

# **PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE MODEL PROCEDURES**

*Public Interest Disclosure Act 2002*

***Waratah-Wynyard Council Public Interest Disclosure officers:***

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## 1. Statement of Support

The Waratah-Wynyard Council is committed to the aims and objectives of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002* (the Act) which are primarily:

- *to encourage and facilitate disclosures of improper conduct by public officers;*
- *to protect persons making those disclosures and others from reprisals;*
- *to provide for the matters disclosed to be properly investigated and dealt with;*  
*and*
- *to provide all parties involved with those disclosures with procedural fairness (referred to as natural justice in the Act).*

The Waratah-Wynyard Council recognises the value of transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices and supports the making of disclosures that reveal the type of conduct to which the Act is directed.

The Waratah-Wynyard Council will take all reasonable steps to protect people who make sure a disclosure, and to protect their welfare. It will also afford natural justice to all parties involved in the investigation of a disclosure.

## 2. Purpose of these procedures

These procedures set out how:

- public officers and contractors can make disclosures about improper conduct or reprisal action;
- disclosures are assessed;
- public interest disclosures are investigated; and
- Waratah-Wynyard Council protects disclosers and affords procedural fairness<sup>1</sup> to those being investigated.

These procedures are designed to complement normal communication channels between supervisors and employees. Employees are encouraged to continue to raise appropriate matters at any time with their supervisors, and to use existing grievance procedures within the organisation where appropriate.

Waratah-Wynyard Council has the following policies and procedures in place for investigation of complaints:

- Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy, Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Complaints Procedure, Contact Officer Guidelines, Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Complaints Reporting Form;
- Councillors Code of Conduct, Content to accompany the Model Code of Conduct, LG Template Complaint Form;
- Disability Discrimination Policy;
- Diversity and Equity Policy and Guidelines

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to as natural justice in the Act.

The procedures have been prepared in accordance with the Ombudsman's *Guideline One: Procedures for Public Bodies*. This Guideline can be accessed on the Ombudsman's website at [www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au).

### 3. How the Act works

Briefly, the Act works in this way:

- it gives certain people – *public officers* and *contractors* – the right to make disclosures about *improper conduct* or *detrimental action* to certain integrity agencies, other persons and bodies (Part 2 of the Act, particularly s 6);<sup>2</sup>
- it provides certain statutory protections for *protected disclosures*, even if the discloser does not reference the Act (Part 3);
- it dictates how the recipient of the disclosure is to deal with it (Parts 4 to 8);
- it treats the Ombudsman as the oversight agency in relation to the operation of the Act, including the default investigator, monitor of investigations by public bodies, and setter of standards under the Act;
- where the disclosure is handled by the Ombudsman or a public body, it requires a determination as to whether the protected disclosure is a *public interest disclosure* (ss 30 and 33);
- subject to exceptions, it requires investigation by the Ombudsman or public body of any public interest disclosure (ss 39 and 63);
- it requires such investigation to be conducted as soon as practicable, but if it is being conducted by a public body, not more than six months from the date of the determination that the disclosure is a public interest disclosure (ss 39A and 77A);
- it controls the manner in which a disclosure is investigated, and provides investigative powers; and
- in the case of an investigation by a public body which results in a finding that the alleged conduct occurred, it requires the public body to take action to prevent that conduct from continuing or recurring, and to take action to remedy any harm or loss which may have arisen (s 75).

A flow chart, which depicts the way in which a public body should deal with a disclosure, is **Attachment 4** to this document.

### 4. Roles and responsibilities

This part explains the roles and responsibilities under the Act of individuals within Waratah-Wynyard Council.

#### 4.1 Members, officers and employees

Members, officers and employees (public officers) of Waratah-Wynyard Council are encouraged to report known or suspected incidences of improper conduct or detrimental action in accordance with these procedures.

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<sup>2</sup> Members of the public may also make disclosures in limited circumstances, when the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission deems this in the public interest under s 7A.

All public officers of Waratah-Wynyard Council have an important role to play in supporting those who have made disclosures. They must refrain from any activity that is, or could be perceived to be, victimisation or harassment of a person who makes a disclosure. They should protect and maintain the confidentiality of a person they know or suspect to have made a disclosure.

#### **4.2 Principal Officer**

The Principal Officer has primary responsibility for ensuring that the provisions of the Act are implemented by Waratah-Wynyard Council. Section 62A of the Act provides that the Principal Officer has responsibility for:

- preparing procedures for approval by the Ombudsman;
- receiving public interest disclosures and ensuring they are dealt with in accordance with the Act;
- ensuring the protection of witnesses;
- ensuring the application of procedural fairness in Waratah-Wynyard Council's procedures;
- ensuring the promotion of the importance of public interest disclosures and general education about the Act to all staff, and ensuring easy access to information about the Act and the procedures, and
- providing access to confidential employee assistance programs and appropriately trained internal support staff for those involved in the process.

The Principal Officer may delegate all of these functions and powers to a Public Interest Disclosure Officer.

#### **4.3 Public Interest Disclosure Officer**

A Public Interest Disclosure Officer is appointed by the Principal Officer under s62A(2) of the Act. They hold a delegation from the Principal Officer which enables them to:

- section 72 – Notice of Referral;
- section 73 – Investigation to be in accordance with procedures;
- section 74 – Information about progress of investigation;
- section 75 – Action to be taken by public body;
- section 76 – Report on investigation;
- section 77 – Report to person making disclosure;
- section 77A – Investigation to be completed with 6 months;
- section 86 – Annual reports by public body;

See the cover page for a list of Waratah-Wynyard Council's Public Interest Disclosure officers.

#### **4.4 Investigator**

Where it is determined that a disclosure is a public interest disclosure, or where the Ombudsman has referred a public interest disclosure to Waratah-Wynyard Council for investigation, the Principal Officer will appoint an investigator to investigate the matter in accordance with the Act. An investigator may be a person from within Waratah-Wynyard Council or a consultant engaged for that purpose.

## 4.5 Welfare Manager

The Welfare Manager will be appointed by the Principal Officer or by a Public Interest Disclosure Officer and is responsible for looking after the general welfare of the discloser. The Welfare Manager will:

- examine the immediate welfare and protection needs of a person who has made a disclosure, and develop a support plan for them;
- advise the discloser of the legislative and administrative protections available to them;<sup>3</sup>
- listen and respond to any concerns of harassment, intimidation, victimisation or other detrimental action which may be occurring in reprisal for making the disclosure; and
- so far as is practicable, protect the identity of the discloser in the course of carrying out these responsibilities.

A welfare manager may be a person employed by Waratah-Wynyard Council or a consultant engaged for that purpose. They must not be responsible for assessing or investigating the disclosure.

