

Guide to engaging with lobbyists in the Victorian Public Sector



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**

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As a Victorian public sector employee, lobbyists may contact you to influence Government decisions.

This guide helps you understand your obligations and what to do when you're working in the office or remotely.

When you're working in the office or remotely and a lobbyist contacts you, you have obligations under the:

- Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
- Code of Conduct for Public Sector Employees of Special Bodies
- Victorian Professional Lobbyists Code of Conduct (Lobbyist Code)

Your obligations under the codes

Your obligations under the Code of Conduct

When a lobbyist contacts you, you must behave in line with the [7 public sector values](#) in the [Code of Conduct](#).

You must also comply with your organisation's relevant policies, including those on probity and grants.

Relevant values and behaviours from the Code of Conduct include:

Integrity

- Be honest
- Use powers responsibly
- Identify and deal with inappropriate conduct
- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Develop and maintain trust

Impartiality

- Make decisions free of bias
- Consider all relevant facts
- Implement policies and programs fairly

Accountability

- Be transparent
- Be responsible
- Be open to scrutiny

Your obligations under the Lobbyist Code

Under the code, you must check if a lobbyist is on the [register of lobbyists](#) before you meet with them. This will assure you of their credentials.

If a lobbyist is not on the register, you must tell them you can't meet until they register.



If a lobbyist contacts you and isn't on the register, email lobbyists.register@vpsc.vic.gov.au or call 03 7004 7243 to advise that a lobbyist tried to meet with you but wasn't registered.

To check if someone is a lobbyist, you can also check their company website.

Their website may advertise services like government relations or public affairs. It may also have a list of clients or former political links of its staff. Having this information on their website also suggests they are a lobbyist.

If you can't access the register

If you want to check if a lobbyist is registered but can't access the register of lobbyists, email lobbyists.register@vpsc.vic.gov.au.

What a lobbyist must tell you before you first meet with them

Under the code, you can only meet with a person who says they're a lobbyist after they confirm:

- they're registered on the [Register of Lobbyists](#)
- they're making contact on behalf of a third party
- the name of the third party or parties
- the nature of the third party's issue
- if they also act for any other third party that is currently involved in a Government tender process

Lobbyists must provide you with the above information under the Lobbyist Code. These requirements help transparent and well-informed decision making.

Lobbyist obligations under the code

Lobbyists must behave in line with the [Lobbyist Code](#) of Conduct.

They have a duty to be ethical, transparent and act to the highest standards of professional conduct in line with probity requirements.

This helps to uphold public expectations of transparency, integrity and honesty.



When you can't engage with lobbyists

Financial matters

You must not engage with lobbyists when they're involved in a government tender process.

Buying for Victoria's [how to plan for probity](#) says all buyers must provide the same information to all suppliers, be fair and not preference any bidder.

This means if you engaged with lobbyists during a government tender process, you may give the lobbyist's clients an advantage and have a [conflict of interest](#).

Government business

You must not discuss information you're not authorised to disclose.

This includes:

- cabinet information
- personal information
- any information that could negatively reflect on the state

Public sector employees becoming lobbyists

You can become a lobbyist when you leave the public sector, with some restrictions if you were an executive.

For 12 months after you leave your employment as an executive, you must not engage in lobbying activities on any matters you had official dealings with. This is to prevent a [conflict of interest](#).

About lobbyists



Who is a lobbyist?

Under the Lobbyist Code, a lobbyist is a person, company or organisation who works on behalf of a third-party client to influence government outcomes.

Lobbyists seek to influence public sector employees or politicians to support an outcome favourable to their third-party client.

Government affairs directors have a paid role to do the same kind of work as lobbyists in either:

- an organisation
- a business
- a professional or trade association

To keep it simple in this guide, we refer to government affairs directors as lobbyists.

Who isn't a lobbyist?

A person, company or organisation is not a lobbyist if they act on their own behalf, rather than a client, to influence government outcomes.

A lobbyist doesn't include:

- charitable, religious and non-profit organisations that represent their members' interests
- people who represent the personal affairs of their family or friends
- members of trade delegations visiting Australia
- a person who is a member of a regulated profession who deals with government as part of their day-to-day work
- a member of a profession who occasionally makes representations to government on behalf of others as part of what they do in their job

What do lobbyists try to influence?

Lobbyists try to influence favourable outcomes on government decisions like:

- a policy
- a Bill
- a change in law
- planning decisions
- the actions of an organisation
- the actions of a government
- the allocation of government grants
- tender and contract discussions

But lobbying activities don't include things like:

- a response to a call for submissions or a request for information
- a grassroots campaign to influence government policy or decisions
- statements made in a public forum

Who may lobbyists engage with?

A lobbyist might try to engage with you if you work in the following areas:

- development and implementation of government policy
- grant allocation
- procurement
- planning
- legislative reform

As a public sector employee, you're not obliged to meet with a lobbyist unless you're lawfully directed to do so.

