

VPSC INTEGRITY STRATEGY

UPDATED MAY 2017

VPSC
Victorian Public Sector Commission



The Victorian Government has vested the Victorian Public Sector Commission with functions designed to enhance the performance of the public sector – fostering the development of an efficient, integrated and responsive public sector which is highly ethical, accountable and professional in the ways it delivers services to the Victorian community.

The key functions of the Commission are to:

- strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and capability of the public sector in order to meet existing and emerging needs and deliver high quality services; and
- maintain and advocate for public sector professionalism and integrity.

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www.vpsc.vic.gov.au/integrity/

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1. INTRODUCTION

Government and community trust in public sector integrity is critical to the effectiveness of public sector employees and agencies. This trust enables the public sector to implement policy and deliver services for the benefit of all Victorians.

Public sector officials are entrusted with considerable powers, resources, and information to fulfil their duties to deliver outcomes for the Victorian public. In Victoria, this includes more than 33,000 board members and over 285,000 staff employed by over 3,300 public sector bodies. Their roles and responsibilities cover many industries and disciplines, including health, education, water and land management, transport, finance, emergency services, arts, sports and recreation, and regulation.

Building and maintaining sustained community and government trust requires dedicated efforts from all parts of the Victorian public sector. VPSC has a central leadership role in coordinating integrity efforts. VPSC:

- has a statutory objective to maintain and advocate for public sector integrity;
- is responsible for issuing binding codes of conduct and employment standards; and
- is a member of the Victorian Secretaries Board (VSB), which has a public sector stewardship role.

In Victoria, the *Public Administration Act 2004* (PAA) establishes seven public sector values and six employment principles to guide public sector employees, directors and agencies in their work. These are at the centre of public sector responsibilities to serve Government and the Victorian community.

Victorian Public Sector Values



Responsiveness



Integrity



Impartiality



Accountability



Respect



Leadership



Human Rights

Victorian Employment Principles



Fair and Reasonable Treatment



Merit in Employment



Equal Employment Opportunity



Human Rights



Reasonable Avenue of Redress



Career Public Service

The Victorian Public Sector Commissioner has issued three Codes of Conduct that set out expectations and guide how public sector employees, consultants, contractors, directors and special body staff demonstrate the values in their work and interactions with the government, the community and each other. Each code is binding on a particular category of public official, including Victorian public sector employees; directors of Victorian public entities; and Victorian public sector employees of special bodies.

This Integrity Strategy sets out how VPSC has and will support public sector employers and employees to strengthen integrity and adherence to the public sector values and codes of conduct. During 2016, VPSC focused on reinforcing the organisational systems that enable and support integrity, including issuing codes, guidance, frameworks and policies (see Section 3 for more details).

In 2017, VPSC is focusing on building the awareness and understanding of both leaders and employees to demonstrate integrity behaviours at work. The key initiatives for 2017-18 year are:

- **A new Integrity Portal** to provide clear, accessible and easy-to-navigate information about the public sector values and employment principles;
- **Values promotion and engagement** incorporating a strategic approach to communicating and engagement about integrity matters;
- **Specific integrity projects** to address problem areas, such as bullying; and
- **Meeting statutory functions** by continuing to fulfil its functions under the PAA to provide avenues of redress, administer registers, provide advice and seek information from public sector agencies.

2. VPSC'S 2017 INTEGRITY STRATEGY: OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOMES

The objective of VPSC's Integrity Strategy is to achieve **sustained community and government trust in the Victorian public sector**. This objective relies on:

- strong organisational systems, with clear codes of conduct, policies and procedures in place;
- effective leadership that models integrity and the public sector values; and
- employees having the awareness and understanding to act with integrity as a core feature of their work.

VPSC has identified key behaviours and outcomes in each of these areas which are targeted by the strategy.



3. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016

During 2016, VPSC issued new and updated frameworks, guidance and resources to support public sector integrity. These include:



new conflict of interest resources – VPSC released a [new model conflict of interests policy and supporting resources](#), to encourage greater consistency in how conflict of interest is managed across the Victorian public sector.



updated gifts, benefits and hospitality resources – VPSC issued a [revised framework and supporting resources, including strengthened minimum accountabilities](#) for all Victorian public sector organisations. The updated requirements adopt a principles-based approach, reflecting the wide variety of public sector roles, and incorporate stronger reporting and transparency requirements to provide greater accountability to the public of gifts, benefits and hospitality received and refused.



revised guidance on addressing breaches of the Code of Conduct –VPSC updated its guide, [Managing poor behaviour in the workplace](#), to reflect current legislation and regulations. The updated guide places greater emphasis on high standards of behaviour, addressing unsatisfactory performance and using non-disciplinary approaches.

These three initiatives fulfil VPSC's commitments made by VSB to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) in March 2016, in response to the findings and recommendations arising from IBAC investigations.