## 5. Who can make a disclosure

### 5.1 Public officers

Any current public officer<sup>4</sup> can make a disclosure to Waratah-Wynyard Council under the Act. This includes *for a local council*

*'all employees and councillors of Waratah-Wynyard Council. Council volunteers are not considered public officers but could make a disclosure to the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission about a public body as a member of the public.'*

### 5.2 Contractors

Current or past contractors and sub-contractors can make disclosures about public bodies, not public officers, but they can only make a disclosure to the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission not to Waratah-Wynyard Council.

Public Interest Disclosure officers should refer any contractors wanting to make a disclosure to either of these bodies.

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<sup>3</sup> See [Protection](#) below for details of the legislative protections.

<sup>4</sup> This can include a public officer from another public body

### **5.3 Members of the public**

Members of the public can make a disclosure about a public body and may be treated in the same way as a contractor if it is in the public interest to do so, but they can only make the disclosure to the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission. The Ombudsman or Integrity Commission determines whether it is in the public interest to treat the discloser as a contractor, not the discloser. Public interest disclosure officers should refer any members of the public wanting to make a disclosure to either of these bodies.

### **5.4 Anonymous persons**

An anonymous disclosure may be accepted if the person receiving it is satisfied that the disclosure is being made by a public officer or contractor (see s 8 of the Act). If the person is satisfied that an anonymous disclosure is from a contractor it should be referred to the Ombudsman.

## **6. What can a disclosure be made about?**

A disclosure can be made about one or more public officers or a public body itself. If a disclosure relates to Waratah-Wynyard Council as a whole or the Principal Officer of Waratah-Wynyard Council, it should be referred to the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission as internal investigation would not be appropriate.

### **6.1 Improper conduct**

Disclosures about public officers need to relate to improper conduct by that officer, in the past, present or future (proposed action). Section 3 of the Act defines improper conduct as:

- a. conduct that constitutes an illegal or unlawful activity; or
- b. corrupt conduct; or
- c. conduct that constitutes maladministration; or
- d. conduct that constitutes professional misconduct; or
- e. conduct that constitutes a waste of public resources; or
- f. conduct that constitutes a danger to public health or safety or to both public health and safety; or
- g. conduct that constitutes a danger to the environment; or
- h. misconduct, including breaches of applicable codes of conduct; or
- i. conduct that constitutes detrimental action against a person who makes a public interest disclosure under this Act–

that is serious or significant as determined in accordance with guidelines issued by the Ombudsman.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Public Interest Disclosure Guideline Two: Serious or Significant Improper Conduct, available at [www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au)



Examples of improper conduct include:

- to avoid closure of a town's only industry, an environmental health officer ignores or conceals evidence of illegal dumping of waste;
- an agricultural officer delays or declines imposing quarantine to allow a financially distressed farmer to sell diseased stock; and
- a principal officer spends \$15,000 of public money on a staff Christmas party.

## **6.2 Corrupt conduct**

Corrupt conduct is further defined in s3 of the Act as:

- a. conduct of a person (whether or not a public officer) that adversely affects, or could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the honest performance of a public officer's or public body's functions; or
- b. conduct of a public officer that amounts to the performance of any of their functions as a public officer dishonestly or with inappropriate partiality; or
- c. conduct of a public officer, a former public officer or a public body that amounts to a breach of public trust; or
- d. conduct of a public officer, a former public officer or a public body that amounts to the misuse of information or material acquired in the course of the performance of their functions as such (whether for the benefit of that person or body or otherwise); or
- e. a conspiracy or attempt to engage in conduct referred to in paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d).

Examples of corrupt conduct include:

- a public officer takes a bribe in exchange for the discharge of a public duty;
- a public officer favours unmeritorious applications for jobs or permits by friends and relatives; and
- a police officer accesses and discloses criminal record information at the request of a friend, without any legitimate reason.

## **6.3 Detrimental action**

Detrimental action, or reprisal action, against a discloser can be a form of improper conduct. It is defined in s 3 of the Act, as including:

- a. action causing injury, loss or damage; and
- b. intimidation or harassment; and
- c. discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to a person's employment, career, profession, trade or business, including the taking of disciplinary action; and
- d. threats of detrimental action.

Examples of detrimental action include:

- refusal of a deserved promotion;
- demotion, transfer, isolation in the workplace or changing a person's duties to their disadvantage;
- threats, abuse or other forms of harassment directly or indirectly against the discloser, their family or friends; and
- discrimination against the discloser or their family and associates in applications for jobs, permits or tenders.

## 7. Where to make a disclosure

For the protections in the Act to apply, a disclosure needs to be made to the right person or body. The following table sets this out, in accordance with s 7 of the Act:

Officer or public body to which the disclosure relates	Where the disclosure may be made
A member, officer or employee of a public body other than the Police Service or a State Service Agency	that public body; or the Integrity Commission; or the Ombudsman
A member, officer or employee of a public body that is a State Service Agency	that State Service Agency; or the Integrity Commission; or the Ombudsman
The principal officer of a public body or State Service Agency	the Ombudsman; or the Integrity Commission
A member of the Police Service, other than the Commissioner of Police	the Commissioner of Police
The Commissioner of Police	the Ombudsman
A member of the Legislative Council	the President of the Legislative Council
A member of the House of Assembly	the Speaker of the House
A councilor, within the meaning of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>	the Ombudsman
A person employed under the provisions of the <i>Parliamentary Privilege Act 1898</i>	the Ombudsman; or the Integrity Commission
The Auditor-General	the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.
The Ombudsman	the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity
A person employed in an office of a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or other Member of Parliament	the Ombudsman
In any other case, including if the disclosure is about a public body as opposed to an individual public officer	the Ombudsman; or the Integrity Commission

## 8. How to make a disclosure

Public officers can make a disclosure about other public officers of Waratah-Wynyard Council orally or in writing to the following officers:

- the General Manager – who is the Principal Officer of the public body, for the purposes of the Act; and
- a Public Interest Disclosure Officer.

### 8.1 Public Interest Disclosure Officers

The following staff are public interest disclosure officers and can receive disclosures:

- Samantha Searle – Director Organisational Performance; and
- Roseanne Titcombe – Executive Officer Governance and Performance.

If someone wants to make a disclosure about the Principal Officer or Waratah-Wynyard Council, they should be referred to the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission.

## 8.2 Written or oral disclosure

It is preferable that a disclosure be made in writing. It should be addressed to the public body, marked for the attention of the Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer. A disclosure can be sent, delivered or left at:

The Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer	
Waratah-Wynyard Council	or at:
PO Box 168	21 Saunders Street
WYNYARD TAS 7325	WYNYARD TAS 7325

Email: [ssearle@warwyn.tas.gov.au](mailto:ssearle@warwyn.tas.gov.au)  
[rtitcombe@warwyn.tas.gov.au](mailto:rtitcombe@warwyn.tas.gov.au)

A public officer can also make an oral disclosure over the phone or in person to a Public Interest Disclosure officer. An oral disclosure should be made in private. If a public officer is concerned about making a disclosure in person in the workplace, they can call or email the Public Interest Disclosure Officer to request a meeting in a location away from the workplace.

