



# Case study – Operation Wyong and Operation Denmark

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IBAC investigated two matters in relation to the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) involving allegations of bribery or attempted bribery to obtain allocation of preferred grave sites.

## Background

In 2013, IBAC received a notification alleging that a member of the public had offered a bribe to an employee of the GMCT to secure scarce multiple grave sites for their family at a suburban Melbourne cemetery. IBAC undertook an investigation, Operation Wyong, to determine whether there was any evidence supporting the allegations.

In late 2015, IBAC received a notification alleging that another member of the public had offered bribes to GMCT employees in return for allocating a grave site at a particular cemetery. It was alleged that, after several GMCT employees refused the bribes, another staff member facilitated the transaction and accepted money from the member of the public. IBAC commenced Operation Denmark to investigate the allegations.

## What were the outcomes?

### Operation Wyong

As a result of Operation Wyong, the Office of Public Prosecutions brought charges against a member of the public alleged to have offered the bribe. In December 2014 that individual pleaded guilty to the charge of attempting to bribe a public official. They were convicted and fined \$10,000.

The IBAC investigation did not identify corrupt practices by GMCT employees, however there were a number of deficiencies with GMCT's policies and procedures. These included discrepancies in various records maintained by GMCT, outdated record keeping practices, poor employee knowledge of administrative policies, and poor internal reporting processes. IBAC brought these issues to the attention of GMCT to assist the agency in reducing its vulnerability to corruption.

GMCT committed to improving its systems and practices by:

- developing a records management strategy, supported by records management staff
- implementing a new, consolidated finance, cemetery and asset management system

- transferring historical hard copy records to an electronic database
- updating and implementing staff training on GMCT policies and procedures, and ethical conduct
- improving recruitment processes.

### Operation Denmark

Operation Denmark concluded there was no evidence that the GMCT employee had accepted money to facilitate the grave purchase. However, IBAC identified that high demand for grave sites (a limited resource) is a contributory factor to attempted bribery of cemetery employees. This will continue to be a corruption vulnerability for GMCT which should have systems and controls in place to mitigate the risk, including a formal policy for determining grave allocation.

## Lessons learned, challenges and outtakes

Operation Wyong resulted in the successful prosecution of a person who attempted to bribe a public official. More broadly, both IBAC investigations demonstrated opportunities for GMCT to strengthen its policies, systems and practices to prevent corruption.

In Operation Denmark, the employee who was alleged to have accepted money in return for allocating a particular grave site, had refused an offer of money but did not complete a declaration of the gift offer and refusal, as required by GMCT's gifts, benefits and hospitality policy.

IBAC recommended that GMCT review and strengthen its policies and procedures to address the corruption vulnerabilities identified in Operation Denmark. In October 2017, GMCT advised of action taken to address these vulnerabilities including strengthening its gifts, benefits and hospitality policy, and developing new controls around the allocation of graves.

## Vulnerabilities and prevention measures

IBAC identified the following vulnerabilities and prevention measures as a result of Operations Wyong and Denmark. Public sector agencies, and other bodies can effectively mitigate the risk of corruption by identifying if they are susceptible to these vulnerabilities and undertaking appropriate prevention measures.

Issue	Vulnerability	Prevention measures:
Attempted bribery of a public officer	<p>Attempts of bribery can adversely affect the honest performance of individuals and the organisation as a whole</p> <hr/> <p>Heightened risk for those staff who do not have adequate induction and/or regular exposure to relevant policies, procedures and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate corruption prevention policies and procedures in place including appropriate controls around bribery</li> <li>• Tailor training on corruption prevention policies and procedures to suit various roles within the organisation</li> </ul>
Lack of written policy and procedures	<p>When an organisation manages the distribution or sale of a scarce and high demand resource, staff need to be consistent in the application of policy regarding the allocation and sale of the resource</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review policies and procedures to identify and address gaps</li> <li>• Ensure staff are aware of, and understand, relevant policies</li> </ul>
Internal reporting systems	<p>Limited awareness and clarity of reporting processes regarding suspected corrupt conduct</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and awareness of internal reporting structures, including protected disclosure policies and procedures (as required under the <i>Protected Disclosure Act 2012</i>)</li> <li>• Build a strong reporting culture, including support strategies for staff and awareness of the protections afforded under the <i>Protected Disclosure Act 2012</i></li> </ul>
Outdated record keeping and inadequate document management	<p>Inconsistencies and discrepancies between various record keeping systems</p> <hr/> <p>Reliance on outdated and restrictive paper recording systems</p> <hr/> <p>Storing of electronic information without back-up or networked abilities</p> <hr/> <p>Inability to access all relevant documents and material for information, storage and disposal purposes</p> <hr/> <p>Failure to properly record offers of gifts, benefits, and hospitality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate records management strategies and systems in place (following <a href="#">Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) standards</a>)</li> <li>• Training and awareness of organisational records management and general records management standards (modules available on the <a href="#">PROV website</a>)</li> <li>• Random audits of all document management systems, to check for correlation across systems</li> <li>• Ensure staff are trained on gifts, benefits and hospitality policy including the requirement that all offers must be recorded regardless of whether or not they are accepted</li> </ul>

## Useful links and information

In October 2017, GMCT advised of action taken to address the issues identified in Operation Denmark:

**[www.ibac.vic.gov.au/docs/default-source/responses/GMCT-response-to-operation-denmark.pdf](http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au/docs/default-source/responses/GMCT-response-to-operation-denmark.pdf)**

Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) standards

**[www.prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/about-standards-framework-policies](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/about-standards-framework-policies)**

Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) online recordkeeping training

**[www.prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/learning-resources-tools/online-recordkeeping-training](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/recordkeeping-government/learning-resources-tools/online-recordkeeping-training)**

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IBAC is Victoria's anti-corruption agency responsible for preventing and exposing public sector corruption and police misconduct. We do this by:

- investigating serious corruption and police misconduct
- informing the public sector, police and the community about the risks and impacts of corruption and police misconduct, and ways in which it can be prevented.

To find out how to report corruption, visit **[www.ibac.vic.gov.au](http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au)** or call **1300 735 135**.

If you need help with translation, call Translating and Interpreting Service on **13 14 50** or visit **[www.ibac.vic.gov.au/general/accessibility/tr](http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au/general/accessibility/tr)**

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