

INTEGRITY MATTERS



From the Chief Executive Officer

Since the last edition of *Integrity Matters* we have seen a State election campaign in which the Commission's role was discussed. This is a good opportunity to set the record straight.

The Integrity Commission, established in 2010, has clearly demonstrated its capacity to undertake significant systemic investigations in the broad public interest. Late last year alone, we released two major reports – on improvements needed in managing misconduct in public authorities, and on the State's management of the threat of foxes. This is in addition to the 168 complaints which we dealt with in 2017.



Should the need arise, we have the capacity to undertake more serious Integrity Tribunal inquiries and our legislation makes it clear that any additional resources in this instance can be made available without specific Parliamentary appropriation. In the event of the determination to conduct a tribunal we do not need to make a case to Government for funding.

Comparisons have been made about the Integrity Commission's powers and those of similar integrity bodies interstate. Let me be clear about the facts. Our powers are broadly comparable to our interstate counterparts, although our Act has some complex procedural features that can sometimes slow us down.

While we would always welcome additional resources, there are some realities to be considered in terms of the funding base in relation to the need. Each state has made a determination based on its own circumstances.

In 2016-17, Tasmania spent approximately \$4.40 per head of population on its Integrity Commission. This compares with \$2.62 for ICAC in NSW, \$5.75 for IBAC in Victoria, and \$5.89 for ICAC in South Australia. The figures for Queensland and Western Australia are significantly higher but those bodies have organised crime responsibilities.

Our focus continues to be the current challenge, which is to use our powers and resourcing to maximise outcomes that can be achieved.

Richard Bingham, Chief Executive Officer

Integrity Commission focus: unauthorised access to, and misuse of, information

Unauthorised access to and/or misuse of information is a current and developing focus of integrity entities throughout Australia. This is because information management is a key misconduct risk area in most public sector organisations.

Many public officers have access to personal, sensitive or confidential information through their work in a public sector organisation. The community places a significant amount of trust in public officers to only access and use this information for work purposes.

Unauthorised access to information' is the access to work information for purposes that are not work related. Examples include, for the sake of curiosity, looking up friends, family members and potential partners on a database at your work place.

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Conflicts of interest: the importance of declaring and managing conflicts in recruitment

Conflicts of interest in recruitment processes continue to be identified in many misconduct complaints received by the Commission. These complaints range from alleged nepotism relating to spouses, close relations and friends, to alleged failures to properly follow procedures or to apply a merit-based process.

The relative small size of Tasmania's population and particularly the high proportion of Tasmanians working in the public sector, suggests that such conflicts may not always be avoidable. However, the Commission emphasises the importance of declaring and managing such conflicts to uphold integrity in recruitment.

Recruitment is, by its nature, competitive. In most recruitment processes there are unsuccessful applicants, some of whom may feel aggrieved at the outcome. Clearly, this does not automatically mean there was an actual conflict of interest or fault in a recruitment process. However, it does highlight how conflict of interest perceptions can be just as important when assessing the integrity of a recruitment process.

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Managing misconduct training now underway

The Commission has developed and is now delivering a full day education workshop on managing and investigating alleged misconduct. The workshops are designed around our [Guide to managing misconduct in the Tasmanian public sector](#).

The guide was developed as part of our [own-motion investigation](#) into the management of misconduct in the public sector. The aim of the investigation was to gain an understanding of the capacity of public sector organisations to deal with misconduct, so that effective resources and training could be developed to support improved standards.

The guide is a series of fact sheets that together set out good practice on managing allegations of misconduct. The workshops are hands-on and use scenarios and activities to lead attendees through the guide.

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West Tamar Council takes a holistic approach to building an ethical culture

In developing a program on ethics and integrity for staff, West Tamar Council recognises that training alone is not enough. Creating a culture where serving the public interest is front of mind and where staff are willing to raise ethical issues, requires a holistic, long-term approach.



In late 2017, West Tamar Council began running *Ethical Decisions at Work* sessions for staff. They started with two workshops facilitated by the Commission and another two facilitated by Council's Human Resources Specialist.

When the Council rolled out *Ethical Decisions at Work*, senior staff, including the general manager, showed their support for the training by attending the early sessions. Councillors also participated in ethics training provided by the Commission and the Local Government Division in early 2017.

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Easy ways to catch resumé fraud

It is one thing to present credentials in the best possible light when applying for a job but what happens when a resumé crosses the line and poses a lie?

Recent Australian examples show that inadvertently accepting fraudulent credentials is a serious matter for any organisation.

In 2015, the Australian Tax Office found that an employee's supposed qualifications and work history were bogus. When confronted, the employee resigned and later pleaded guilty to charges of knowingly using a false document and dishonestly deceiving a public official.

In New South Wales some years earlier, the Independent Commission Against Corruption determined that former Director of the state's Department of Business and Regional Development, Glen Oakley, had lied about having high-level academic qualifications, including a PhD, when applying for public and private sector positions.

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