



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Roles and responsibilities

The differences between officers and executives when informing and advising ministers

Responsibility for briefing the minister

Ministers are responsible for government policy, projects and public services.

They're accountable to the Parliament and the Victorian community for delivering these well.

It's the VPS's responsibility to brief ministers on any matter that affects their minister's policies, projects and public services.

Executives decide when to brief their minister – officers shouldn't do so without authorisation. Executives also handle interactions between the minister's office and the VPS, except in limited circumstances and with the executive's knowledge. Officers shouldn't give the minister or their office information without an executive's knowledge or oversight.

Both officers and executives must give frank, impartial and timely advice to the government of the day. Frank, impartial and timely advice is a foundation of Victoria's Westminster style of government and forms part of:

- the public sector values in section 7 of the [Public Administration Act 2004](#)
- [the Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees](#).

All VPS employees are bound by the values and code.

Role of officers

VPS officers work on a range of matters including:

- policy
- projects
- grants
- budget and resource management
- frontline service delivery
- analysis
- records management
- other corporate and administrative responsibilities.

Compared to executives:

- their accountability is limited to specific areas of responsibility
- they don't have the same degree of autonomy or freedom to exercise judgement.

VPS officers are employed under part 3 of the [Public Administration Act 2004](#) and their employment conditions are set out in the [VPS Enterprise Agreement](#).

Role of departmental liaison officers (DLOs)

DLOs are VPS employees. They're employed by departments and allocated to ministers – often for a reasonably short period of time (e.g. 12 months).

DLOs work with their department and minister's office to:

- provide a central point of contact
- facilitate strong communication and an efficient flow of information and advice
- help build a cooperative working relationship.

Departments employ DLOs under part 3 of the [Public Administration Act 2004](#). DLOs must adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and must not function as quasi-ministerial staff or act in ways that are, or could be perceived to be, politically partisan. They're not subject to direction by ministerial staff.

A DLO shouldn't:

- conduct policy development or research work
- provide policy advice
- draft or edit briefs or correspondence
- prepare speeches, media releases, ministerial statements, parliamentary questions and answers or other similar documents
- organise meetings or events on behalf of the minister or their office
- initiate communication with external parties, including Members of Parliament or other ministers' offices (excluding liaising with DLOs in other offices to facilitate liaison with other departments)
- be involved in electorate office matters or any other party-political activities.

Role of executives

Executives are responsible for the leadership and stewardship of the public sector.

In order of least to most authority, responsibility and accountability, executive levels include director, executive director, deputy secretary and secretary (or CEO for public entities).

Executives work with a large degree of judgement and autonomy. They're generally accountable to organisational leaders like secretaries, or in the case of secretaries, the minister for the success of:

- complex policy outcomes
- major project development and delivery
- strategic decisions
- budget and resource management
- high-level stakeholder management
- upholding the public sector values to avoid serious damage to the public's trust in the culture and integrity of the VPS and government.

In most cases, executives are responsible for engaging with ministerial offices.

The minister or a more senior executive may also delegate statutory responsibilities to another executive that legally requires them to perform a role.

Executives are employed on fixed-term contracts under part 3 of the [Public Administration Act 2004](#) and classified under the [VPS Executive Classification Framework](#).