It is not a requirement that the person contemplating making a disclosure refers to the Act or is aware of the Act.

## 8.3 Disclosure to the Ombudsman

A disclosure may also be made directly to the Ombudsman. The contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Ombudsman Tasmania	or at
GPO Box 960	Level 6, 86 Collins Street
HOBART TAS 7001	HOBART TAS 7000

Website: [www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au)  
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au)  
Phone: 1800 001 170

## 8.4 Disclosure to the Integrity Commission

A disclosure may also be made directly to the Integrity Commission. The Commission can deal with a protected disclosure about individuals under the *Integrity Commission Act 2009* or refer it to a public body or the Ombudsman. A protected disclosure about a public body would be referred to the Ombudsman. The contact details for the Integrity Commission are:

Integrity Commission	or at
GPO Box 822	Level 2
HOBART TAS 7001	Surrey House
	199 Macquarie Street
	HOBART TAS 7000

Website: [www.integrity.tas.gov.au](http://www.integrity.tas.gov.au)  
Email: [contact@integrity.tas.gov.au](mailto:contact@integrity.tas.gov.au)  
Phone: 1300 720 289

## 9. Confidentiality

Waratah-Wynyard Council will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of a discloser. Maintaining confidentiality is crucial to ensure that detrimental action is not taken against the discloser in reprisal for making the disclosure.

All reasonable care should also be taken to protect the privacy of witnesses and of the person against whom the disclosure has been made.

Section 23 of the Act requires any person who receives information in the course of or as a result of a protected disclosure or its investigation, not to disclose that information except in certain limited circumstances. Disclosure of information in breach of this section constitutes an offence that is punishable by a maximum fine of 60 penalty units or six months imprisonment, or both.

The circumstances in which a person may disclose information obtained about a protected disclosure include:

- where exercising their functions or the functions of the public body under the Act;
- when making a report or recommendation under the Act;
- when publishing statistics in the annual report of a public body; and
- in proceedings for certain offences under the Act.

The Act, however, prohibits the inclusion of particulars in any report or recommendation that is likely to lead to the identification of the discloser. The Act also prohibits the identification of the person who is the subject of the disclosure in any particulars included in an annual report made in accordance with Part 9 of the Act.

It may be necessary to consider disclosing information where:

- it is essential, having regard to the principles of natural justice, that the identifying information be disclosed to the person who is the subject of the disclosure;
- the investigating body believes that the disclosure of the identifying information is necessary for the matter to be effectively investigated; or
- the identity of the discloser is likely to be guessed from the circumstances of the disclosure and the risks for the discloser are better managed if their identity is known and specific warnings or risk management actions can be taken.

In these circumstances, the person who made the disclosure should first be consulted before any action is taken. Consider obtaining permission in writing from the discloser prior to identifying them.

The Waratah-Wynyard Council will ensure that all relevant files, whether paper or electronic, are kept securely and can only be accessed by the Principal Officer, Public Interest Disclosure Officer/s, the investigator, and (in relation to welfare matters only) the Welfare Manager.

All printed and electronic material will be kept in files that are clearly marked as confidential, and all materials relevant to an investigation, such as interview recordings, will also be stored securely with the files. Electronic files should have access restricted to the relevant officers.

Care should also be taken to ensure that all relevant phone calls and meetings are conducted in private.

Section 90 exempts documents from release under the *Right to Information Act 2009* to the extent that:

- they contain information regarding a disclosure; or
- information that is likely to lead to the identification of the person who:
  - made the disclosure; or
  - the person who is the subject of the disclosure.

## **10. Assessing the disclosure**

The Act requires the taking of two distinct steps when assessing a disclosure. It first needs to be determined whether or not it qualifies as a protected disclosure, and thus attracts the protections contained in the Act. In order to do so it must satisfy the following prerequisites:

- has it been made to the correct person or body?;
- if it has been correctly made to Waratah-Wynyard Council,
  - has it been made by a public officer (or, if the disclosure is anonymous, is the person receiving it satisfied that it is being made by a public officer)?;
  - is it about the conduct of a public officer?;
  - does the discloser believe the public officer has, is or is proposing to engage in improper conduct?;
  - is it about conduct that could objectively fall within the definition of improper conduct?; and
  - does it concern conduct that occurred on or after 1 January 2001?

The next step is to determine if it is a public interest disclosure. This requires an assessment of the evidence provided by the discloser to determine if it shows or tends to show a public officer has, is or is proposing to engage in improper conduct.

### **10.1 What should the recipient of the disclosure do upon receipt of the disclosure?**

If the disclosure is oral, the recipient should make a file note as soon as possible. The note should record the time the disclosure was made, the circumstances under which it was made and, so far as is possible, the exact words used by the discloser. The recipient should ask the discloser to consider putting the disclosure in writing as soon as possible.

Unless the recipient is the Principal Officer (or the disclosure is about the Principal Officer), the recipient should immediately inform the Principal Officer of the disclosure, and should provide the Principal Officer with a copy of the disclosure, or record of the disclosure, and any accompanying documents.<sup>6</sup> If the disclosure is about the Principal Officer, contact the Ombudsman for advice.

## **10.2 Is it a protected disclosure?**

The protections for disclosers, provided in Part 3 of the Act, only apply where the disclosure is a *protected disclosure* made in accordance with Part 2 of the Act.

The Principal Officer or a Public Interest Disclosure Officer should assess whether a disclosure has been made in accordance with Part 2 as soon as possible after it has been received. The assessment of disclosure form at Attachment 1 should be completed as part of this process. It contains a series of questions going to the essential elements of a protected disclosure, raised at [Assessing the disclosure](#), and what is needed to be established before a disclosure can be a protected disclosure. A separate assessment of disclosure form will usually need to be completed for each disclosure. This means, for example, that if a discloser is complaining about three different public officers, this constitutes three disclosures and three assessments should be completed.

If it is determined that it is a protected disclosure, the discloser should be given information about the protections in the Act (such as a copy of Part 3 of the Act). These protections should be explained to the discloser if necessary. The discloser should also be informed of the process which will be followed with respect to the disclosure.

The Principal Officer or a Public Interest Disclosure Officer should also immediately appoint a Welfare Manager to protect the interests of the discloser and ensure that the discloser is advised of the name and contact details of that person. A risk assessment should also be completed.

## **10.3 Mixed content disclosures**

Many disclosures will also contain personal grievances. When conducting assessments of complaints or grievances the assessor needs to be alert to identifying those aspects that could constitute a protected disclosure.

It is not a requirement that a discloser specify they are making a disclosure, the onus rests on Waratah-Wynyard Council to identify whether or not the Act applies. Consider discussing with the person whether they wish to make a public interest disclosure if it appears their concerns would meet the threshold.

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<sup>6</sup> Contractors or members of the public who wish to make a disclosure should be advised to contact the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission, as per [Who can make a disclosure?](#)

Those matters that can be dealt with under a grievance process and those that are more appropriately dealt with under these procedures should be dealt with separately where possible.

