



## Senior staff need high standards

A respected and trusted public sector is a vital component of a robust community. If the community is to have confidence in the sector, public sector employees must act and be seen to act with integrity. This is especially important for people who hold senior leadership positions.

Chief executive officers (CEOs) of public sector agencies depend heavily on their senior staff to act with the highest possible ethical standards. CEOs can only run agencies effectively if they can delegate to senior employees and trust that these employees will maintain high levels of integrity. Where that trust is breached, the reputation of the agency is at risk.

OPSSC Parliamentary Series Report Five highlights the need for people in senior leadership positions to maintain the highest levels of integrity in their professional dealings. The report details the outcome of OPSSC's investigation into alleged improper practice at a government department. Of particular concern was that a senior staff member at the department appeared to have been involved in matters of non-compliance.

Commissioner for Public Sector Standards Dr Ruth Shean said that when individuals who are appointed to senior public sector positions do not act with integrity the reputation of the whole sector is at risk.

"Senior staff in government agencies have an obligation to honour the charge they carry of both duty and trust," Dr Shean said.

"They must maintain high standards of ethical behaviour and act with integrity at all times. To do otherwise damages not only their own reputation, but can also impact on the reputation of their



**Discussing conduct and compliance:**  
Stephanie Boyd and Martin Clifford from OPSSC discuss conduct requirements and Parliamentary Series Report Five.

colleagues, their agency, and the public sector in general."

Dr Shean said the report also highlights the importance of internal audit processes in public sector agencies.

"Internal audit is a significant part of the overall governance framework of public sector agencies.

"It is important that serious consideration is given to understanding the risk profile of agencies. The capacity and capability of internal audit to exercise a level of engagement and scrutiny that matches the agency risk profile then needs to be given consideration.

"This applies equally, regardless of whether the internal audit function is conducted by in-house resources or via a contracted provider."

Parliamentary Series Report Five was tabled in Parliament on 12 August 2009. The report is available from the Publications and Resources section of the OPSSC website under 'Reports'.

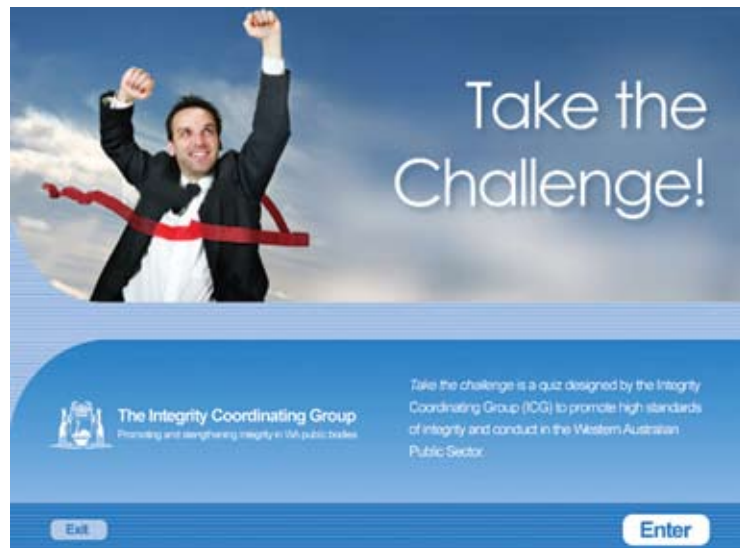
# Integrity put to the test

The ethical behaviour of public sector employees is vital to the public sector securing and sustaining public trust. All public sector employees must be aware of the high standard of behaviour expected of them.

A new tool has been developed by OPSSC on behalf of the Integrity Coordinating Group (ICG) to promote high standards of integrity and conduct in the Western Australian public sector.

'Take the Challenge' is an online quiz which provides a walk through of scenarios based on dilemmas that public sector employees may experience in their everyday working lives. Participants use their knowledge of the principles of official conduct, the Western Australian code of ethics and their agency's code of conduct to make the best choice in each scenario. After a series of questions and different scenarios they are given an overall rating and provided with potential avenues for further information or advice if needed.

Penny Bird, OPSSC's representative on the ICG Working Group, believes Take the Challenge will become a valuable induction tool for new public sector employees, and a useful tool for existing employees to use to refresh their knowledge.



