

Governance Charter

Governance arrangements
for the Victorian Ombudsman

July 2026

Contents

1	Purpose.....	3
2	About the Victorian Ombudsman.....	4
3	External governance arrangements	5
3.1	Operational	5
3.1.1	Direction.....	5
3.1.2	Oversight.....	7
3.1.3	Accountability	10
3.2	Financial, asset, resource and risk management.....	11
3.2.1	Direction.....	11
3.2.2	Oversight.....	12
3.2.3	Accountability	12
3.3	People management and integrity	13
3.3.1	Direction.....	13
3.3.2	Oversight.....	14
3.3.3	Accountability	14
3.4	Information handling	15
3.4.1	Direction.....	15
3.4.2	Oversight.....	15
3.4.3	Accountability	15
4	Internal governance arrangements	16
4.1	Internal direction.....	16
4.2	Internal oversight	22
4.3	Internal accountability	24
5	Document history	25

1 Purpose

This Charter informs the Victorian community and other stakeholders of the Victorian Ombudsman's governance arrangements.

The Charter seeks to ensure transparency and understanding of how the Victorian Ombudsman is directed, overseen and held accountable, both internally and externally.

The Charter includes descriptions of our organisation's:

- establishing legislation and other key legal frameworks
- role within the Victorian integrity system
- relationship with the Victorian Parliament and its parliamentary committees and oversight bodies, executive government, the Victorian public sector and the Victorian community
- strategies, governance policies, decision-making structures, internal oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Where there is any inconsistency between this Charter and any documents that it refers to, then those documents have precedence over this Charter. If any document referred to in this Charter is amended, then this Charter should be interpreted as referring to the amended document.

2 About the Victorian Ombudsman

Established in 1973, the Victorian Ombudsman resolves complaints about the administrative actions of government departments, public sector agencies and local councils. We do this through:

- facilitating, enquiring into, conciliating and investigating complaints about an action or decision made by Victorian public bodies
- proactively assisting Victorian public bodies to improve their administration and complaint handling practices
- preventing maladministration and improper conduct
- educating the community and public sector about matters related to its work.

3 External governance arrangements

Our external governance includes various legislative frameworks, parliamentary and integrity body oversight and accountability, and its relationships with executive government, the Victorian public sector and the Victorian community.

3.1 Operational

The Victorian Ombudsman's operations refer to the day-to-day management and execution of its core integrity functions within the boundaries of its legislative remit and government policy.

3.1.1 Direction

The Victorian Ombudsman is a constitutionally independent officer reporting to Parliament, governed by the *Ombudsman Act 1973*. While the government influences resources and appointments, the Ombudsman acts independently of the executive. Legislation defines its legal framework, while stakeholder feedback helps inform its strategic direction.

Establishing legislation

Constitution Act 1975 (Constitution Act)

The Constitution Act is the fundamental law establishing the framework for democracy and responsible government in Victoria, outlining the powers and structures for the Crown, Parliament, judiciary and executive. Under the Constitution Act, the Victorian Ombudsman is established as an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament.

Ombudsman Act 1973 (Ombudsman Act)

The Ombudsman Act establishes a Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, called the Ombudsman, who has all the powers and functions under that legislation.¹ This Act is the primary source of the Victorian Ombudsman's authority, objectives, functions and jurisdiction.

Objectives

Section 2A of the Ombudsman Act defines the Ombudsman's objectives:

- (a) to provide a timely, efficient, effective, flexible and independent means of resolving complaints about administrative action of authorities
- (b) to provide for the identification, investigation, exposure and prevention of maladministration
- (c) to assist in the identification, investigation, exposure and prevention of improper conduct and corrupt conduct
- (d) to assist in improving the quality of administration and complaint-handling practices and procedures of authorities
- (e) to facilitate the education of the Victorian community and public sector about matters relating to the functions of the Ombudsman.

¹ Ombudsman Act, s 3(1).

