



Public Sector Misconduct: Impacts, Risks, and Reporting

This fact sheet explains what public sector misconduct is, why it matters, the impacts it can have on individuals and organisations, and how concerns can be raised. It supports awareness, prevention, and informed decision-making across the Tasmanian public sector.

What is public sector misconduct?

In Tasmania, misconduct is defined in the *Integrity Commission Act 2009* (the Act). Misconduct includes conduct, or an attempt to engage in conduct, involving:

- ▼ a breach of a code of conduct;
- ▼ dishonest or improper use of functions or powers;
- ▼ misuse of public resources;
- ▼ misuse of information acquired through public duties; and
- ▼ conduct that adversely affects, or could affect, the honest performance of another public officer's functions.

Misconduct can range from poor judgment or failure to follow organisational policies, to intentional wrongdoing. Some misconduct may involve criminal behaviour or conduct that could justify termination of employment.

In practical terms, misconduct involves behaviour that undermines trust, fairness, or proper use of public authority and resources.

Why misconduct matters

Community trust

Public sector misconduct can erode trust in government decision-making, public institutions, and service delivery.

Financial and organisational costs

Misconduct can result in significant direct and indirect costs, including:

- ▼ investigation and legal expenses;
- ▼ staff time diverted from core work;
- ▼ recruitment, induction, and training costs where employment ends;
- ▼ compensation claims and dispute resolution costs.

Turnover following serious misconduct also results in loss of organisational knowledge and capability.

Workplace impacts

The impacts of misconduct extend beyond the individuals involved, and may include:

- ▼ reduced morale and engagement;
- ▼ increased conflict and workplace stress;
- ▼ absenteeism; and
- ▼ reduced productivity and performance.

How an organisation responds to misconduct strongly influences workplace culture and confidence in leadership.

Reputational damage

Public complaints, adverse media coverage and social media scrutiny can significantly affect how an organisation is perceived by:

- ▼ employees and potential recruits;
- ▼ stakeholders and partners; and
- ▼ the broader community.

Misconduct risk areas

Experience shows misconduct is more likely to occur in areas involving:

- ▼ conflicts of interest;
- ▼ gifts and benefits;
- ▼ procurement and contract management;
- ▼ use of public resources;
- ▼ use of power or authority; and
- ▼ outside employment or associations.

Awareness, sound governance, and clear workplace expectations reduce risk across these areas.

Why misconduct occurs

Misconduct may arise from:

- ▼ limited awareness of policies or legal obligations;
- ▼ unclear processes or weak controls;
- ▼ workplace cultures that normalise entitlement, complacency or shortcuts;
- ▼ inadequate supervision or oversight; and
- ▼ deliberate dishonesty for personal or third-party benefit.

Education, strong leadership, and a positive organisational culture play a central role in creating a pro-integrity culture that resists misconduct.

Reporting concerns about misconduct

Why reporting matters

Raising concerns supports:

- ▼ ethical, transparent and accountable public administration;
- ▼ responsible and transparent use of public resources; and
- ▼ early identification and reduction of misconduct risks.

Reporting suspected misconduct is a positive action that contributes to integrity across the public sector.

If you are a public sector employee

Concerns are generally raised through:

- ▼ internal complaint or reporting processes; and
- ▼ a line manager or Human Resources area.

If internal options are unclear, inappropriate, or raise concern, independent advice can be sought externally, including from the Integrity Commission.

Employees who raise concerns in good faith play an important role in maintaining integrity and accountability in the public sector.

If you are a member of the public

Concerns should be raised first with the relevant organisation. The Integrity Commission can provide and make referrals to other organisations if appropriate.



The Commission can help

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