VPSC also:

- released **updated Employment Standards**, including the development of [new standards](#) for applying the employment principles to ‘foster a career public service’ and for ‘upholding the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities’. The employment standards set out the expectations to which all public sector employers are held. The mandatory employment standards are effective from 1 February 2017.
- published a series of **data insights** based on the 2016 People Matter Survey, including findings on [discrimination, bullying and harassment](#).
- mined VPSC’s **integrity-related information** from reviews of actions; enquiries and requests for information; and organisation reviews, to identify key trends and emerging issues. This information has been used to inform future initiatives in the Integrity Strategy.
- responded to over **180 queries and concerns** relating to the professionalism and integrity of the public sector (compared to 116 in 2015). In addition, VPSC received 21 applications for a review of actions from public service employees (compared to 22 in 2015) and requested information from 12 public sector bodies in response to concerns raised by individuals (compared to six in 2015).
- continued to administer and oversee the registration of Lobbyists and Government Affairs Directors, and their compliance with the [Victorian Government Professional Lobbyist Code of Conduct](#).

4. FOCUS FOR 2017

During 2017, VPSC's focus will shift from systems and compliance-based projects towards building the awareness and understanding of public sector officials to demonstrate integrity at work. This will include a greater emphasis on communicating and engaging with key stakeholders, including public sector agency heads, to support public sector employees to make decisions that reflect and uphold the public sector values and employment principles.

VPSC will focus on four key areas:

- **Integrity Portal** – developing VPSC's web-based integrity resources and introducing an Integrity Portal, to provide clear, accessible and easy-to-navigate information about the public sector values and employment principles;
- **values promotion and engagement** – adopting a more strategic approach to communicating and engagement about integrity matters;
- **specific integrity projects** – VPSC will deliver projects to improve work practices and build strong integrity cultures in areas such as bullying; improving the management of misconduct and grievances; and responding to offers of gifts from suppliers;
- **meeting statutory functions** – VPSC will continue to undertake reviews of actions, administer and oversee registration of Lobbyists and Government Affairs Directors, respond to enquiries and requests for information under s.41(2) of the PAA, monitor public sector compliance with the values and principles, and provide advice.

VPSC will also incorporate an integrity focus into other functions and programs to deliver on its statutory mandate to strengthen capability and integrity within the public sector, including the establishment and roll out of the Victorian Leadership Academy and VPSC's work to build high performing workforces.

Integrity Strategy initiatives 2017

VPSC Integrity Portal

During 2017, VPSC will develop its online content offerings to provide public sector organisations and employees with comprehensive information and resources to support integrity behaviours and cultures.

The online content will be re-designed and updated to ensure materials are clear, accessible and easy-to-navigate, including:

- the Codes of Conduct, Employment Standards and related guidance;
- resources to address specific integrity risks, such as conflict of interest or gifts, benefits and hospitality;
- scenarios that provide examples of how to apply the values when making decisions, both in common situations and in more unusual or challenging circumstances.

A dedicated Integrity Portal will be developed to provide employees and organisations with a dedicated site for resources and advice on demonstrating integrity in the public sector.

Reviews of actions

Under the PAA, public service employees may request that VPSC reviews the process of an initial review of an employment related action within a public service body. These actions include recruitment decisions, treatment of staff, or perceived bias in decision-making.