"The challenge provides new employees with valuable insight into how they should act or behave in situations where issues of integrity or ethical conduct may be at stake," Penny said.

"It covers all aspects of ethical conduct, from the code of ethics and agency codes of conduct, through to the public sector standards and how to manage conflicts of interest, all of which are central to maintaining the integrity of the public sector."

Take the Challenge will be launched in October 2009. It will be available from the ICG website at [www.opssc.wa.gov.au/icg](http://www.opssc.wa.gov.au/icg)

## GGG to assist local governments

OPSSC will work in partnership with the Department of Local Government (DLG) to develop a Good Governance Guide (GGG) for local government authorities.

OPSSC developed the GGG for public sector entities as a voluntary guide to help state government agencies assess their governance risks and to design an appropriate framework for accountability.

Jennifer Mathews, Department of Local Government Director General, believes the GGG will become a useful tool for local governments.

"The GGG is a really good initiative and consistent with the focus on governance support that the department will provide to the local government sector in the future," Jennifer said.



**Working together for governance (left - right):** Jennifer Mathews, Department of Local Government Director General; Richard Beavitt, Murdoch University; and Dr Ruth Shean, Commissioner for Public Sector Standards.

Richard Beavitt from Murdoch University will be working with OPSSC and DLG to develop the local government GGG.

## OPSSC update

### New OPSSC website live

The new OPSSC website was launched on 1 July 2009 at [www.opssc.wa.gov.au](http://www.opssc.wa.gov.au). The content of the website has undergone a significant restructure. If you are unable to find what you are looking for on our website, please refer to the sitemap or the publications page. Alternatively send an email to our Website Administrator at [webadmin@opssc.wa.gov.au](mailto:webadmin@opssc.wa.gov.au)

### GGG resources available now

The OPSSC Good Governance Guide (GGG) online maturity model is now available. The maturity model is an interactive tool designed to assist public sector organisations identify their risk profile and assess the state of their current governance framework against the GGG. It also helps agencies plan any future improvements and allows them to compare their own performance over time. More information about the maturity model is available at [www.opssc.wa.gov.au/Good\\_Governance/Maturity\\_Model.php](http://www.opssc.wa.gov.au/Good_Governance/Maturity_Model.php)

Printed GGG support materials are also now available. Requests for the resources can be sent by email to [webadmin@opssc.wa.gov.au](mailto:webadmin@opssc.wa.gov.au)

### Tips for minimising breach claims

Preparing a business case is a recommended procedure for agencies where there is variation to standard practice. Using a business case will reduce the risk of agencies being non-compliant with the standards and increase confidence in the probity of decision making. For tips on preparing a business case for variation to the standards visit [www.opssc.wa.gov.au/Documents/HRM/breach\\_claim\\_tips\\_sept2009.pdf](http://www.opssc.wa.gov.au/Documents/HRM/breach_claim_tips_sept2009.pdf)

### OPSSC and IPAA WA partnership

OPSSC and the WA Division of the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA WA) are working in partnership to facilitate the delivery of a range of professional development opportunities to the public sector. The current initiative focuses on the development of a training package for selection panel members. For further information contact Rebecca Harris by email at [rebecca.harris@opssc.wa.gov.au](mailto:rebecca.harris@opssc.wa.gov.au)

### Annual Agency Survey

The WA Public Sector Annual Agency Survey closed on 31 July 2009. The survey collects information relating to compliance with the general principles of human resource management, the WA Public Sector Code of Ethics, and agency codes of conduct; and informs equity and diversity matters. Data from the survey will be aggregated and reported in our State of the Service Report. For further information contact Paul Morgan by email at [paul.morgan@opssc.wa.gov.au](mailto:paul.morgan@opssc.wa.gov.au)

### New resources

OPSSC has developed a suite of online toolkits to support the standards framework, which is a principles based approach to the public sector standards in human resource management. The toolkits cover appointment, good practice and termination and focus on providing practical support for human resource practitioners and line managers. Each toolkit includes top tips, pitfalls, good practice examples, information sheets and templates. It is anticipated that the toolkits will be available from the OPSSC website in November 2009. For further information contact Rebecca Harris by email at [rebecca.harris@opssc.wa.gov.au](mailto:rebecca.harris@opssc.wa.gov.au)