#### **10.4 Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment should occur as soon as possible after the disclosure has been assessed as being a protected disclosure under the Act. The risk assessment template at Attachment 2 should be completed by the Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer and any appropriate risk mitigation action required be implemented. A single assessment can be made of all relevant risks, or you may prefer to undertake separate assessments of the different risks relating to a particular disclosure, such as the risks to the discloser, the subject of the disclosure, any witnesses, or Waratah-Wynyard Council.

The discloser is usually the most able to identify potential reprisal risks, so input should be sought from the discloser and the Welfare Manager in completing the risk assessment. All reasonable steps to reduce risks of reprisal to the discloser should be taken.

#### **10.5 Referral of a protected disclosure to the Integrity Commission**

Waratah-Wynyard Council may refer a protected disclosure, as distinct from a public interest disclosure, to the Integrity Commission where it considers that the disclosure relates to misconduct as defined in s 4(1) of the *Integrity Commission Act 2009*. Consideration should also be given to:

- whether independent investigation of the subject matter of the disclosure by the Integrity Commission is preferable; and
- the views of the discloser and the Integrity Commission about whether the matter should be referred.

Waratah-Wynyard Council must notify the discloser of the referral under s 29D of the Act within a reasonable time (unless the disclosure was made anonymously).

The Integrity Commission may deal with the disclosure under its legislation, or it may refer the disclosure to the Ombudsman or a public body, as the case may require, for action in accordance with the Act.

#### **10.6 Is the disclosure a public interest disclosure?**

Once a disclosure has been assessed as being a protected disclosure, a further determination must be made as to whether or not it is a public interest disclosure. The Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer must make this determination under s 33 of the Act within 45 days of the receipt of the disclosure. Use the Assessment of disclosure form at Attachment 1 to ensure you consider all the necessary requirements.

For a disclosure to be a public interest disclosure, the Principal Officer, or their delegated Public Interest Disclosure Officer, must be satisfied that the disclosure shows or tends to show that the public officer to whom the disclosure relates has:

- engaged, is engaging or proposes to engage in improper conduct in their capacity as a public officer, or
- taken, is taking or proposes to take detrimental action in reprisal for the making of the protected disclosure.

A disclosure must be more than a mere allegation without substantiation to meet this threshold. A disclosure must include an indication of the existence of evidence that, if substantiated, would show or tend to show that the alleged improper conduct occurred.

Where the Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer determines that the disclosure amounts to a public interest disclosure, they must:

- advise the Principal Officer (if not the person assessing the disclosure);
- notify the Ombudsman within 14 days of the decision using the notification template at Attachment 3;
- notify the person making the disclosure within 14 days of the decision (unless they are anonymous and uncontactable); and
- proceed to investigate the disclosed matter under s 34 of the Act.

If the Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer determines that the disclosure is not a public interest disclosure, they must:

- advise the Principal Officer (if not the person assessing the disclosure);
- notify the Ombudsman within 14 days of the decision using the notification template at Attachment 3; and
- notify the person making the disclosure within 14 days of the decision (unless they are anonymous and uncontactable) – see s 35.

The Ombudsman must then review this decision under s 35(2).

If, on review of the matter, the Ombudsman agrees that the disclosure is not a public interest disclosure, it does not need to be dealt with under the Act. The Principal Officer, or the Public Interest Disclosure Officer in consultation with the Principal Officer, will then decide how the disclosure should be dealt with. If the Ombudsman determines on review that the disclosure is a public interest disclosure, it may be referred back to the public body under s 42 for investigation under the Act or the Ombudsman will deal with the disclosed matter.

## **10.7 Referral of criminal conduct to the Commissioner of Police**

It is possible that, before or during the investigation of a public interest disclosure, facts are uncovered that indicate the possibility that a criminal offence might have been committed. If this happens, Waratah-Wynyard Council will not commence, or will suspend, the investigation and will consult with the Ombudsman as to the future conduct of the matter. Under s 41 of the Act, the Ombudsman has the power to refer a public interest disclosure to the Commissioner of Police for investigation.



If the Ombudsman is satisfied that the disclosed matter should be referred to the Commissioner, Waratah-Wynyard Council should consider whether the disclosure should be referred to the Ombudsman under s 68 of the Act.

Early referral of the matter may avoid interference with the evidentiary trail and so should be done at the first possible opportunity. Referral to the Commissioner through the Ombudsman will also avoid any question of a breach of confidentiality under s 23 of the Act. Once a disclosure is referred to the Commissioner through the Ombudsman, the investigation under the Act ceases. There may still be administrative or operational issues which have been identified during the disclosure process or investigation, however, these should be dealt with under other internal processes of Waratah-Wynyard Council. The Principal Officer, or the Public Interest Disclosure Officer acting in consultation with the Principal Officer, will decide how the matter should be dealt with.

## **11. Protection**

### **11.1 When does protection commence?**

Where Waratah-Wynyard Council receives a disclosure, which complies with the requirements of Part 2 of the Act, the disclosure immediately attracts the protections set out in Part 3 of the Act. This is so whether or not the disclosure is factually correct (although one of the requirements of Part 2 is that the discloser genuinely believes that the alleged improper conduct or detrimental action in fact occurred).

The protection can also extend to a person who intends to make a disclosure - see s19 of the Act.

### **11.2 What protection does the Act provide?**

Part 3 of the Act gives various types of protection to a person who makes a protected disclosure. Below is a summary of some elements of Part 3.

A person who makes a protected disclosure:

- is not subject to any civil or criminal liability, or to any liability arising by way of administrative process, for making the protected disclosure (s 16);
- does not by doing so commit an offence under a provision of any other Act that imposes a duty to maintain confidentiality, or which imposes any other restriction on the disclosure of information (s 17(1)(a)); and
- does not by doing so breach an obligation by way of oath, or rule of law or practice, or under an agreement, which requires the discloser to maintain confidentiality or otherwise restricts the disclosure of information (s 17(1)(b)).

If a disclosure is not made to the correct entity, the protections may not apply. For example, a discloser will not be protected if otherwise confidential information is disclosed to the media.

Part 3 also contains various provisions which are intended to protect a discloser from detrimental action by way of reprisal for a protected disclosure. These are:

- section 19, which makes it an offence to take such detrimental action;
- section 20, which creates a liability to pay damages for such detrimental action; and
- section 21, which gives a person who believes that detrimental action has been taken against them the right to apply to the Supreme Court for an order requiring the person who has taken the detrimental action to remedy that action, or for an injunction.

## **12. Investigation**

### **12.1 Introduction**

Any disclosure Waratah-Wynyard Council determines to be a public interest disclosure under s 33 must be investigated under the Act, unless there is a good reason not to do so pursuant to s 64.

Waratah-Wynyard Council must investigate every disclosure referred to it for investigation by the Ombudsman under s 63(b).