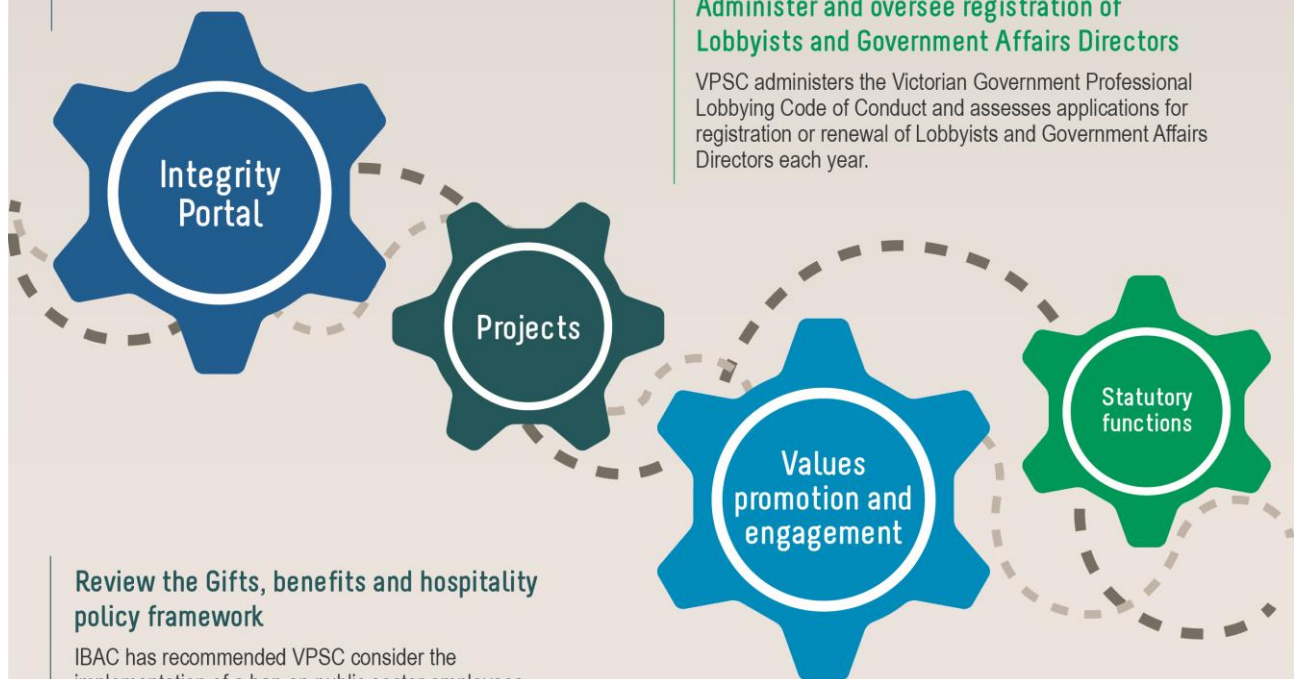
Provide advice and monitor compliance

Under the PAA, VPSC monitors and reports to public sector body heads on compliance with the public sector values, the Codes of Conduct and the public sector employment principles and standards. It also provides advice to employees on these issues, and may make recommendations for improvements to public sector employers.

VPSC will also continue to monitor the Department of Education and Training's integrity reform program and projects to address corruption risks.

Administer and oversee registration of Lobbyists and Government Affairs Directors

VPSC administers the Victorian Government Professional Lobbying Code of Conduct and assesses applications for registration or renewal of Lobbyists and Government Affairs Directors each year.



Review the Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy framework

IBAC has recommended VPSC consider the implementation of a ban on public sector employees receiving any gift, benefit or hospitality from a current or prospective supplier. VPSC will review the Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy framework in light of this recommendation.

Projects to reduce bullying

Bullying and harassment undermine confidence in the integrity of our workplaces and are blockers of high performance. VPSC will work with agencies and unions to analyse and research bullying and identify opportunities to reduce bullying rates.

Integrity Communications and Engagement Plan

VPSC will develop a strategic approach to communicating and engaging with public sector leaders and employees about integrity matters.

VPSC will focus on clear, accessible and easy-to-navigate information and resources, with regular web-based articles and tailored messaging to highlight VPSC's integrity resources.

5. MEASURING SUCCESS

Integrity is often most evident in its absence, and can be eroded quickly by a lack of leadership, by poor organisational culture, or by being considered optional rather than a core responsibility. Measuring the extent to which integrity is embedded across the breadth and diversity of the public sector is a shared responsibility, which VPSC will undertake in partnership with public sector agencies.

VPSC will evaluate the Integrity Strategy in 2018 to assess its impact and effectiveness in building sustained community and government trust in the Victorian public sector. This is expected to be demonstrated by better awareness of, and higher responsiveness to, integrity as a core professional responsibility and integral value-based system, beyond a series of policies and processes.

To provide an overarching measure of the impact of the Integrity Strategy and its key components, VPSC will monitor and review:

- results of relevant People Matter Survey data; and
- usage of the website, including increase in number of visits to integrity pages and number of downloads of resources.

Evaluation plans will also be developed for key Integrity Strategy initiatives, such as the Integrity Portal and the Integrity Communications Plan. These evaluations will form part of the broader evaluation of the Integrity Strategy.

6. TIMELINES

VPSC will promote and maintain public sector integrity via specific short-term projects and a range of ongoing functions. The timelines below confirm completion of initiatives in 2016 and sets out the timeframes for 2017 activities.

		2016	2017								
Initiative		Complete	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Integrity Portal	Develop web content and resources		→								
	Build Integrity Portal					→	→				
	Maintain and update web content and resources		→								
Statutory functions	Reviews of actions		→								
	Provide advice and monitor compliance		→								
	Administer and oversee registration of Lobbyists and Government Affairs Directors		→								
Values promotion and engagement	Prepare Integrity Communications and Engagement Plan		→		●						
	Deliver Integrity Communications and Engagement Plan		→								
Projects	Review Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy framework		→			●					
	Projects to reduce bullying		→							●	
	Re-issue Directors Code of Conduct	✓									
	Update conflict of interest resources	✓									
	Update gifts, benefits and hospitality resources	✓									
	Update guidance on Code of Conduct breaches	✓									
	Re-issue Employment Standards	✓									
	VPSC Integrity Data Mining	✓									