

CIRCULAR 2018-01 | GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY



Circular Number	2018-01
Issue date:	28 June 2018
Application:	All Victorian public sector bodies
Resources:	Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Resource suite at https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/gifts-benefits-and-hospitality-resource-suite/
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Key points

- The VPSC has updated its *Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy Guide* to provide additional guidance on implementing the minimum accountabilities, particularly on how to record and report any offers. The updated guide also highlights the importance of public officials considering conflicts of interest or reputational risks when they are offered or provide a gift, benefit or hospitality.
- To build public trust, Victorian public officials and their employers must manage offers in line with community expectations. Public officials must therefore ensure that their personal interests cannot reasonably be perceived to influence them in the performance of their duties. By avoiding such conflicts of interest, public officials set a strong foundation for integrity and avoid reputational damage to the public sector.
- The updates to the policy guide do not alter the minimum accountabilities, which came into effect in 2016 and which required employers to publish their gifts, benefits and hospitality register online from 1 July 2017.

Updates

The updates include:

- **Changes to accepting gifts** – Public officials may now accept ceremonial gifts on behalf of their organisation.
- **Changes to recording** – Public officials no longer need to record cumulative offers, although they still need to consider the potential conflicts of interest and reputational risks that may arise. Public officials no longer need to declare the official hospitality they are offered by public sector organisations, where their attendance is consistent with public sector functions, objectives and

roles.

- **Changes to reporting** – Employers may now provide more generic information about the recipients and donors of declined offers; and publish role titles rather than individual names for accepted offers.

Requirements

The minimum accountabilities for managing gifts, benefits and hospitality are binding on Victorian public officials and their employers under the *Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance*.

The updated implementation advice outlined in the policy guide comes into effect on 1 July 2018. Departments and administrative offices should review their existing policies and procedures against the policy guide. They should also:

- highlight the importance of conflict of interest and reputational risks when determining whether to accept or provide a gift, benefit or hospitality; and
- ensure their policies and procedures reinforce the Victorian public sector values of impartiality, integrity and accountability defined in section 7 of the *Public Administration Act 2004* and further described in the *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees* and the *Code of Conduct for Employees of Special Bodies*.

Background

The policy guide (formerly framework) was last updated in 2016. It is supported by a [suite of resources](#) to assist public officials and their employers to apply the minimum accountabilities.

Scope

The minimum accountabilities in the policy guide apply to all Victorian public sector officials and their employers. The guidance should be adopted to ensure consistency across the public sector.

Date of Application

The updated policy guide takes effect from 1 July 2018.