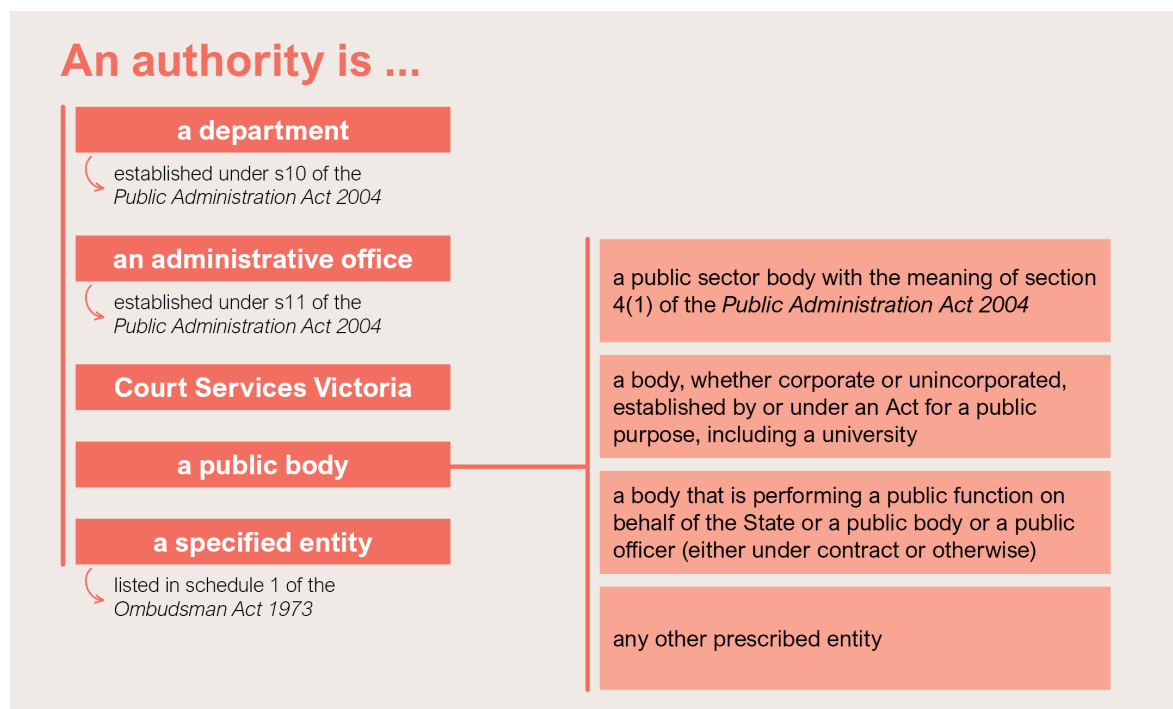
Functions

Section 13 and 13AA of the Ombudsman Act establish the Ombudsman's functions, being to resolve complaints, enquire into or investigate administrative action, investigate public interest complaints, review complaint practices and procedures of authorities, provide education and training to the community and public sector, and promote improved public sector administration.

Jurisdiction

The Ombudsman has jurisdiction over an 'authority' – defined under section 2 of the Ombudsman Act as a department, administrative office, Court Services Victoria, a public body or a specified entity. Figure 1 summarises the Victorian Ombudsman's jurisdictional reach.

Figure 1: The Victorian Ombudsman's jurisdiction



An authority does not include a councillor of a council or an exempt person or body as specified in Schedule 2 of the Ombudsman Act, which include: chief examiner and examiners; IBAC; various legal bodies; the Office of the Governor; oversight bodies (Integrity Oversight Victoria (IOV); the Public Interest Monitor); various parliamentary bodies; trustees; Victorian Auditor-General; Victorian Electoral Commission and Electoral Boundaries Commission; and Victoria Police and members of Victoria Police personnel.

Other legislation

Some other legislation directs the Victorian Ombudsman's operations:

<i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> (Human Rights Charter)	The Ombudsman is obliged to ensure her decisions respect and comply with human rights. Under the Human Rights Charter, the Ombudsman also acts as a human rights guardian, complaint handler and investigator, assessing whether public bodies properly consider and uphold Charter rights in their actions and decisions.
<i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012</i> (PID Act)	The Ombudsman must receive, assess and investigate complaints referred from IBAC that show or tend to show improper conduct or detrimental action.
<i>Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011</i> (IBAC Act)	The Ombudsman refers corruption matters to IBAC and investigates public interest complaints about improper conduct or detrimental action in the public sector referred by IBAC.
<i>Integrity Oversight Victoria Act 2011</i> (IOV Act)	The IOV Act establishes IOV to provide independent oversight of other integrity, accountability and investigatory bodies, including the Ombudsman.
<i>Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003</i>	This Act requires the Ombudsman to be notified when a preventative detention order or prohibited contact order is made, and if a person is taken into custody. We can receive complaints and make representations to a nominated senior police officer about a person's treatment in connection with their detention.
<i>Corrections Act 1986</i>	Under the Act, the Ombudsman investigates complaints about Corrections Victoria and prison management, including private prisons.

External stakeholders

The Victorian Ombudsman is not directed by external stakeholders, but we engage with public sector bodies, the community and other stakeholders to listen, build trust and proactively share insights. Meaningful engagement at all levels ensures our work is responsive, relevant and built on shared accountability for better outcomes.

3.1.2 Oversight

Parliament

The Parliament has conferred powers on the Victorian Ombudsman by legislating certain powers and functions. Beyond this, the relationship between the Ombudsman and Parliament can be described as independent and accountable. The Ombudsman has complete discretion in the use of her functions or powers and is accountable to the public and Parliament via the Integrity Oversight Committee (IOC).

