



OPSSC

Office of the
Public Sector
Standards
Commissioner

In Principle

Issue 2, June 2009

One-stop-shop to good governance

Good governance is at the heart of the public sector. It ensures a quality public sector that is efficient, effective, fair and transparent; and trusted by its customers – the wider community. Yet with the proliferation of applicable accountability requirements it is easy for agencies to get lost.

To help agencies find their way through the maze of mandatory requirements and obligations, OPSSC has developed the *Good Governance Guide* – helping you comply with the standards, which documents the across-government accountability requirements into a single framework.

The Guide is based on the governance concept adopted by the Australian Stock Exchange and has been developed in consultation with WA public sector agencies. It addresses the following nine key aspects of governance:

- Government and public sector relationship;
- Management and oversight;
- Organisational structure;
- Operations;
- Ethics and integrity;
- People;
- Finance;
- Communication; and
- Risk management.

For each area the Guide sets out the overarching principle and provides an operational matrix that helps to identify the applicable standard, how to achieve the standard, how to know whether the standard has been met, and how to report on compliance with the standard.



Helping to comply with the standards: OPSSC's Rebecca Harris and Paul Stafford review the components of the Good Governance Guide.

An additional important element of the Guide is the Accountability Map, which is an on-line tool that agencies can use to see applicable mandatory requirements and existing guidance documents at one glance. The Accountability Map will also help agencies to streamline their response to their accountability obligations.

Commissioner for Public Sector Standards Dr Ruth Shean said that OPSSC has already incorporated some of the elements of the Guide into OPSSC activities.

"We used the Guide during the redesign of our survey tools, in particular the CEO survey and the employee perceptions survey," Dr Shean said.

"By doing this we were able to see first hand the contribution that the Guide will make to streamlining governance and accountability requirements."

The Good Governance Guide and associated products will be launched in July. For more information visit www.opssc.wa.gov.au/GGG

Reaching out to the regions

In a State as large as Western Australia, it is important that metropolitan based agencies find ways to help people in regional areas access their services and information. OPSSC makes regular use of video conferences and satellite broadcasts and is now participating in a joint initiative to further enhance our interaction with people in regional areas.

OPSSC recently visited Kalgoorlie with the WA Ombudsman, Office of Health Review, Freedom of Information Commission and Commonwealth Ombudsman with a view to ensuring that the services of the accountability agencies are accessible to people in regional WA.

Director of Public Sector Practice Improvement Rebecca Harris said the visit was an enormous success.

“We were in Kalgoorlie for two days and had a full program of events including seminars, workshops, issues clinics and meetings, which were attended by people from right across the Goldfields-Esperance Region,” Ms Harris said.

“A key issue that emerged was the sense of removal that regional agencies experience from their head offices. Often regional offices are united by local issues that are highly relevant to their particular region. Meeting people on their home ground gives OPSSC a much better idea of understanding their local issues and shaping assistance to better meet their operational needs.”

Visits to other regional locations will occur during the remainder of this year and into 2010. Information about the visits will be available from the OPSSC website www.opssc.wa.gov.au



Regional outreach (left to right): Dr Ruth Shean, Commissioner for Public Sector Standards; Anne Donaldson, Director, Office of Health Review; Grace Grandia, Project Officer, Freedom of Information Commission; Chris Field, WA State Ombudsman; and Sandra Pelham, Investigation Officer, Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Photo: Kalgoorlie Miner

Releasing information

Providing the community with information is vital for demonstrating an open and accountable government. The release of information is often bound by legal restrictions. In situations where an agency is not prohibited by law from releasing information, the chief executive officer (CEO) needs to consider carefully whether or not it should be made public.

OPSSC has developed a guide to assist CEOs when they are considering matters relating to public sector standards that they believe may be in the public interest, but which they are not compelled to release through other provisions.

Information Series 2009-01: In the Public Interest provides an overview of what is public interest information and the issues involved in releasing public interest information. It also includes ten easy steps to consider when releasing information in the public interest.

The OPSSC Information Series is a new suite of guides and fact sheets that relate to matters of official conduct, human resource management and public interest disclosures.

Information Series 2009-01: In the Public Interest is available from the OPSSC website. Visit www.opssc.wa.gov.au

OPSSC update

Agency survey

The WA Public Sector Annual Agency Survey will be available for completion online from Friday 19 June. This year the survey has been further refined to link with the redeveloped Employee Perceptions Survey. Public sector agencies are required to complete and submit the survey by Friday 31 July 2009. It will be available from the OPSSC website www.opssc.wa.gov.au

Professional networks

We have recently established professional networks in the areas of official conduct and public sector standards for public interest disclosure officers (PID officers), human resource managers and senior integrity officers. The networks will provide participants with the opportunity to:

- develop knowledge;
- identify common issues and solutions; and
- share good practice and ideas.