The Principal Officer will appoint an investigator to carry out the investigation. The investigator may be a person from within an organisation or a consultant engaged for the purpose.

The objectives of an investigation are to:

- collate information relating to the allegation as quickly as possible, which may involve taking steps to protect or preserve documents, materials and equipment;
- consider the information collected and to draw conclusions objectively and impartially; and
- maintain procedural fairness in the treatment of witnesses and generally to all parties involved in the disclosure.

### **12.2 Matters that do not have to be investigated**

Before starting an investigation, the Principal Officer or Public Interest Disclosure Officer must first consider whether the disclosed matter needs to be investigated. Section 64 specifies certain circumstances under which a public body may legitimately decide not to investigate. Use the disclosure assessment template at Attachment 1 to assist in assessing whether any of the grounds in s64 apply.

Any decision not to proceed with an investigation on a ground specified in s 64 must be made by the Principal Officer.

If it is decided that the disclosed matter is not to be investigated, written notice must be given within 14 days of this decision to both the Ombudsman and (except in the case of an uncontactable anonymous discloser) the person who made the disclosure. Reasons for the decision must accompany the notice. Use the notification template at Attachment 3 to provide notice to the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman will review the decision. If the Ombudsman agrees that the disclosure should not be investigated, the matter does not need to be dealt with under the Act. Importantly, the discloser still retains the protections. The Principal Officer, or the Public Interest Disclosure Officer in consultation with the Principal Officer, will decide how the matter should be dealt with.

If the Ombudsman determines that the disclosure should be investigated, they will advise the Principal Officer.

Section 64 may be reconsidered at a later time during the investigation.

### **12.3 Appointment of investigator and framing of terms of reference**

The Principal Officer – not a Public Interest Disclosure Officer - will determine who is to carry out the investigation.

The investigator will be given formal terms of reference, signed by the Principal Officer.

The terms of reference will specify:

- the matters to be investigated;
- the date by which the investigation is to be concluded;
- the requirement for regular reports to be made to the Principal Officer, including details of compliance with any measures identified in the risk assessment; and
- the resources available to the investigator for the purposes of the investigation.

The completion date should be as soon as practicable but, in any event, not more than six months from the date of the determination that the disclosure is a public interest disclosure under s 77A(1). If at any stage before or during the investigation it appears that the investigation cannot be completed within six months, Waratah-Wynyard Council may apply to the Ombudsman for an extension of up to a further six months.

### **12.4 Investigation plan**

The investigator should prepare an investigation plan for approval by the Principal Officer. The plan should list the issues which are to be investigated and describe the steps which the investigator intends to take when investigating each of those issues. The risk assessment should be considered as part of the investigation planning and appropriate steps taken to reduce identified risks during the investigation.

The plan should be updated as necessary during the course of the investigation.

### **12.5 Procedural fairness**

The principles of procedural fairness must be carefully observed in the course of the investigation, with respect to all parties involved. These principles are referred to as natural justice in the Act.

The principles are a set of procedural standards which need to be met in order to satisfy a person's right to a fair hearing. If natural justice is not provided, the investigation findings may be questionable and could be challenged.

Waratah-Wynyard Council will comply with the following requirements in ensuring that procedural fairness is accorded to all parties involved.

No one is to be involved in the investigation:

- who is known to be biased against any person who is potentially subject to an adverse finding;
- who is known to hold any biases which are relevant to the subject matter of the investigation; or
- against whom there are reasonable grounds for apprehending or suspecting bias.<sup>7</sup>

If the investigator is aware of any reason why they may be susceptible to an allegation of bias on the basis of these principles, they should immediately inform the Principal Officer. It is best to err on the side of caution and to consider an external investigator if there might be a perception of bias over the investigation.

Any person who is potentially subject to an adverse finding or comment must be told of:

- the allegations made against them, or which have arisen against them as a result of the investigation;
- all of the information which is adverse to their interests and which is, on an objective basis, credible, relevant and significant to the investigation; and
- the proposed adverse findings, and their possible consequences.

This must be done before any final conclusions are formed by the investigator. The person subject to the potential adverse finding must be given a reasonable time to respond.

Despite the above, there is no requirement to inform the person who is subject to the disclosure as soon as it is received, or as soon as the investigation has commenced.

The final investigation report should be drafted in a way that demonstrates that procedural fairness has been afforded. For instance, it should record and deal with all submissions and evidence which a person has put in their defence.

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<sup>7</sup> The test for establishing the existence of apprehended bias is whether a fair minded lay observer, taking into account all relevant circumstances, might reasonably apprehend that the decision-maker might not bring an impartial mind to the resolution of the questions that they are required to decide.

## **12.6 Conduct of the investigation**

The Integrity Commission's Guide to Managing Misconduct in the Tasmanian Public Sector<sup>8</sup> is a useful guide on the conduct of a public interest disclosure investigation.

The investigator should make contemporaneous notes of all discussions and phone calls, and audio recordings of significant interviews with witnesses should be made where possible.

All information gathered in the course of the investigation must be securely stored.

Interviews should be conducted in private, and the investigator should take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the discloser. The name of the discloser or any particulars which might identify that person must not be revealed unless necessary, and then only with the discloser's knowledge.

## **12.7 Referral of an investigation to the Ombudsman**

Under s 68 of the Act, a public body may refer the investigation of a public interest disclosure to the Ombudsman where the public body considers that its own investigation is being obstructed or that it is otherwise not within the capacity of the public body to complete the investigation. An investigation can also be referred to the Ombudsman if evidence of possible criminal conduct is found, to enable the Ombudsman to refer the matter to Tasmania Police for investigation (see [Referral of criminal conduct to the Commissioner of Police](#) above for more detail).

Any decision as to whether the investigation should be referred to the Ombudsman will be made by the Principal Officer.

## **12.8 Provision of information about the investigation**

The Principal Officer or the Public Interest Disclosure Officer must ensure that the discloser is kept regularly informed concerning the handling of their protected disclosure and any investigation.

Section 74 of the Act requires a public body, at the request of the Ombudsman or the person who made the disclosure, to give the Ombudsman or that person reasonable information about the investigation. The information must be given within 28 days of the request.

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<sup>8</sup> Accessible at <https://www.integrity.tas.gov.au/publications/prevention-resources/guides>.

As provided by s 74(3), however, such information does not have to be given to the discloser if:

- it has already been given to the person; or
- the giving of the information would endanger the safety of another or may prejudice the conduct of the investigation.

## **13. Action taken after an investigation**

### **13.1 Investigator's final report**

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator must submit a written report of their findings to the Principal Officer. The report should contain:

- the allegation/s;
- a description of the manner in which the investigation was conducted, with sufficient detail to demonstrate that natural justice was observed;
- an account of all relevant information received;
- details of the evidence and submissions supplied by any person against whom an adverse finding is made, and the evaluation of that material by the investigator; and
- the findings made and conclusions reached, and the basis for them.