The Victorian integrity system

The Victorian Ombudsman is a part of the Victorian integrity system which exists so that the community can have confidence in the actions and decisions of government, the public sector and Victoria Police. It is comprised of several agencies, each with a distinct role (see Figure 2). The agencies have inter-connected functions and an overarching shared responsibility for protecting integrity in the public sector.²

Figure 2: The Victorian integrity system

Oversight bodies	Victorian Parliamentary committees, IOV and the Public Interest Monitor provide oversight of integrity agencies.	
Integrity agencies		The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) exposes and prevents public sector corruption and police misconduct
		The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) oversees and regulates how the public sector collects, uses, and discloses public information
		The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) provides independent assurance on the financial integrity and performance of the state and public sector
		Victorian Ombudsman inquires into and investigates the fairness of public sector decisions and actions.
Other agencies	Other agencies support Victoria's integrity system, including the Local Government Inspectorate (LGI) and commissioners for the Victorian public sector, Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission (PWSIC) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.	

Parliamentary Committees

A parliamentary committee consists of a group of members of either House (or both in the case of joint committees) appointed by one or both Houses of Parliament. The main purpose of parliamentary committees is to conduct inquiries into specified matters and report the findings and recommendations to Parliament. The Parliament of Victoria's joint committee – IOC – plays an important oversight role in the state's integrity system.

² IBAC (2016) Safeguarding integrity. A guide to the integrity system in Victoria

IOC

IOC is a joint parliamentary committee, that is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Victorian Ombudsman and IBAC, IOV, OVIC and PWSIC.

In relation to Victorian Ombudsman, IOC can:

- examine reports we have produced, including annual reports and budgets
- report to Parliament on our performance of duties and functions
- undertake inquiries into issues related to our work and make recommendations for improvement
- review our draft annual plans and budgets
- recommend the appointment of an independent performance auditor to coordinate a performance audit of the Victorian Ombudsman, at least once every four years
- receive complaints about us.

IOC does not have the power to investigate complaints about the Victorian Ombudsman and is also prohibited from reconsidering the Ombudsman's decisions, findings or recommendations.

Other oversight bodies

IOV

IOV is responsible for overseeing the integrity, accountability and investigatory bodies and their officers. It receives, assesses and, where appropriate, investigates complaints made about the Victorian Ombudsman. IOV has the authority to receive and assess complaints about the conduct of Victorian Ombudsman officers; investigate conduct; monitor our use of coercive powers and our compliance with procedural fairness; and review PID procedures.

Public Interest Monitor

The Victorian Ombudsman sometimes needs to use its coercive powers to collect evidence as part of their investigations, which can affect a person's privacy and civil liberties. Under the *Public Interest Monitor Act 2011*, the Public Interest Monitor scrutinises applications for coercive powers prior to judge approval, testing the evidence and questioning witnesses to ensure compliance with legal and public interest standards.

3.1.3 Accountability

Accountability is the obligation to fulfill responsibilities, make decisions, explain outcomes and, where appropriate, face consequences for failure. The Victorian Ombudsman remains accountable by transparently reporting to Parliament and the public, and subjecting its performance and decisions to oversight inquiries, media scrutiny and community evaluation.

Public reporting

The Victorian Ombudsman tables its annual plans and annual reports in Parliament. Annual reports include audited financial statements, commentary on the implementation of its annual plan, compliance disclosures and results against performance targets, helping the public understand the office's efficiency and effectiveness.

Public inquiries and reports

Representatives from the Victorian Ombudsman's office can be called to appear before PAEC during inquiries, to provide information and answer questions about agency conduct and recommendations.

IOC annually reviews the Victorian Ombudsman's operations, budgets and compliance through public hearings. Every four years, IOC conducts independent audits to ensure parliamentary accountability, tabling reports and tracking recommendations.

In relation to complaints it receives about the Victorian Ombudsman, IOV may report on and make recommendations, including on proposed actions and whether further investigation or enforcement action should be taken by other agencies.

The media

For the Victorian Ombudsman, the media draws attention to integrity issues within our jurisdiction and amplifies the reach of our work, educates the community about our services, contributes to policy change and enables public scrutiny of agencies' progress to implement recommendations, while ensuring the organisation itself remains transparent and trusted.

Community and stakeholders

To maintain stakeholder and community trust, the Victorian Ombudsman monitors feedback and ensures our oversight mechanisms are accessible and transparent. Further, through its work, the Victorian Ombudsman helps to identify systemic issues and drive continuous administrative improvements.

3.2 Financial, asset, resource and risk management

3.2.1 Direction

The Victorian Ombudsman has discretion as to how it uses its resources but, in doing so, must comply with the *Financial Management Act 1994* and associated directions, instructions, frameworks and policies for financial, asset, resource and risk management.

Financial Management Act 1994

The Financial Management Act sets rules for public sector financial management, including specific rules for procurement, financial planning (including medium- to long-term forward estimates), and financial reporting, supported by Standing Directions and Instructions. It defines roles for financial accountability, ensuring compliance with standards.

