

GOOD DECISION-MAKING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

As public sector employees, our decisions need to be made in the public interest. This means that every decision we make needs to help us achieve the best outcomes for the community and the State of Tasmania as a whole.

To do this right, we need to understand what working in the public interests means for our role and how our personal interests might affect some of our decision making.

The public interest

When we say that the public sector makes decisions in the public interest, we mean that the decisions public sector employees make every day support building the best future for Tasmania.

The decisions that we make in our work roles need to take into account what the decision means for the community.

Sometimes it can be easy to see how our decisions affect the people of Tasmania – when we build roads, open offices or streamline processes there is a real, immediate outcome.

Working in the public interest means that we consider the impact on the community, even when they may not be aware of the decision.

We need to think about the public interest in all of our decisions, including things like filling in timesheets, placing stationary orders and arranging meetings.

How the public interest applies to your decisions

Take some time to consider how the public interest applies to the decisions you make in your role.

As a first step, think about the role of your organisation and the services it provides. It is helpful to consider:

- Your organisation's corporate or strategic plan
- Any relevant internal policies and procedures
- Your Statement of Duties/Role or Position Description

Understanding the contribution your organisation makes and how your role works to achieve that bigger outcome is a vital first step to making good decisions.

Every public sector organisation has its own role to play in achieving outcomes for Tasmania. Thinking about it this way will help you to consider the public interest in your daily decision-making.

Balancing your interests

Public sector employees are people first. As people, we all have a range of personal interests that help to add to the diversity and vibrancy of the public sector and across the broader community. Our personal interests include things like:

- Personal relationships
- The roles and responsibilities we have to our families, friends and community that are different to our work roles
- Associations that we belong to or may be a part of, and
- Even our own reputational concerns.

These personal interests can sometimes help us to view situations and consider decisions in a different way to other people in the community.

While it is important that we have personal interests, as public sector employees we need to manage them appropriately. We need to make sure that our personal interests don't affect our ability to make the decisions we need to make in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for the community.

The decisions we make every day provide us with the opportunity to positively represent that the public sector is working to achieve outcomes in the public interest.

Understanding conflicts of interest

People use a lot of different terms when describing a conflict of interest, which can make it really confusing.

Simply, if your private interests are influencing the decisions you make in your public sector role, this is called a conflict of interest. If a reasonable person would think that your private interests might influence your decisions, this is also a conflict of interest.

You can't make a decision that is truly in the public interest if your decision-making is influenced or thought to be influenced by your personal interests.

While you need to avoid conflicts of interest, you were also likely employed to your role because of the experience and passion you have for your job. Experience and passion can lead to you having a number of personal interests that could potentially lead to a conflict of interest.

When conflicts of interest come up, let your organisation know. Declaring your personal interests makes sure that the situation can be managed to achieve the right outcome – in the public interest.

The role of the Integrity Commission

The Integrity Commission has been established to support public sector employees to make good decisions.

Good decision-making isn't something that public sector employees need to undertake on our own. You should feel confident in discussing your decisions with appropriate colleagues and networks to make sure that your decisions are right and focussed on outcomes that support the public interest.

Further support around good decision-making is available online at www.integrity.tas.gov.au.

You can also contact the Commission directly for support making good decisions. Call us on 1300 720 289 and ask to speak to a consultant.