



Introduction to misuse of public resources

Public resources, or work resources, are the items or services you need or are provided to do your job efficiently and effectively. You are required to use them appropriately.

What are public resources?

Public resources are paid for, owned, and controlled by public sector organisations. Public sector employees are using or managing these resources in trust on behalf of the taxpayer. Resources can be tangible (something you can see or hold) or intangible (such as time). They include:

- ▼ computers, internet, email
- ▼ time at work
- ▼ photocopiers
- ▼ credit cards, taxi cards or vouchers
- ▼ intellectual property and resources, such as logos and images
- ▼ stationery and other office supplies
- ▼ telecommunication devices, such as mobile phones and tablets
- ▼ vehicles and fuel cards
- ▼ files, records and archives
- ▼ tools, machinery and equipment
- ▼ landscaping supplies, including plants and mulch
- ▼ grants and other funds like petty cash, and
- ▼ office furniture and fittings.

Using public resources appropriately

Your organisation relies on you to appropriately use work resources to fulfil its legal responsibilities and obligations.

Correctly using resources will be included in your organisation's code of conduct, or a similar document, which is part of your employment framework. Generally, this will prevent public resources from being available for private use.

Most tangible resources will have policies, procedures and manuals covering how to use the resource correctly. You must read and understand these policies and procedures before you use any public resource.

Misuse of public resources

Misuse of public resources occurs whenever you use a work resource for a non work-related purpose or use a resource in a way that is not approved.

Common examples of misuse of resources include:

- ▼ making unapproved use of workplace equipment for private purposes
- ▼ using work resources for outside (or 'secondary') employment (for example, using a work vehicle, stationery, tools, email and telephone)
- ▼ falsifying timesheets or not submitting leave forms for absences
- ▼ falsifying travel or accommodation claims
- ▼ using work vehicles and fuel cards for non-work purposes
- ▼ purchasing goods or services for private use using government funds, or
- ▼ taking surplus materials from an organisation's worksite.



CASE STUDY

A public sector organisation reported allegations that kitchen staff at a public hospital were stealing food from the hospital, leaving earlier than the times recorded on their timesheets and taking unauthorised breaks.

These practices had been going on for some time and were part of the culture of the unit – even supervisors and senior staff were involved.

One kitchen employee also stole other goods from the hospital. The organisation reported the matter to the police, who recovered the stolen goods. Two employees were dismissed and other employees resigned during the investigation.

*Extracted from Prevention advice
NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption*

<https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/prevention/corruption-prevention-advice-topics/use-of-resources>

Misuse of public resources is misconduct. Employees suspected of misusing public resources are likely to face disciplinary action by their organisation.

Serious misconduct can result in dismissal and may be investigated by the Integrity Commission. It may also be investigated by the police and result in criminal prosecution.

What to do

If you are unsure about your use of public resources

Your organisation will have policies and procedures to guide you in making good decisions about using public resources. Speak to your manager or Human Resources if you feel unsure.

If you suspect someone else is misusing public resources

If the alleged misuse is within your public sector organisation, follow the internal procedure for reporting misconduct. If it is about another public sector organisation, you can report it through your organisation or directly to that organisation or the Integrity Commission.

As a public sector employee, you are required to speak up about any suspected misconduct.



The Commission can help

We are available to provide support and assistance with identifying, reporting, investigating, managing and preventing misconduct: prevention@integrity.tas.gov.au or 1300 720 289.

For more Misconduct Prevention resources go to www.integrity.tas.gov.au/resources.