Standing Directions 2018 (Standing Directions) and Instructions

The Minister of Finance issues Standing Directions under the Financial Management Act. Under the Standing Directions, the Ombudsman is both the ‘responsible body’ and the ‘accountable officer’ and is responsible for the requirements under Directions 2.2 and 2.3. Instructions supplement the Standing Directions and provide more detailed mandatory requirements, processes and procedures designed for specific areas of risk.

Financial Reporting Directions

The Minister for Finance also issues Financial Reporting Directions established by the Financial Management Act. The Victorian Ombudsman must adhere to prescribed accounting treatments and disclosures of financial transactions and non-financial reporting in circumstances where there are choices in accounting treatment, or in the absence of guidance and/or requirements in existing accounting pronouncements.

Associated government frameworks

The Victorian Ombudsman’s approach to asset, resource, financial and risk management is aligned to relevant government frameworks, policies, principles and guidelines:

- The **Asset Management Accountability Framework** sets mandatory requirements for managing our physical and intangible assets but is non-prescriptive, allowing flexibility while requiring attestations of compliance in annual reports.
- The **Resource Management Framework** guides our financial management, budgeting, planning and accountability. It details requirements for funding models, outputs, performance measures and reporting, and incorporates related frameworks for risk, project and information management.
- **Victorian Government procurement policies** provide a framework for efficient, strategic procurement of goods and services, requiring the Victorian Ombudsman to scale its approach to procurement complexity and risk.
- The **Victorian Government Risk Management Framework** sets mandatory minimum requirements for risk management, mandating risk management processes, to ensure value creation and protection for objectives.

3.2.2 Oversight

Minister for Finance and the Department of Treasury and Finance

Each financial year, the Victorian Ombudsman must submit its Departmental Performance Statement, including its objectives, objective indicators and Budget Paper 3 (BP3) output performance measures and targets directly to the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Victorian Ombudsman also submits Output Performance Reports on results to the department twice each year.

VAGO

The Auditor-General plays a role in overseeing the Victorian Ombudsman's financial management. It has authority to undertake annual financial audits and periodic performance audits, ensuring that we are accountable for our effectiveness and use of public funds.

3.2.3 Accountability

Oversight and other bodies can conduct audits, hold inquiries and issue public reports on the Victorian Ombudsman's performance and compliance. There are a range of accountability mechanisms in place:

VAGO audit opinions and reports

Following its annual audit of our financial statements, VAGO issues an 'audit opinion' which is published alongside the financial statements in the Victorian Ombudsman's annual report. The audit opinion provides independent assurance to Parliament and the public that the Victorian Ombudsman's financial reports are reliable, presented fairly and comply with accounting standards, ensuring accountability and transparency in the use of public money, and identifying opportunities for improved financial management.

Attestations of compliance

Attestations of compliance are formal statements the Victorian Ombudsman makes, either in annual reports or to oversight bodies, to confirm we have met legislative, policy and financial management requirements. Attestations include compliance with Standing Directions and the Asset Management and Accountability Framework.

Departmental Performance Statements and Output Performance Reports

The Victorian Ombudsman's Departmental Performance Statement describes how public money is intended to be spent, detailing our objectives, planned outputs (services), and performance measures and targets. This information is consolidated into the State Budget Papers (*Budget Paper 3: Service delivery*), tabled in Parliament and published on the Victorian Government's Budget website.

The Victorian Ombudsman submits Output Performance Reports on results twice-yearly to the Department of Treasury and Finance, and we also publish results in our annual report, which is tabled in Parliament. This allows Parliament and the community to see how well we are meeting government expectations, driving improvement and linking funding to results.

3.3 People management and integrity

3.3.1 Direction

The *Public Administration Act 2004* (PAA) and associated values, principles, codes, agreements, policies and guidelines direct the Victorian Ombudsman's people management practices by establishing requirements for employment and officer behaviours and conduct.

PAA

The PAA governs the Victorian public sector, ensuring integrity and effective management via the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC), which enforces standards. While the Ombudsman Act exempts the Victorian Ombudsman from the PAA, our employees are bound by the PAA, and the Ombudsman serves as a Special Body Head.

Public sector values

The PAA outlines the public sector values (responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership, human rights), which guide behaviour alongside the employment principles and code of conduct for special bodies.

Employment principles

These principles in the PAA complement the public sector values and require the Victorian Ombudsman to ensure its employment decisions are based on merit, its employees are treated fairly and equally, it upholds human rights under the Charter, it provides redress for unfair treatment, and it maintains a focus on developing public service careers.

Code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees of special bodies

The code of conduct requires the employees of the Victorian Ombudsman to uphold the public sector values. Compliance is a condition of employment, and breaches of the behavioural standards may lead to disciplinary action.

