

Service Charter

This client service charter sets out the services that the Ethics Advisory Service (the Service) will provide, the standard of those services, and what clients can expect from the Service. It will be used as a performance measurement and accountability tool.

Our staff are committed to providing you with quality service and advice. We encourage your feedback so that the Service can improve and grow. This charter will be reviewed within the first three months of operation and then annually thereafter.



Lynelle Briggs
Public Service Commissioner
May 2009

Our role

The Service is available to all Australian Public Service (APS) employees, including agency heads and SES staff, who wish to discuss and seek advice on ethical issues that occur in the workplace and on how to make sound decisions around these issues.

Assistance will be provided through a number of communication channels:

- direct advice to individuals through a telephone and email service
- broad policy and good practice information for agencies through publications and a purpose built web page at www.apsc.gov.au/ethics.

We provide advice and information on:

- the application and interpretation of the APS Values and Code of Conduct; sections 10 and 13 of the *Public Service Act 1999* (the Act)
- strategies and techniques for ethical decision making in the APS
- interpretation of the misconduct and whistleblowing provisions of the Act; as well as advice on related policy and good practice.

We do *not* provide advice on:

- technical and operational aspects of APS employment policy; for advice on such matters please refer to the Commission's Employment Policy Adviceline 02 6202 3859
- other aspects of public sector legislation, policy or management
- internal agency policies and processes unless the request comes from an agency head, an SES employee or an agency corporate management area
- the merits or outcome of any misconduct or whistleblowing disclosure cases.

We do not:

- provide counselling or act as a replacement for the agencies *Employee Assistance Programme*
- undertake case management or provide an advocacy service
- provide an avenue for complaint resolution
- accept whistleblower reports.

Legal status

- Advice provided by the Service is not legal advice and should not be acted upon as such.
- Agency heads remain responsible for ethical standards in their agencies.
- Any decision or action taken on the basis of advice provided by the Service will be the responsibility of the agency and its employees.
- Agencies remain responsible for determining breaches of the Code of Conduct and setting sanctions.
- An APS employee who wishes to report suspected breaches of the Code in their agency or to make a public interest disclosure will be advised by the Service to use their agency or central reporting systems as appropriate.

The service you can expect from us

We are committed to the delivery of services according to the behaviours expected under the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

In all cases we will:

- respond to telephone calls promptly
- respond to emails by close of business the next working day
- communicate clearly and courteously
- treat information with privacy and respect, and collect, store, use and disclose personal information only in accordance with Australian law.

In most cases we will:

- provide advice and information at the first point of contact
- provide advice on a confidential basis, if necessary.

In some cases we may:

- be required to research issues prior to providing advice; in such cases timeframes on the closure of issues will be negotiated with the client.
- seek further information from the agency in order to clarify issues; in such cases the caller will be advised of this and will be asked if they wish to continue.

In exceptional cases we may:

- refer issues to the agency head; if the pattern of calls from an agency shows evidence of a serious problem, the Public Service Commissioner may draw the matter directly to the attention of the agency head.
- refer an issue or incident to the agency head and Australian Federal Police or other such relevant body; in cases where claims of a serious nature and/or involving an imminent risk have been identified. For example; serious fraud, OH&S concerns, danger to the public, physical threats.

You can help us by:

- providing your name, agency, classification level and location
 - this is for statistical purposes only and data is aggregated in such a way that individuals cannot be identified (however, the Service will accept anonymous calls).

Feedback about our services

We are committed to continuing to improve our work processes and services; in order to do so we would like to hear your suggestions and complaints. If you would like to provide feedback on the service you have received please inform us via our email ethics@apsc.gov.au. We will acknowledge formal complaints within 24 hours of receipt, and will endeavour to resolve your complaint in a timely manner.

Upon annual review of the Service, we will seek your feedback through a client satisfaction survey and we will monitor our performance against our service standards. This will be reported in the Australian Public Service Commission's annual report.

Contact us:

Enquiries: **Monday – Friday
from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm EST**

Phone: **02 6202 3737**

Email: **ethics@apsc.gov.au**

Web: **www.apsc.gov.au/ethics**

If you would like us to contact you, please call or email us with your contact details.



Australian Government

Australian Public Service Commission

Ethics

Advisory Service

Client Service Charter

Enhancing
ethical awareness
in the APS