### Diversity Forum

The next OEEO Diversity Forum will showcase strategies developed and implemented by public authorities to enhance their equity and diversity employment outcomes. The "Strategies at Work" series of case studies will be launched at the forum. The forum will be held on Thursday 17 September 2009 from 9.00am - 12 noon. For further details about the forum visit [www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/diversityforums/2009/index.htm](http://www.oeeo.wa.gov.au/diversityforums/2009/index.htm)

## OPSSC Assist Line

OPSSC can provide you with collective knowledge and expertise on issues relating to human resource management.

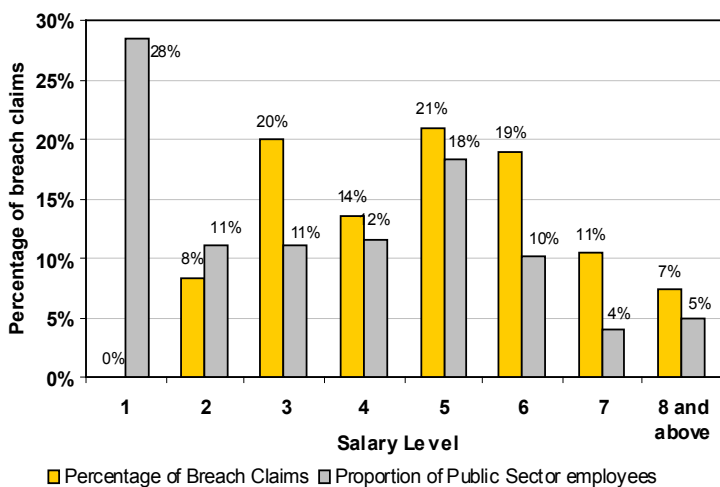
You can use the assist telephone service between 8:30am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday.

**Both country and metropolitan callers can call 1800 676 607 to talk to a Public Sector Practice Consultant.**

## Fewer breach claims for higher levels

Recent research conducted by OPSSC has found that breach claims are proportionally less common for senior positions in the public sector compared to lower positions.

The project looked at breach claims lodged with OPSSC between January and December 2008. For those positions where information on salary was available, only seven percent of breach claims were for level eight or above positions (see figure below).



Dr Chris Stansbury, Director of Public Sector Evaluation and Reporting at OPSSC, said there are a number of reasons why applicants at higher level positions are less likely to lodge a breach of standard claim.

“Applicants for senior public sector positions may perceive that lodging a breach claim could have a negative impact on their career,” Dr Stansbury said.

“They may prefer to follow alternative avenues to lodge a complaint about a recruitment process in an effort to avoid the possibility of this happening.”

In addition to analysing the occurrence of breach of standard claims, the research project also involved a comprehensive audit of recruitment, selection and appointment processes for senior positions in the public sector. The research findings will be published in Parliamentary Series Report Six, which will be released in the coming weeks.

## Commissioner’s comment

We are in the midst of significant change following the recent announcement by the Premier that the roles of Commissioner for Public Sector Standards and Public Sector Commissioner will be merged.

In a report tabled in June of this year, the Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee drew attention to areas of overlap between the two roles and recommended that public sector management be consolidated into a single office. The report also drew attention to the desirability to strengthen the role of Public Sector Commissioner.

Competent oversight of the public sector is essential to give Western Australians confidence in the firm of government. The Premier has guaranteed that any reforms in this area would be protected through direct reporting to the Western Australian State Parliament. This being the case, I see the proposed changes as being entirely positive for the integrity, accountability and effectiveness of the public sector. Any increased independence of reporting for the Public Sector Commissioner will be a positive move for our state and those who serve it.

Structural changes within government are inevitable and indeed desirable. The one thing that must remain paramount throughout such times, however, is accountability. We look forward to working with other key stakeholders on this important reform to ensure that accountability is at the forefront of every consideration.

We are currently working with the Public Sector Commission to plan the future, a key part of which is a review of the Public Sector Management Act.

In the meantime OPSSC will continue to fulfil our functions as specified within the Public Sector Management Act. We will continue to do this with energy, independence and integrity.

All the best,

Ruth Shean.