Associated government policies

- **Victorian Public Sector Enterprise Agreement 2024** is legally binding and defines employment conditions, pay, leave and workplace policies for the Victorian Ombudsman's non-executive employees. It is supported by non-binding common policies, which provide practical guidance on applying the agreement.
- **VPSC model policies** provide standardised guidelines for public entities to help them implement consistent integrity, conduct and governance standards. The policies set minimum accountabilities for managing gifts, benefits and hospitality, which apply to all public officials and all public sector organisations.
- **Appointment and remuneration guidelines** establish standard processes for appointing people to government boards, councils and similar entities, focusing on integrity, fairness and diversity, with principles covering skills, experience, representation and remuneration for consistency and transparency.

- **Pre-employment and misconduct screening policies** are mandated by VPSC for Victorian public sector bodies. These policies seek to ensure the integrity of candidates and their suitability for the role, while protecting natural justice and fairly assessing risk.

3.3.2 Oversight

Two bodies play a role in overseeing the Victorian Ombudsman's people management practices and the conduct of Victorian Ombudsman officers – IOV and IOC.

IOV

IOV is responsible for overseeing Victoria's integrity, accountability and investigatory bodies and their officers. It assesses and, where appropriate, investigates complaints it receives about the Victorian Ombudsman. IOV has the authority to receive and assess complaints about the conduct of Victorian Ombudsman officers and investigate conduct.

IOC

IOC can undertake inquiries into the Victorian Ombudsman's work, facilitate performance audits and make improvement recommendations. Previous performance audits have considered the Victorian Ombudsman's people management processes, workforce suitability and capability.

3.3.3 Accountability

VPSC

To promote transparency, VPSC publishes the Victorian Ombudsman's People Matter Survey results on its website each year. The Victorian Ombudsman must report to VPSC annually on a range of employee-related data such as organisational composition and performance-related payments.

Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector

The Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, established under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, promotes and oversees workplace gender equality across Victoria. As a defined entity, the Victorian Ombudsman must comply with the Act by submitting progress reports and data.

Publishing registers of gifts, benefits and hospitality and executive travel

The Victorian Ombudsman must publish these registers on its website to ensure transparency, build public trust and uphold integrity. Publishing these registers allows public scrutiny of how executives and employees manage potential conflicts of interest, ensuring decisions are not swayed by personal gain, and demonstrating responsible use of public resources.

IOV recommendations

IOV may report on complaints it receives and make recommendations, including on proposed actions and whether further investigation or enforcement action should be taken by other agencies, such as Victoria Police or the Director of Public Prosecutions.

3.4 Information handling

3.4.1 Direction

Two key pieces of legislation direct the Victorian Ombudsman's information handling practices.

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (PDP Act)

The PDP Act governs how Victorian public sector agencies handle personal information, establishing rules through 10 Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) and setting up Protective Data Security Standards (VPDSS) to protect individuals' information, with OVIC as the regulator. The Victorian Ombudsman must comply with the IPPs, unless there are exceptions for doing so, and ensure that we and our contractors do not act or engage in a practice that contravenes VPDSS.

Victorian Protective Data Security Framework and VPDSS

OVIC establishes and issues the Victorian Protective Data Security Framework and VPDSS, under the PDP Act. The framework sets the overall direction, while the VPDSS provide 12 high-level mandatory requirements for agencies to implement security measures, ensuring data protection throughout its life cycle. VPDSS requirements align with national standards like *ISO 27001 Information Security Management System*, to manage threats like cyber attacks and data theft.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act)

The FOI Act gives the public the right to access documents held by the Victorian Ombudsman, subject to section 29A of the Ombudsman Act, and allows individuals to request amendments to the personal information we hold. OVIC oversees this process, providing guidance and handling complaints. The Ombudsman, as Principal Officer under the FOI Act, has responsibilities, specific obligations and associated professional standards.

3.4.2 Oversight

Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC)

OVIC is the primary regulator for Victorian public sector privacy, data security and FOI. It oversees the Ombudsman's information handling practices and compliance with privacy and data security requirements, and can receive complaints about privacy and information breaches, conduct audits, investigate potential breaches and provide guidance on the IPPs.

3.4.3 Accountability

Every two years, the Victorian Ombudsman must undertake a self-assessment of its compliance with the VPDSS and attest to OVIC. The Victorian Ombudsman must report certain types of information security incidents to OVIC and any privacy breaches that fall under its security standards or other specific obligations. OVIC can enforce the FOI and PDP Acts through VCAT intervention, issuing compliance notices for serious breaches, and facilitating resolution of privacy complaints via conciliation.

4 Internal governance arrangements

Because the Ombudsman cannot manage all required tasks alone, she may delegate authority to staff; however, she retains ultimate accountability. To ensure staff act appropriately and meet standards, we maintain an enterprise governance framework, which describes mechanisms and key governance functions to support good decision making and management.

4.1 Internal direction

Subject to the Ombudsman Act and other Victorian laws, the Ombudsman has complete discretion in the performance or exercise of her functions or powers.³ This discretion is applied through our strategies, governance policies and decision making structures, which collectively direct the use of resources, areas of focus and ways of working.

