



Executive Summary

April 2008

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OPSSC

Office of the
Public Sector
Standards
Commissioner

Background

The Parliamentary Series is a new reporting approach by the Office of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner (OPSSC) to Parliament.

Under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (PSM Act), the Commissioner is required to report annually or from time to time to each House of Parliament on compliance or non-compliance with:

- some parts of section 8 and all of section 9 of PSM Act (these detail the general principles of human resource management and official conduct);
- the public sector code of ethics;
- agencies' own codes of conduct; and
- public sector standards.

The Commissioner intends to report in a more timely manner on specific matters of public interest and emerging systemic issues for public sector improvement. This is in addition to the annual compliance reports.

Section 1 of the Report – Referred Matters – contains information on five matters referred to OPSSC that are of public interest.

- A matter alleging political interference, patronage in the appointment, and a range of perceived anomalies of a technical nature in recruitment practices in relation to the appointment of a senior public servant.
- A matter alleging the inappropriate release of confidential information.
- A matter alleging the interest of a planning committee member was not managed appropriately.
- A matter where it was alleged that the appointment of a senior public servant was not based on merit.
- A matter alleging that the appointment of two senior public servants did not comply with public sector standards.

Section 2 of the Report – Emerging Issues – focuses on compliance with public sector standards in relation to acting and secondment arrangements.



OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR STANDARDS COMMISSIONER

Implications for agency heads

This Report raises a number of issues which chief executive officers and chief employees should consider and act upon.

Management of interest

- All potential, real or perceived conflicts of interest should be identified and a strategy for managing these developed and endorsed.
- All staff declaring an interest (perceived or real) should document this for their own purpose.
- All declarations of interest (perceived or real) should be minuted or documented on behalf of the agency.
- Agencies, boards and committees should review their processes for managing interests.

Public sector standards: acting and secondment

- All acting and secondment requires a proper assessment which can be simple documentation specifying the reason for the decision.
- Under external requirements, acting and secondment beyond a six month period requires advertising.
- In exceptional circumstances, acting and secondment can continue beyond six months, but only where a strong business case is made for this to occur.
- The business case should specify rationale and timeline, be endorsed by the agency head, and communicated effectively to staff.