

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES POLICY

Executive Summary

Western Water is a public body subject to the *Protected Disclosure Act 2012* ("Act"). The purpose of the Act is to encourage and facilitate the making of disclosures of improper conduct by public officers and public bodies, including Western Water, its staff, members and employees.

Protected Disclosures are an important tool in the prevention and detection of corruption and other malpractice and can provide benefits such as:

- a) more effective compliance with relevant laws;
- b) more efficient fiscal management of the entity through, for example, the reporting of waste and improper tendering practices;
- c) a healthier and safer work environment through the reporting of unsafe practices;
- d) more effective management;
- e) improved morale within the entity; and
- f) improved public confidence.

Western Water is committed to the aims and objectives of the Act. It recognises the value of transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices, and supports the making of disclosures that reveal improper conduct. It does not tolerate improper conduct by the organisation, its employees, officers or members, nor the taking of detrimental action in reprisal against those who come forward to disclose such conduct. Western Water will take reasonable steps to protect and ensure the welfare of those who make or co-operate with protected disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making a disclosure.

What can Disclosures be made about?

Disclosures may be made about "improper conduct" on the part of Western Water or its staff, employees and members. Disclosures may also be made about "detrimental action" taken (or suspected may be taken) in reprisal or in connection with a disclosure made about improper conduct.

The conduct or action being disclosed may have taken place, still be occurring, or is believed will occur or be engaged in.

The Act provides definitions about improper conduct and detrimental action. For more information about what those terms mean, see the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission ("**IBAC**") website:

<http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/guidelines-for-making-and-handling-protected-disclosures/what-is-a-disclosureIBAC>

A disclosure must be made in good faith and the person making the disclosure must have a reasonable belief that the information and allegations are substantially true. Persons making deliberately misleading or false statements will not be protected under this policy.

Who can make a Disclosure?

Any individual natural person (e.g., not organisation or company) may make a disclosure under the Act. The individual could be a person within the organisation, or any member of the public externally.

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Disclosures may be made in a number of ways set out in the Act, including anonymously, in writing or orally. A discloser need not identify the person or body about whom the disclosure is made.

How to make a Disclosure

According to the IBAC, Western Water is not permitted to receive disclosures made under the Act. Therefore, disclosures about Western Water, its officers, members or employees, are to be made directly to the IBAC. If Western Water believes a disclosure may be a protected disclosure made in accordance with the Act, it will request the disclosure to be made to the IBAC. The IBAC will deal with the disclosure. The detailed process for reporting a disclosure can be found at <http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au>. IBAC will acknowledge receipt of all disclosures and will write to anyone who makes a disclosure by letter or email within 60 days to advise of their assessment. Feedback cannot be provided on anonymous disclosures.

Role of Western Water

It is important to note that the IBAC is not required to contact Western Water about any disclosure it receives. Disclosures should not be discussed with Western Water unless permission has been obtained from IBAC, or unless the IBAC has directed so, or the IBAC has contacted Western Water to provide it with information in order to allow Western Water to provide any necessary welfare and support.

As required under the Act, Western Water has established procedures to facilitate and encourage the making of disclosures under the Act, and how we will protect people against detrimental action that might be taken against them because they made a protected disclosure. ("Detrimental Action Policy and Procedures") Western Water's Detrimental Action Policy and Procedures are available at <http://www.westernwater.com.au/> or by inspection during normal office hours at 36 Macedon Street, Sunbury.

For assistance accessing a copy online copy or via the mail, please contact 1300 650 422, Monday to Friday, 7am to 7pm, Email mail@westernwater.com.au or contact the Protected Disclosure Co-ordinator, Melissa Jeal on 9218 5513 (if appropriate).

Confidentiality

Western Water takes its obligations under the Act seriously. This includes the requirement to protect the identity of the discloser and the matters disclosed by a discloser. Maintaining confidentiality in relation to protected disclosure matters is crucial, among other things, in ensuring reprisals are not made against a discloser. It is a criminal offence under the Act to disclose information connected with a disclosure made in accordance with the Act, including the identity of the discloser. The penalties for breaching confidentiality obligations include financial penalties and imprisonment.

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For More Information

For more information about protected disclosures or the Victorian integrity system generally, also see <http://www.ibac.vic.gov.au/report-corruption-or-misconduct/protected-disclosure>.

In addition, more information about Western Water's general complaints handling process can be found at <http://www.westernwater.com.au/customerservice/Pages/Givesomefeedback.aspx>

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if impacted by legislative changes.

Related Documents

Detrimental Protection Action Policy & Procedure
Protected Disclosure Act 2012
Code of Conduct

Responsible for Implementation

Managing Director