Strategies and plans

The Victorian Ombudsman's [Strategic plan 2025–29](#) provides high-level direction to staff by outlining the office's long-term vision, strategic objectives and desired outcomes.

Vision	Victoria is fair
Strategic themes	Our prevention: Proactive education and engagement Our oversight: Independent and considered approach Our communities: Trusted and effective services Our people and systems: A capable and future-focused organisation
Outcomes	We are respected stewards for good public administration and integrity We have a lasting impact on fairness, equity and integrity in Victoria Our role and services are well known, accessible and valuable We are capable, curious and collaborative. Our systems are resilient and scalable.

Our annual plans guide resource allocation, decision-making, and performance tracking. Each year, the annual planning process sets deliverables and targets for a financial year, to translate our strategic plan into action, ensuring teams are aligned, accountable and focused on achieving specific priorities.

³ Section 94E (6) Constitution Act 1975 (Vic)

Values

The Victorian Ombudsman's values support a constructive culture. Alongside the public sector values under the PAA, our values act as a compass for how employees work together and with others. The descriptors provide guiding principles about expected behaviours and decision making, with both an internal and external focus.

Value	Descriptor
Fairness	We pursue fairness in our work. We keep people at the centre of decision making and seek to address inequity. We treat each other and everyone with dignity, respect and compassion.
Impact	We make intentional choices to bring about meaningful and enduring change. We work with those we oversight to develop innovative solutions to improve the lives of Victorians. We bring creativity and curiosity to our work.
Trust	We build trust with the community and government by listening and acting with independence and integrity. We strive to be a valued voice in improving public administration. We work in a spirit of openness and collaboration to support a constructive workplace culture

Governance policies

Governance policies are the formal rules and principles set by the Victorian Ombudsman that define requirements, expected behaviours, roles and responsibilities for managing risks, finances, people, resources and information to support ethical conduct, accountability and transparency, compliance with legal requirements and achievement of objectives. These policies are listed below:

- Code of conduct
- Complaints about and oversight of the Victorian Ombudsman*
- Conflict of interest
- Enterprise governance framework
- Gifts, benefits and hospitality*
- Instruments of delegation – financial, human resources and operational
- Privacy statement*
- Travel*

* Policies publicly available via the Victorian Ombudsman website.

Decision-making structures

The Victorian Ombudsman's primary decision-making structures are the roles of the Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman and Executive Leadership Team Committee and the organisational structure through which delegated and authorised decisions are made.

The Ombudsman

The Ombudsman Act establishes the Ombudsman, and the Constitution Act defines her independence.

Appointment

Under section 3 of the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman is appointed for a term of 10 years by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister and Cabinet approval. The Ombudsman can only be removed from office by both Houses of the Parliament in certain circumstances. Under section 4, the Governor in Council may suspend the Ombudsman in certain circumstances.

Role and responsibilities

The Ombudsman has multifaceted roles and responsibilities:

Operational	Undertake the functions under Sections 13 and 13AA of the Ombudsman Act, PID Act, IBAC Act, Human Rights Charter, Terrorism (Community Protection) Act, Corrections Act and any other Act.
Financial	Manage the office's finances in accordance with the FMA, Standing Directions and Financial Reporting Directions; procure goods and services in accordance with Victorian Government procurement policies; manage assets in accordance with the Asset Management Accountability Framework; and manage organisational risks and maintain adequate insurances in accordance with the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework.
Administrative	Ensure staff adhere to the public sector values, employment principles and the code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees of special bodies, under the PAA. Manage the health and safety of employees and adhere to the employment conditions, pay, leave and workplace policies set out in the Victorian public sector enterprise agreement. Implement consistent integrity, conduct and governance standards, including for conflicts of interest and gifts, benefits and hospitality.
Information	Handle personal information, protect public sector information and provide public access to documents in accordance with the PDP and FOI Acts.

Decision-making authority

The Ombudsman has functions, powers, rights, immunities and obligations as specified in the Constitution Act, the Ombudsman Act and other Victorian laws. Under Section 11 of the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman can delegate her powers or functions (except the power of delegation) to any person and may also revoke or vary such delegation. Regardless of any delegation, the Ombudsman remains the key role responsible for internal governance.

Accountability

Under section 94E of the Constitution Act, the Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Parliament and not accountable to executive government. The Ombudsman is subject to external oversight by IOV, IOC and other bodies, but is ultimately accountable to Parliament for her performance.

Deputy Ombudsman

The Ombudsman Act does not specify the role of the Deputy Ombudsman. The role and number of deputies is at the discretion of the Ombudsman.

Appointment

The Deputy Ombudsman is engaged by a contract of employment between the executive and their employer (the Victorian Ombudsman) under section 25 of the PAA.

Role and responsibilities

The Deputy Ombudsman is involved at both a strategic level as a member of the Executive Leadership Team and operationally through the exercise of delegated functions. This operational role involves overseeing finances and staff, who are managed and directed through reporting lines established within each division.

