

Principal Officer roles

Departmental Secretaries, Chief Executive Officers and other heads of Australian government agencies and Commonwealth companies play a key role under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act) as principal officers.

A principal officer needs to:

- appoint a sufficient number of authorised officers to receive disclosures in the agency
- ensure the authorised officers are readily accessible to current and former public officials and contracted service providers who belong to the agency
- establish written PID procedures for the agency and ensure these are accessible for current and former public officials and contractors who belong to the agency
- broadly promote the PID scheme to public officials and contracted service providers as a safe and effective way to speak up about wrongdoing
- promptly act to address allegations of wrongdoing by public officials
- delegate only those powers and responsibilities as are necessary for the effective operation of the PID scheme
- influence an organisational culture that supports public officials who speak up about wrongdoing and does not tolerate reprisal against them
- drive change to address problems uncovered through the investigation of disclosures made under the PID Act.

Agency head (principal officer) [resources](#) includes the following:

- Information sheet - Responsibilities of principal officers
- Guide - Agency guide to the Public Interest Disclosure Act
- NEW - Public Interest Disclosure Scheme Reference Guide - setting out key actions for officers with a role in the PID scheme
- FAQs

Authorised Officer roles

Authorised officers are public officials working within Australian Government agencies who have been appointed to accept public interest disclosures (PID) about their agency, and from the officials who belong to it. Under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act), authorised officers have the responsibility for receiving, assessing and allocating PIDs.

Authorised officers must be appointed in writing by the head of the agency (the principal officer). There must be sufficient authorised officers who are accessible to current and former public officials to make a PID. Information about how to make contact with authorised officers should be easy to find on an agency's internal and external facing website.

Authorised officers need to:

- provide advice to public officials about the PID process, including how to make a PID, how the protections and immunities apply, and the reprisal risk assessment process
- assess all allegations of wrongdoing under the PID Act and decide if they constitute a PID (making preliminary enquiries to inform decision making as appropriate)
- obtain consent to disclose the public official's name and contact details for the purpose of handling the PID and adhere to the PID Act confidentiality and secrecy requirements
- identify and address any possible conflict of interests that may affect the handling of the PID
- allocate the PID to the principal officer or an appropriately delegated PID investigator
- notify the public official, the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the principal officer if the matter is a PID and of the allocation decision
- make appropriate records of their decision making.

Note: authorised officers may also have a role in conducting a reprisal risk assessment - this should be outlined in an agency's PID procedures.

Authorised officer [resources](#) includes the following:

- Information sheet - Role of Authorised Officers
- Guide - Agency guide to the Public Interest Disclosure Act
- Forms - notification of allocation form
- FAQs

PID Investigating Officer roles

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (PID Act) requires agency heads (principal officers) to investigate PIDs. The investigation function may be delegated to a public official within the principal officer's agency.

Officers charged with the responsibility for investigating PIDs should:

- promptly inform the discloser that their PID is being investigated and the estimated length of the investigation, and explain the investigation powers and discretions to not investigate in the PID Act
- identify and address any possible conflict of interests
- investigate and make enquiries as they see fit in relation to the disclosable conduct
- ensure their investigation complies with the PID Act (Part 3) and the PID Standards (Part 3)
 - comply with procedures under s 15(3) of the Public Service Act 1999 or s 15(3) of the Parliamentary Service Act 1999 if investigating alleged breaches of the relevant Code of Conduct,
 - comply with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Policy and Australian Government Investigation Standards if investigating allegations of fraud in non-corporate Commonwealth entities,
- ensure procedural fairness is observed
- adhere to the PID Act confidentiality and secrecy requirements
- alert the responsible officers if they become aware of any reprisal risks
- communicate with the discloser about the investigation process and keep them informed of progress, particularly if there are delays
- comply with the time frame of 90 days to complete a PID investigation (or seek an extension of time from the Commonwealth Ombudsman or IGIS if required)
- produce a written report on outcome of the investigation
- prepare a copy of the report for the discloser - consider whether deletions are appropriate (s 51(5) of the PID Act)
- provide a copy of the report to the discloser - within a reasonable period after the investigation was finalised
- ensure appropriate records are made throughout the investigation process
- ensure records are appropriately classified and stored so that only officers that are authorised either by the PID Act or another law of the Commonwealth can access the PID information.

PID investigation officer [resources](#) includes the following:

- Legislation - *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*
- Legislation - Public Interest Disclosure Standard
- Guide - Agency guide to the Public Interest Disclosure Act
- NEW - Public Interest Disclosure Scheme Reference Guide - setting out key actions for officers with a role in the PID scheme
- Forms - notification of decision not to investigate
- Forms - request for extension of time
- FAQs