

Circular 2020-21 | Gifts, benefits and hospitality reminder



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**

Circular Number	2020-21
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Application:	Victorian public sector employers and employees
Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Resource Suite
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Key points

- December and through the new year period are times of giving and receiving in many cultures. The Victorian Public Sector Commission's [Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy Guide](#) provides additional guidance on the minimum accountabilities, established in the [Standing Directions](#) issued by the Minister for Finance, required of Victorian public sector employees.
- The guidance provides practical information on how to manage, record and report any offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality. It also highlights the importance of public sector employees considering conflicts of interest and other risks when they are offered or provided with a gift, benefit or hospitality. Public sector employees should carefully consider any offer, and refuse gifts, benefits and hospitality not in line with the guidance, particularly where this concerns a current or potential supplier.

- To build and maintain public trust, Victorian public sector employees and employers must manage offers in line with community expectations. Public sector employees must 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 sector employees can maintain integrity and avoid reputational damage to the sector.
- The gifts, benefits and hospitality minimum accountabilities came into effect in 2016. It requires employers to publish their gifts, benefits and hospitality register online from 1 July 2017.

Requirements

The minimum accountabilities for managing, gifts, benefits and hospitality are binding on Victorian public sector employees and their employers under the [Standing Directions 2018 under the Financial Management Act 1994](#).

Public sector employers should seek to provide information to their employees on the requirements of the guidance and in doing so:

- Highlight the importance of conflict of interest and risks when determining whether to accept or provide a gift, benefit or hospitality;
- 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](#); and
- Note that the [Supplier Code of Conduct](#) (the Supplier Code) provides minimum standards in guiding ethical, sustainable and socially responsible procurement. The Supplier Code includes further guidance on the areas of conflict of interest and gifts, benefits and hospitality.

Background

The policy guidance was updated last in 2018. It is supported by the [gifts, benefits and hospitality resource suite](#) to assist public sector employees and their employers to apply the minimum accountabilities.



The Victorian Public Sector Commission has issued guidance to assist public sector employees and their employers manage their obligations under the [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#) and the [Code of Conduct for Employees of Special Bodies](#) when working remotely.

The [How to Maintain Integrity When Working Remotely](#) guide provides further insight into how public sector employees might maintain and apply the minimum accountabilities while working from home.

Scope

The minimum accountabilities in the policy guidance apply to all Victorian public sector employees and their employers.

Date of application

The requirements within the policy guide took effect from 1 July 2018.