Decision-making authority

The Deputy Ombudsman has operational, human resources, financial and administration authorities as delegated by the Ombudsman under various instruments.

The table below outlines typical delegations that may be in place:

Operational	<i>General delegation:</i> • All powers and functions under the Ombudsman Act and any other Acts, other than the Ombudsman's power of delegation <i>Specific delegations under the Ombudsman Act:</i> • 13G resolve complaint by alternative dispute resolution • 13H decide outcome of alternative dispute resolution • 18F(2) administer oath or affirmation <i>Specific authorisation under the FOI Act:</i> • 26(1) make decision in respect of FOI request
Human resources	Employ and terminate employees, approve classification and salaries, assign duties, approve work arrangements, authorise allowances and reimbursements, approve leave and manage conduct and performance
Financial	Approve expenditure up to authorised financial limit, approve invoices, procurements and contract execution.

Accountability

Deputy Ombudsman are accountable to the Ombudsman or Acting Ombudsman.

Executive Leadership Team Committee

The committee's role is to support the Ombudsman to make decisions relevant to the strategic direction of the organisation. The committee has no statutory decision-making authority but can make recommendations and provide advice to the Ombudsman.

Organisational structure, delegations and authorisations

The Ombudsman enables more efficient operations and faster decision making by delegating authority down the organisational hierarchy. By clearly defining decision-making authority and entrusting operational tasks to experts at various levels, senior leaders are freed to focus on strategic governance and control.

Appointment

Executives within the Victorian Ombudsman are engaged by a contract of employment between the executive and their employer (the Victorian Ombudsman) under section 25 of the PAA. Employees are employed under section 20 of the PAA by the Deputy Ombudsman, as delegated by the Ombudsman under section 18(1) of the PAA.

Role and responsibilities

Victorian Ombudsman executives have individual employment conditions (known as a total remuneration package) rather than being employed directly under the Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2024, though the enterprise agreement sets a framework for their overall conditions and benefits such as superannuation.

The enterprise agreement covers Victorian Ombudsman employees, who must adhere to the requirements and duties outlined in the agreement. Position descriptions specify individual roles and responsibilities.

Decision-making authority

The Ombudsman delegates her authority to executives and designated employees under various instruments of delegation and authorisation. These instruments are maintained by the head of each of the responsible business areas.

Operational delegations and authorisations	An instrument delegates all powers and functions under the Ombudsman Act and certain other Acts, other than the Ombudsman's power of delegation, to the Deputy Ombudsman and specific powers or functions to different role categories, such as designated directors, managers, solicitors, senior officers, senior analysts, officers, analysts and support officers. There are also standalone delegations and/or authorisations, including under the Ombudsman Act and Freedom of Information Act.
Financial and administrative delegations	Financial delegates consist of cost centre managers ('first approver') and executive leaders ('second approver') with different approval limits. Several employees hold corporate credit cards with various approval limits, and each has a more senior corporate card approver. Typically, two people are authorised invoice approvers for each cost centre/organisational structure.
Human resources delegations	There are four distinct positions or offices that have delegated human resources powers and functions: • Deputy Ombudsman • Head of People and Culture • Directors, Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) • Senior managers (people managers who report through to a member of the Executive Team, a director, CIO or CFO).

These instruments are maintained by the Director, Legal, CFO and Head of People and Culture respectively.

Accountability

Victorian Ombudsman executives are accountable to the Ombudsman as per their contract of employment.

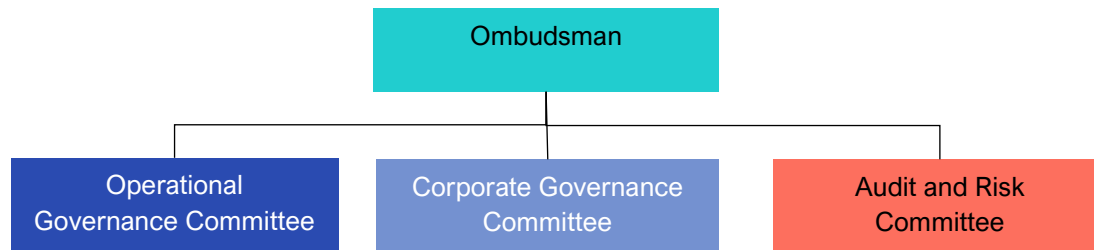
All employees, including those with delegations and authorisations:

- are ultimately accountable to the Ombudsman (as employer and delegator), but also accountable to their direct line manager under the organisational structure
- are part of the Victorian Public Service and are bound by the PAA, the Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2024 and any standards issued by VPSC
- must comply with the code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees of special bodies
- may be subject to disciplinary action if they breach the code of conduct.

4.2 Internal oversight

The Victorian Ombudsman has three key committees to assist in governing the organisation – see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Governance committees



Operational Governance Committee (OGC)

Appointment

Membership is based on position and typically includes the Ombudsman (Chair); Deputy Ombudsmen; Directors of Legal, Complaints and Investigations; Managers of Engagement and Education, Strategic Communications, Policy and Research, and Intelligence and Reviews.