Note in particular that the report should not include any comment adverse to any person unless that person has been given an opportunity to be heard on the matter and their defence is fairly set out in the report. A public body must take action, under s 75 of the Act, to redress any improper conduct found and try to prevent its recurrence. Accordingly, if the investigator has found that the alleged improper conduct has occurred, the investigator may wish to include recommendations as to:

- any steps that need to be taken by the Waratah-Wynyard Council to prevent the conduct from continuing or occurring in the future; and
- any action that should be taken by the Waratah-Wynyard Council to remedy any harm or loss arising from that conduct.

The steps to be taken may include bringing disciplinary proceedings against the person responsible for the conduct or referring the matter to an appropriate authority for further consideration. For example, if the investigation has revealed conduct that may constitute an unreported criminal offence, consideration should be given to whether the matter should be referred to Tasmania Police.

The internal investigation report must be accompanied by:

- the transcript or other record of any oral evidence taken, including audio or video recordings; and
- all documents, statements or other exhibits received by the investigator and accepted as evidence during the course of the investigation.

## **13.2 Action to be taken**

If the investigation makes a finding that a public officer has engaged, is engaging or proposes to engage in improper conduct, Waratah-Wynyard Council must, in accordance with s75, take all reasonable steps to prevent the conduct from continuing or occurring in the future and may take action to remedy any loss or harm arising from the conduct. The Principal Officer should take into consideration any recommendations in the investigator's report but can take different or broader action if appropriate.

The Principal Officer will provide a written report to [*name of the minister responsible for the public body, or name of council where disclosure relates to employee of a council*] and the Ombudsman, setting out the findings of the investigation and any remedial steps taken. The report must not disclose particulars likely to lead to the identification of the discloser. The Ombudsman will also be provided with the full internal investigation report and accompanying evidence. See the notification template at Attachment 3.

As required by s 77 of the Act, the Principal Officer will also inform the discloser of the findings of the investigation, and of any steps taken under s 75 as a result of those findings having been made.

Where the investigation concludes that the disclosed conduct did not occur, the Principal Officer will report that finding to the Ombudsman, in accordance with the notification template at Attachment 3, and to the discloser.

## **14. Managing the welfare of the discloser**

### **14.1 Support for the discloser**

The Principal Officer or the Public Interest Disclosure Officer must appoint a Welfare Manager to support all persons who have made a protected disclosure. This must occur within five working days of the protected disclosure being received.

The Welfare Manager must contact the discloser as soon as possible and not more than five working days after being appointed.

A discloser who believes that they are being subjected to detrimental action in reprisal for having made the disclosure should report it to the Principal Officer or a Public Interest Disclosure Officer, as this can be a potential further protected disclosure. If they believe that the reprisal is not being effectively dealt with by Waratah-Wynyard Council, they may report the matter to the Ombudsman.

## **14.2 Keeping the discloser informed**

The Principal Officer or the Public Interest Disclosure Officer must ensure that the discloser is kept informed of action taken in relation to their disclosure, and the time frames that apply. The discloser must be informed of the objectives of any investigation that takes place, the findings of the investigation, and the steps taken by Waratah-Wynyard Council to address any improper conduct that has been found to have occurred. The discloser must be given reasons for all decisions made by Waratah-Wynyard Council in relation to a disclosure. All communication with the discloser must be in plain English.

## **14.3 Occurrence of detrimental action**

If a discloser reports an incident of detrimental action allegedly taken in reprisal for the making of a disclosure, the Welfare Manager should:

- record details of the incident;
- advise the discloser of their rights under the Act; and
- assist the discloser to advise a Public Interest Disclosure Officer or the Principal Officer of the detrimental action.

The taking of detrimental action in reprisal for the making of a disclosure can be an offence under the Act as well as grounds for making a further disclosure. Where such detrimental action is reported, the Public Interest Disclosure Officer or the Principal Officer will assess the report as a new disclosure under the Act, and it will be dealt with accordingly.

## **14.4 Discloser implicated in improper conduct**

Where a person who makes a disclosure is implicated in improper conduct, Waratah-Wynyard Council will handle the disclosure and protect the discloser from reprisals in accordance with the Act, the Ombudsman's guidelines and these procedures. At the same time Waratah-Wynyard Council acknowledges that the act of disclosing should not shield disclosers from the reasonable consequences flowing from any involvement in improper conduct. Section 18 of the Act specifically provides that a person's liability for their own conduct is not affected by the person's disclosure of that conduct under the Act. In some circumstances, however, an admission may be a mitigating factor when considering disciplinary or other action.

The Principal Officer will make the final decision as to whether disciplinary or other action will be taken against a discloser. Where disciplinary or other action relates to conduct that is the subject of the person's disclosure, the disciplinary or other action will only be taken after the disclosed matter has been appropriately dealt with.



In all cases where disciplinary or other action is being contemplated, the Principal Officer must be satisfied that it has been clearly demonstrated that:

- the intention to proceed with disciplinary action is not because of the making of the disclosure (as opposed to the content of the disclosure or other available information);
- there are good and sufficient grounds that would fully justify action against any non-discloser in the same circumstances; and
- there are good and sufficient grounds that justify exercising any discretion to institute disciplinary or other action.

The Public Interest Disclosure Officer or Principal Officer will thoroughly document the process, including recording the reasons why the disciplinary or other action is being taken, and the reasons why the action is not in retribution for the making of the disclosure. The Public Interest Disclosure Officer or Principal Officer will clearly advise the discloser of the proposed action to be taken, and of any mitigating factors that have been taken into account. They should advise the discloser that they can raise any concerns about the action taken being a potential reprisal with the Ombudsman.

## **15. Management of the person against whom a disclosure has been made**

Waratah-Wynyard Council recognises that employees against whom disclosures are made must also be supported during the handling and investigation of disclosures. When a person who is the subject of the disclosure is made aware of the allegations or of an investigation, they should be provided with an appropriate contact person to whom to direct queries. Information about employee assistance programs or other supports should also be provided, if appropriate.

Waratah-Wynyard Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the person who is the subject of the disclosure during the assessment and investigation process. Where an investigation does not substantiate a disclosure, the fact that the investigation has been carried out, the results of the investigation, and the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure will remain confidential.

The Public Interest Disclosure Officer or Principal Officer will ensure that the person who is the subject of any disclosure investigated by or on behalf of Waratah-Wynyard Council is afforded procedural fairness in accordance with these procedures.


Where the allegations in a disclosure have been investigated, and the person who is the subject of the disclosure is aware of the allegations or of the investigation, the Public Interest Disclosure Officer or Principal Officer will formally advise the person who is the subject of the disclosure of the outcome of the investigation.

Waratah-Wynyard Council will give its full support to a person who is the subject of a disclosure where the allegations contained in a disclosure are clearly wrong or unsubstantiated. If the matter has been publicly disclosed, the Principal Officer of Waratah-Wynyard Council will consider any request by that person to issue a statement of support setting out that the allegations were wrong or unsubstantiated.