If you would like to join one of the professional networks, please email doug.tomlinson@opssc.wa.gov.au

Parliamentary Series Report Four

The latest Parliamentary Series Report was tabled in State Parliament on 6 May 2009. The report details two cases which examine situations where government agencies failed to follow proper process in recruitment. The report is available at www.opssc.wa.gov.au/publications/reports.htm

PUBLIC SECTOR STANDARDS

Tips for minimising breach claims

Analysis of breach claims processed by OPSSC has shown that providing poor feedback is a leading reason for the lodgement of breach of standards claims by unsuccessful applicants. For tips on providing feedback visit www.opssc.wa.gov.au/documents/breachclaims/tips/june2009.pdf

New Public Sector Standards

We have completed the consultation process for the new Public Sector Standards. Feedback received indicates that the sector is supportive of our move to simplify the standards and the associated processes. We anticipate that the new standards and accompanying resource material will be available in the coming months. We will keep you informed.

OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Conduct Guide for Boards and Committees

The Conduct Guide for Boards and Committees sets out six categories where a public sector board member, executive officer or other officer of the board needs to display the appropriate behaviour and comply with the accountability framework set out in the legislature and by government. The guide, supporting information and sample code of conduct is available at www.opssc.wa.gov.au/publications/ethics.htm

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES

PID Officer register

Under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003*, every public authority is required to have a PID officer to receive disclosures of public interest information. OPSSC maintains a register of all PID officers, which is available at www.opssc.wa.gov.au/documents/pid/contactlist.xls

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Showcasing diversity initiatives

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) is developing a series of case studies about initiatives public authorities have developed and implemented to improve their equity and diversity employment outcomes. The case studies will be available from the OEEO website at www.oeeo.wa.gov.au

Equity and diversity data

Collection of equity and diversity data for 2009 will be commencing soon. Agencies will be able to submit data from 15 June through the national Workforce Analysis and Comparative Application system. All public authorities must submit their data by Friday 24 July 2009. For more information, go to www.dpc.wa.gov.au/PSMD/WorkforcePlanning/Pages/WorkforceInformationSystem.aspx

Diversity Forum

The next OEEO Diversity Forum will showcase strategies developed and implemented by public authorities to enhance employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The forum will be held on Thursday 18 June from 9.00am-12.00 noon. For more information visit www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/diversityforums/2009/index.htm

Supporting disability employment

While the representation for people with disabilities in the public sector workforce exceeds government targets, it is still low in comparison to the Western Australian labour market figures. And while we have come a long way, more can be done by public sector agencies to provide increased opportunities for people with disabilities.



To promote disability employment across the public sector the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (OEEO) has produced a short documentary about Supported Work Teams.

The Supported Work Teams arrangement involves employing a group of people with disabilities who are supported by a field coordinator, employed by a disability employment network provider.

The documentary demonstrates the benefits of employing people with disabilities through such an arrangement, from both the employer and employee perspective.

Acting Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Michael Palermo said there is a need for agencies to look at new ways to employ people with disabilities and Supported Work Teams is a smart way to go.

“Sometimes agencies see employing people with disabilities as a daunting task because they think it may lead to lost productivity or increased workloads for managers,” Mr Palermo said.

“Implementing a Supported Work Team takes some of this pressure away as the field coordinator manages the team”.

“Supported Work Teams are an alternative way to employ people with disabilities,” he said.

The documentary will be launched at the OEEO Diversity Forum on 18 June 2009. Visit www.oeeo.wa.gov.au for more information.

Commissioner's comment

Boards and committees are important to government. When I was running the Disability Services Commission (DSC), our Board helped us to remain in touch with people with disabilities, their families and carers. Barry MacKinnon, who was chair of the DSC Board at that time, was a strong supporter of linking the work of government with the community. His leadership of the DSC Board was essential in keeping the disability community in touch with government.

But while being on a board is rewarding, it also carries its challenges. Being a board member can be difficult, and especially so where people are new to a board or committee.

“It is important that board members understand that their role is not to run the organisation, but to assist in setting and monitoring the strategic direction of the organisation,” Barry said to me recently.

“It is equally important that each board member brings to the board their particular knowledge and skills, but without any personal or organisational conflict issues clouding that input,” he said.

Recently, we put together some information to help Boards and Committees write their own codes of conduct. When we consulted with board and committee members, however, many people told us that a sample code of conduct would be more helpful. The result is a Conduct Guide which contains both a sample code of conduct, and some suggestions for those boards and committees that wish to develop their own.

We have mailed our Conduct Guide for Boards and Committees to a wide range of boards. If you haven't received a copy and would like one, please contact us on (08) 9260 6600, or download the guide and supporting materials from our website at www.opssc.wa.gov.au/publications/ethics.htm

All the best,



Ruth Shean

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