Role and responsibilities

OGC advises the Ombudsman on matters relevant to operational oversight of the office and supports the Ombudsman to make decisions in her role under relevant legislation. OGC advises on complaint handling and conciliation; the progress of investigations and recommendations arising from them; education and community engagement; stakeholder engagement and strategic communications; policy matters; intelligence and emerging issues; and legal operations, including external oversight (IOV and IOC).

Decision-making authority

OGC has no statutory decision-making authority, but can endorse and note papers, make recommendations and provide advice to the Ombudsman and her delegates, and item owners.

Accountability

OGC is accountable to the Ombudsman, who is the committee's chair.

Corporate Governance Committee (CGC)

Appointment

Membership is based on position and typically includes the Ombudsman (Chair); Deputy Ombudsmen; CFO; CIO; Head of Strategy, Risk and Performance; Head of People and Culture; and Directors of Legal, Complaints and Investigations.

Role and responsibilities

CGC supports the Ombudsman to discharge her obligations as responsible body under the FMA, PAA, PDP Act and other legislative obligations relevant to corporate functions. CGC's specific responsibilities include advising the Ombudsman on strategy development and implementation,

risk management; organisational performance and compliance; financial strategy and management; people management, organisational culture and structure; information management and business systems; and internal communications.

Decision-making authority

CGC has no statutory decision-making authority, but can endorse and note papers, make recommendations and provide advice to the Ombudsman, their delegates and item owners.

Through approval by the Ombudsman, and after consultation, CGC's and OGC's Terms of Reference grant authority to the Committee. Additional items not specified in the Terms of Reference may also be tabled at a Committee meeting, with the approval of the Ombudsman.

Accountability

CGC is accountable to the Ombudsman, who is the committee's chair.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

Established under Standing Direction 3.2.1.1, ARC is an advisory committee comprising at least four independent members, including an independent chair. It provides independent assurance and advice to the Victorian Ombudsman on internal controls, risk compliance, and financial reporting.

Appointment

The Ombudsman appoints ARC members for a term of one to three years, giving due consideration to the Victorian Government's board appointment remuneration and diversity guidance. Members are not permitted to exceed their tenure beyond six years. The Ombudsman appoints the ARC chair.

Role and responsibilities

ARC provides independent assurance and advice to the Ombudsman on corporate governance, including financial reporting and responsibilities, internal and external audits, risk and compliance management frameworks.

Decision-making authority

ARC has no executive powers unless stated otherwise in the ARC Charter or Standing Directions. Under the Standing Directions, it is authorised to approve the Internal Audit Charter and Strategic Internal Audit Plan. The Ombudsman further authorises ARC to exercise its Charter duties, request information and legal advice, and access all staff and auditors.

Accountability

ARC must report to the Ombudsman in accordance with Standing Direction 3.2.1.3(a), exercise independent judgement, be objective in its deliberations, decisions and advice, self-assess its performance annually and report this assessment to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman must formally review ARC's membership and performance and at least once every three years.

4.3 Internal accountability

Internal accountability involves leaders and employees taking responsibility for their work and delivering required outcomes. We are accountable through a combination of direct reporting lines, internal reporting and internal audits and reviews.

Upward accountability

Mutual workplace accountability requires shared responsibility: employees take ownership of tasks, while managers provide support and clear direction. This two-way dynamic is formalised through performance development plans, which measure goals and ensure reciprocal feedback

Internal reporting

The Victorian Ombudsman uses structured internal reporting to drive transparency, accountability and compliance. Routine data informs decision-making across five core areas:

Organisational performance	Quarterly tracking of performance targets and division plans by CGC and ARC
Financials	Monthly reviews with CGC and quarterly reviews with ARC and cost centre managers
People and culture	Quarterly updates to CGC on safety, capability, and workforce metrics
Risk and compliance	Quarterly risk and business continuity updates to CGC and ARC
Incidents	Quarterly analysis provided to CGC and ARC to identify systemic learnings

Internal audits and reviews

Internal audits and reviews provide the Victorian Ombudsman with assurance and actionable advice, improving governance, risk management, and operational controls:

- **Internal audits** – an outsourced provider conducts up to four annual reviews to identify vulnerabilities and assess risk management and governance.
- **Quality audits** – Targeted reviews of complaint handling and investigations to identify systemic trends and drive operational improvements.
- **Internal reviews** – an Internal Review Group Senior re-assesses specific cases to ensure compliance with legislation, policies and service charters.
- **Peer reviews** – staff-led consultations allow for shared decision-making perspectives on highly discretionary matters.

5 Document history

Version	Author	Revision date	Key changes	Approved by
0.1	Andrew Ellis, Head of Strategy, Risk and Performance	01/07/2026	Initial draft	Marlo Baragwanath, Ombudsman