



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Executives

What to consider as an executive when you're briefing your minister

Using your judgement

When you engage with your minister or anyone in their office, use any protocols your department has agreed to with the minister's office.

You may find it difficult to identify the right course of action. This requires your judgement and that of your colleagues and secretary if required. You may be considering matters beyond the immediate content of the brief including:

- the minister's expectations
- the political context
- any media implications
- any impacts your actions or inactions may have on your career and your professional reputation.

It's natural to be mindful of these matters and some can be useful context to inform the advice you provide. However, they must not interfere with your duty under the [code of conduct](#) to give frank, impartial and timely advice.

Oral briefs

It's common for VPS executives to provide oral briefs on sensitive issues, rather than written ones. However, the sensitivity of the issue shouldn't determine whether your brief your Minister in writing or not. For issues that require immediate discussion, you may only have time to speak to or email your minister's office about the details of your advice. This is better than having no record at all, but at the earliest opportunity should be followed up with a formal brief of what has been discussed or decided.

Giving oral briefs on significant matters can be important. Ideally, you should do this to:

- prepare your minister for the formal written advice
- discuss any questions or issues your minister may have identified after you have provided them with detailed written advice.

Decisions by your minister

Ministers are the decision-makers on government policy and implementation and will decide what action to take. The VPS provides advice on issues and assists ministers to implement their decisions.

If your minister doesn't follow your advice or chooses their own action contrary to what you recommend, the department will implement that decision professionally and responsively and not repeatedly advise on other options it may have recommended.

That doesn't mean you can't continue to raise risks with your minister under certain circumstances. For example, if you identify new significant risks or that a previous risk is now likely to result in the failure of a policy, project or service.

Making it safe to speak up

You should always encourage employees to provide you with advice – even if they think it may be unwelcome to you or the minister – in order to create and protect a culture where people feel safe to speak up.

When employees know you're open to receiving advice, you're more likely to receive the information you need to do your job well.