



Key findings

Perceptions of corruption: Victorian local government employees

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About this research

In late 2016, IBAC conducted research on perceptions of corruption. An online questionnaire was sent to a representative sample of council CEOs for distribution to their employees.

Responses were received from 1019 local government employees, most of whom worked in office-based roles.

The full report is available on the IBAC website.

Integrity and awareness

- Victorian local government employees overwhelmingly agreed *behaving with honesty and integrity is important* (98 per cent of respondents agreed with this statement).
- 84 per cent agreed they know what constitutes corrupt behaviour.
- Corruption was more likely to be seen as something that occurs outside people's workplaces, that is, as something that *happens in Victoria* (56 per cent) rather than as a *problem in my workplace* (12 per cent).

'My view is a general one. I am not aware [of corruption] in my organisation or the immediate ones I deal with. But I think if there is a problem elsewhere, it would be a problem here. Risk and temptation are the same here ... my community is not immune.'

Risk of corruption

- Four behaviours – *conflict of interest, misuse of information or material, hiring of friends or family and abuse of discretion* – were identified as the areas of highest corruption risk by local government employees.
- 67 per cent felt there was an opportunity for *conflict of interest* to occur in their local council. Only 37 per cent suspected it had occurred and even fewer had observed it (20 per cent).
- Local government respondents were generally more likely to agree there were opportunities for potential corrupt behaviours to occur, than to agree they had ever suspected or witnessed such behaviours in their workplace.
- 45 per cent had not observed any of the examples provided of corrupt behaviours in their workplace, and 8 per cent did not believe there was an opportunity for any of the behaviours to occur in their workplace.

Key findings

Reporting corruption

- Social and moral beliefs are strong drivers to reporting. 84 per cent of local government employees agreed that *reporting corruption is the right thing to do* and 78 per cent agreed they would report corruption *because it impacts the Victorian community*.
- Barriers to reporting, caused by lack of awareness of the process or concern about potential career and personal costs, have a direct impact on the willingness to report corruption.
- 41 per cent of local government employees agreed they confidently know *how to report corruption*.
- However, confidence in the levels of protection provided to people who report corruption was low:
 - 28 per cent felt that they would experience personal repercussions
 - 20 per cent thought they could lose their job

'I believe that status and employment would be affected. I have felt that this would be a barrier to reporting corruption as it may hinder future employment in or outside the government sector.'

- 49 per cent of local government employees said they would report corruption only if they knew their report would be anonymous.
- Less than half of respondents felt their council would take meaningful action if they reported corruption (40 per cent).

'Nothing gets done about corruption if it is exposed. Just a slap on the wrist, no penalty for offenders.'

Organisational support

- Local councils were generally perceived as workplaces where people are encouraged to act with honesty and integrity:
 - Most respondents agreed their direct supervisor would be supportive *if they chose to report corruption* (71 per cent)
 - 74 per cent agreed *their organisation encourages people to act with honesty and integrity*.
- Support for corruption prevention activities run by local councils was strong (85 per cent).
- Just over half agreed that their *organisation has strong corruption prevention policies in place* (52 per cent).
- Only 27 per cent of local government employees agreed that their council *regularly communicates about reporting corruption*.

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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 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