## **16. Approval and review of these procedures**

The procedures will be submitted to the Ombudsman for review at least once every three years to ensure they meet the objectives of the Act and accord with the Guidelines and Standards published by the Ombudsman under s 38(1)(c).

The date by which the procedures must be submitted to the Ombudsman for review is 7 April 2024.

WARATAH-WYNYARD COUNCIL	
 <b>ASSESSMENT OF DISCLOSURE FORM (ATTACHMENT 1) Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002</b>	
<b>File number:</b>	
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	
<b>Name of assessing officer:</b>	
<b>Summary of disclosure:</b> Include details of how the disclosure was received, the subject of the disclosure and details of the allegations.  An assessment of disclosure form will usually need to be completed for each disclosure. This means, for example, that if a discloser is complaining about three different public officers, this constitutes three disclosures and three assessments may be required.	
PART 1: IS THE DISCLOSURE A PROTECTED DISCLOSURE?	
<b>Question 1: Is the discloser a public officer?</b> <i>The discloser needs to be a current public officer. See s4(2) and s4(4) of the Act for the definition of a public officer. If the discloser is anonymous, it is enough to be satisfied that the discloser is a public officer.</i>  <i>If the discloser is a contractor, member of the public or no longer a public officer at the time the disclosure is made, refer them to the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  Please provide details if relevant:
<b>Question 2: Is the disclosure about a public officer?</b> <i>A disclosure can be made even if the discloser cannot identify the public officer – see s9 of the Act. If a disclosure is about the principal officer or the public body itself, refer the discloser to the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Question 3: Has the disclosure been made to the right person or body?</b> <i>See s7 of the Act and reg 8 of the Public Interest Disclosures Regulations 2013.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  Please provide details:

<p><b>Question 4: Does the discloser believe that a public officer has, is or proposes to engage in improper conduct?</b></p> <p><b>Question 5: Does the disclosure relate to improper conduct?</b> Is the disclosure about conduct that could objectively fall within one of the categories of improper conduct, ie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conduct that constitutes an illegal or unlawful activity; or</li> <li>• corrupt conduct; or</li> <li>• conduct that constitutes maladministration; or</li> <li>• conduct that constitutes professional misconduct; or</li> <li>• conduct that constitutes a waste of public resources; or</li> <li>• conduct that constitutes a danger to public health or safety or to both public health and safety; or</li> <li>• conduct that constitutes a danger to the environment; or</li> <li>• misconduct, including breaches of applicable codes of conduct; or</li> <li>• conduct that constitutes detrimental action against a person who makes a public interest disclosure under this Act –</li> </ul> <p>that is serious or significant as determined in accordance with guidelines issued by the Ombudsman?</p> <p><i>For example, a discloser may believe that taking a non-confidential work file home is serious or significant improper conduct, but it may not objectively fall within that definition.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, provide details:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Please provide details:</p>
<p><b>Question 6: Does the disclosure concern conduct that occurred on or after 1 January 2001?</b> <i>This is the only time limitation that is relevant when assessing if a disclosure is a protected disclosure. Delays in making a disclosure any time on or after 1 January 2001 can be relevant when deciding whether to investigate a public interest disclosure under s64 of the Act.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

**Assessment of Answers to Part 1 Questions**

If **ALL** the answers to the above are yes, the disclosure is a protected disclosure. The discloser should be notified as soon as possible, if the disclosure is a protected disclosure and the assessment of whether it is a public interest disclosure has not been undertaken simultaneously.

If **ANY** of the answers to the above are no, the disclosure is not protected, and the Act does not apply. Refer the discloser to the appropriate body and/or handle the matter under complaint or grievance policies.

In either case, the discloser should be given reasons in writing. A copy of the assessment should be given to the Principal Officer without delay, where the person who carried out the assessment is not the Principal Officer.

**PART 2: SHOULD THE PROTECTED DISCLOSURE BE REFERRED TO THE INTEGRITY COMMISSION?**

<p>Does the disclosure relate to misconduct, as defined in the <i>Integrity Commission Act 2009</i>?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, should the disclosure be referred to the Integrity Commission under section 29B of the Act?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If yes, please provide details</p>
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*If the disclosure is referred, the assessment process is complete after the discloser is notified of the referral.*

**PART 3: IS THE PROTECTED DISCLOSURE A PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE?**

<p>Are you satisfied that the protected disclosure shows, or tends to show, that the public officer to whom the disclosure relates –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) has engaged, is engaged or proposes to engage in improper conduct in his or her capacity as a public officer; or</li> <li>b) has taken, is taking or proposes to take detrimental action in contravention of s 19 of the Act?</li> </ul> <p><i>A mere allegation without substantiation is not sufficient – the disclosure must contain evidence or point to its existence (name documents, refer to potential witnesses etc) that shows or tends to show that the public officer is, has, or is proposing to engage in improper conduct.</i></p> <p><i>This determination under s33 of the Act must be made within 45 days of the disclosure being received.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Provide reasons for your decision and attach evidence if available</p>
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**Next steps**

Notify the discloser and the Ombudsman of the assessment determination. Use the notification template attached to the public interest disclosure procedures when notifying the Ombudsman.

If the answer is no, the assessment is complete, and Part 4 does not need to be completed. The Ombudsman will review the determination.

If the answer is yes, the public interest disclosure must be investigated unless a ground exists not to under s64 of the Act.

**PART 4 - IS THERE A GROUND UNDER S64 NOT TO INVESTIGATE THE PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE?**

<b>Question 1: Is the public interest disclosure trivial, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details. Compelling reasons will be required to justify not investigating on this ground:
<b>Question 2: Has the subject matter of the public interest disclosure already been adequately dealt with by the Ombudsman or a public body, statutory authority, Commonwealth statutory authority, commission, court or tribunal?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please provide details
<b>Question 3: Has the discloser commenced proceedings in a commission, court or tribunal in relation to the same matter, and does that commission, court or tribunal have power to order remedies similar to those available under this Act?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please provide details
<b>Question 4: Did the discloser:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have knowledge for more than 12 months of the public interest disclosure matter before making the disclosure; and</li> <li>• fail to give a satisfactory explanation for the delay in making the disclosure?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details of this issue being put to the discloser and analysis concerning why any explanation provided was not satisfactory:

<p><b>Question 5: Does the public interest disclosure relate solely to the personal interests of the discloser?</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  <i>Most disclosures will contain some element of personal interest. This should only be used as a basis to not investigate in clear circumstances.</i>          If yes, please provide details:</p>
<p><b>Question 6: Is the public interest disclosure based on false or misleading information?</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No          If yes, please provide details and consider whether an offence may have been committed under s87 of the Act.</p>
<p><b>Question 7: Has the matter the subject of the public interest disclosure already been determined AND this additional disclosure fails to provide significant or substantial new information?</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No          If yes, please provide details</p>
<p><b>Assessment of Answers to Part 4 Questions</b>          If the answers to <b>ALL</b> the questions in Part 4 are no, the disclosure <b>must</b> be investigated in accordance with the public interest disclosure procedures. Referral to the Ombudsman can occur if internal investigation is not possible or appropriate.          If the answer is yes to <b>one or more of the above questions</b>, will the public interest disclosure be investigated?</p>	
<p><i>Although the public interest disclosure may not need to be investigated if an answer to any of the Part 4 questions is yes, it may still be appropriate to investigate in some circumstances.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No          Provide reasons for your decision:</p>
<p>Notify the discloser and the Ombudsman if it is decided not to investigate. The Ombudsman will review the decision. Use the notification template attached to the public interest disclosure procedures when notifying the Ombudsman.</p>	

## SUMMARY

Part	Question	Answer
Part 1	Is the disclosure a protected disclosure?	
Part 2	Should the protected disclosure be referred to the Integrity Commission?	
Part 3	Is the protected disclosure a public interest disclosure?	
Part 4	Should the public interest disclosure be investigated?	

## APPROVAL

<b>Approved by:</b> Name of Public Interest Disclosure Officer or Principal Officer:	
<b>Date of approval:</b>	





**WARATAH-WYNYARD COUNCIL**

**RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE  
(ATTACHMENT 2)  
Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002**

<b>File number:</b>	
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	
<b>Name of assessing officer:</b>	
<b>Risk assessed to:</b> <i>Please select all relevant options</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Discloser <input type="checkbox"/> Other employees including potential witnesses <input type="checkbox"/> Your public body <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. Tasmanian Government, the general public) <input type="checkbox"/> The subject of the disclosure
<b>Type of risk / possible harm</b> Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse employment action</li> <li>• Workplace injury</li> <li>• Physical violence</li> <li>• Verbal abuse</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Untenable work environment</li> <li>• Withdrawal of cooperation due to fear of reprisal/lack of support</li> <li>• Reputational damage</li> <li>• Risk to public safety</li> <li>• Misuse of public funds</li> <li>• Disruption to functioning of public body</li> </ul>	<b>Please provide details:</b>
<b>Likelihood risk/s will occur</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Unlikely <input type="checkbox"/> Possible <input type="checkbox"/> Likely
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can confidentiality be maintained?</li> <li>• Is the discloser (or others) concerned about reprisals?</li> <li>• How many public officers are involved in the alleged improper conduct?</li> <li>• What is their level of seniority?</li> <li>• What is the seriousness of the alleged conduct?</li> <li>• Is there a history of conflict in the workplace?</li> </ul>	

<b>Please provide your reasons:</b>																	
<b>Seriousness of consequences if risk/s occurs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> Major																
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the potential impact if the risk occurs?</li> <li>• Will the impact be limited, with the person able to readily deal with it?</li> <li>• Will the impact have consequences which will affect the person's work or their personal and home life?</li> <li>• Will the consequences be short-term, medium-term or long-term?</li> </ul>																	
<b>Please provide your reasons:</b>																	
<b>Evaluation of level of risk</b> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Risk occurrence</th> <th>Minor consequence</th> <th>Moderate consequence</th> <th>Major consequence</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Unlikely</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Medium</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Possible</td> <td>Low</td> <td>Medium</td> <td>High</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Likely</td> <td>Medium</td> <td>High</td> <td>High</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Risk occurrence	Minor consequence	Moderate consequence	Major consequence	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Possible	Low	Medium	High	Likely	Medium	High	High
Risk occurrence	Minor consequence	Moderate consequence	Major consequence														
Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium														
Possible	Low	Medium	High														
Likely	Medium	High	High														
<b>Determine your level of risk:</b>																	
<b>Steps needed to mitigate risk</b> Consult with discloser and other parties as required. Possible strategies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining confidentiality as much as possible</li> <li>• ensuring all parties are aware of their obligations</li> <li>• when the identity of the discloser will be known or guessed by the subject of the disclosure and/or associates, proactively identifying the discloser (with their written permission) and advising relevant parties of the consequences of taking reprisal action and that their actions are being monitored</li> <li>• altering reporting structures</li> <li>• increasing monitoring of the work environment</li> <li>• standing down the subject of the disclosure</li> <li>• temporarily relocating the subject of the disclosure or the discloser to a different location/role</li> <li>• independently verifying the work performance of the discloser</li> <li>• providing access to specialist support services if required</li> <li>• making a statement to all staff or the media to address concerns</li> </ul>																	
<b>Please provide details:</b>																	


ACTION TO BE TAKEN	
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• risk rating</li> <li>• ease or difficulty of mitigating risk</li> <li>• financial cost of taking action</li> <li>• consequences of not taking action should risk occur</li> </ul>	
<b>Please provide details of your risk action plan:</b>	

### APPROVAL

<b>Approved by:</b> Name of Public Interest Disclosure Officer or Principal Officer – Type Name:	
<b>Date of approval:</b>	

### RISK ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Risk assessment to be reviewed on (date)	or when (event)	occurs.
<b>Name of reviewing officer:</b>		
<b>Date of assessment</b>		
<b>Notes on changes to risk since last assessment</b>		
<b>Review outcome</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> No change to action plan <input type="checkbox"/> Further action required <b>Please provide details:</b>	
<i>Thank you to the Queensland Ombudsman for the use of some of its risk assessment materials in this template.</i>		

WARATAH-WYNYARD COUNCIL	
 <b>OMBUDSMAN NOTIFICATION TEMPLATE (ATTACHMENT 3) <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002</i></b>	
<b>Public Body Name:</b>	
<b>Date of disclosure:</b>	
<b>Contact person:</b> <i>(include telephone and email contact details)</i>	
<b>Date of s 33 determination:</b> <i>(to be made within 45 days of date of disclosure)</i>	
<b>Date of notification:</b>	
NOTIFICATION TYPE	
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 34 – Determination that disclosure is a public interest disclosure <i>Notification to be made within 14 days of decision</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 35 – Determination that disclosure is not a public interest disclosure <i>Notification to be made within 14 days of decision</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 65 – Decision not to investigate public interest disclosure under s 64 <i>Notification to be made within 14 days of decision</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 76 – Findings of investigation and steps taken under s 75 <i>Investigation to be completed within 6 months unless Ombudsman extension granted</i>	
EVIDENCE ATTACHED	
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of original disclosure or record of oral disclosure	
<input type="checkbox"/> Disclosure assessment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk assessment/s	
<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation report including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the transcript or other record of any oral evidence taken, including audio or video recordings; and</li> <li>• all documents, statements or other exhibits received by the investigator and accepted as evidence during the course of the investigation.</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Any other material used to make determination (list): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	



**WARATAH-WYNYARD COUNCIL**  
**DISCLOSURE TO A PUBLIC BODY**  
**(ATTACHMENT 4 to Model Procedures)**  
**Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002**

