



PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING BREACHES OF THE APS CODE OF CONDUCT

I, Nathan Williamson, Secretary of the Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC), revoke the previous Procedures for Determining Breaches of the APS Code of Conduct made on 8 February 2023 and establish these Procedures under subsection 15(3) of the *Public Service Act 1999* (the PS Act).

Nathan Williamson
Secretary

15 August 2025

Introduction

1. The Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct (the Code) sets out the behavioural standards expected of APS employees. The Code is set out in section 13 of the PS Act. The PS Act, the *Public Service Regulations 1999* (PS Regulations) and the *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2022* provide a framework for managing the conduct of employees.
2. The PS Act requires the head of each agency to establish procedures for determining whether an employee has breached the Code and what sanction, if any, is to be imposed if a breach is found.

Application of procedures

3. These procedures apply in determining:
 - a. whether a person who is an Australian Public Service employee in the CGC, or who is a former APS employee who was employed in the CGC at the time of the suspected misconduct, has breached the Code in section 13 of the PS Act; and
 - b. any sanction to be imposed on an APS employee in the CGC who has been found under these procedures to have breached the Code.
4. In these procedures, a reference to a breach of the Code by a person includes a reference to a person engaging in conduct set out in subsection 15(2A) of the PS Act in connection with their engagement as an APS employee.

Initial decision maker – initiation of Code process

5. Any one of the following persons may decide whether or not to initiate an inquiry by which a suspected breach of the Code is to be dealt with under these procedures (the initial decision maker):
 - a. Secretary
 - b. Chief Operating Officer
6. If an APS employee in the CGC has engaged in conduct that may breach the Code or raises concerns relating to effective performance, the initial decision maker must, before deciding to initiate an inquiry under these Procedures, have regard to any relevant standards and guidance issued by the Australian Public Service Commissioner.

Note: Not all suspected breaches of the Code need to be dealt with by way of determination under these procedures. In particular circumstances, and when dealing with non-ongoing, irregular or intermittent employees, and alternative course of dealing with a suspected breach of the Code may be more appropriate.

*Note: Section 52 of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2022 provides that if an APS employee has engaged in conduct that may breach the Code or raises concerns relating to effective performance, the Secretary must, before making a decision to initiate an inquiry under procedures established by the Secretary under subsection 15(3) of the PS Act, have regard to the relevant standards and guidance issued by the Commissioner. As at August 2025, the relevant standards and guidance issued by the Commissioner are set out at paragraphs 4.1 to 4.37 of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's publication *Handling Misconduct: a human resource manager's guide*.*

Breach decision-maker and sanction delegate

7. As soon as practicable after a suspected breach of the Code has been identified and the Secretary, or a person authorised by the Secretary, has decided to deal with the suspected breach under these procedures, the Secretary or that person will appoint a decision-maker to make a determination under these procedures.
8. The role of the breach decision-maker is to determine in writing whether a breach of the Code has occurred.
9. The breach decision-maker may undertake the investigation or seek the assistance of an investigator. The investigator may investigate the alleged breach, gather evidence, and make a report of recommended findings of fact to the breach decision-maker.
10. The Secretary or their delegate has the power to impose a sanction in relation to a breach of the Code. The person who is to decide what, if any, sanction is to be imposed on an APS employee who is found to have breached the Code will be a person holding a delegation of the powers under the PS Act to impose sanctions.
11. These procedures do not prevent the breach decision-maker from being the sanction delegate in the same matter.

Person or persons making breach determination and imposing any sanction to be independent and unbiased

12. The breach decision-maker and the sanction delegate must be, and must appear to be, independent and unbiased.
13. The breach decision-maker and the sanction delegate must advise the Secretary in writing if they consider that they may not be independent and unbiased or if they consider that they may reasonably be perceived not to be independent and unbiased; for example, if they are a witness in the matter.

Suspension delegate

14. A current CGC employee who is under investigation for suspected breach of the Code may be:
 - a. Reassigned to alternative duties, either for a temporary period or on an ongoing basis under section 25 of the PS Act, and/or
 - b. Suspended from duty by the suspension delegate under section 28 of the PS Act and section 24 of the *Public Service Regulations 2023*
15. The employee must be provided with a reasonable opportunity (usually 7 calendar days) to make a statement regarding the reassignment of duties or suspension from duty.

16. The employee who determines the suspension of an employee from duties, with or without remuneration, in accordance with Section 28 of the PS Act (the suspension delegate) will act consistent with section 14 of the *Public Service Regulations 2023*.

These Procedures do not prevent the initial decision maker, the breach decision maker of the sanction delegate from being the suspension delegate.

The determination process

17. The process for determining whether a person who is, or was, an APS employee in the CGC has breached the Code must be carried out with as little formality, and with as much expedition, as a proper consideration of the matter allows.
18. The process must be consistent with the principles of procedural fairness.
19. A determination may not be made in relation to a suspected breach of the Code by a person unless reasonable steps have been taken to:
- a. inform the person of:
 - i. the details of the suspected breach of the Code, including any subsequent variation of those details; and
 - ii. where the person is an APS employee, the sanctions that may be imposed on them under subsection 15(1) of the PS Act; and
 - b. give the person a reasonable opportunity to make a statement in relation to the suspected breach.
20. The statement may be a written or oral statement and should be provided within 7 calendar days or any longer period that is allowed by the decision-maker.
21. A person who does not make a statement in relation to the suspected breach is not, for that reason alone, to be taken to have admitted to committing the suspected breach.
22. For the purpose of determining whether a person who is, or was, an APS employee in the CGC has breached the Code, a formal hearing is not required.

Sanctions

23. The process for imposing a sanction must be consistent with the principles of procedural fairness.
24. If a determination is made that an APS employee in the CGC has breached the Code, a sanction may not be imposed on the employee unless reasonable steps have been taken to:
- a. inform the employee of:
 - i. the determination that has been made; and
 - ii. the sanction or sanctions that are under consideration; and
 - iii. the factors that are under consideration in determining any sanction to be imposed; and
 - b. give the employee a reasonable opportunity to make a statement in relation to the sanction or sanctions under consideration.
25. The statement may be a written or oral statement and should be provided within 7 calendar days or any longer period that is allowed by the sanction delegate.

Record of determination and sanction

26. If a determination is made in relation to a suspected breach of the Code by a person who is, or was, an APS employee in the Commission, a written record must be made of:
- a. the suspected breach; and
 - b. the determination; and
 - c. any sanctions imposed as a result of a determination that the employee has breached the Code; and
 - d. if a statement of reasons was given to the person regarding the determination in relation to suspected breach of the Code, or, in the case of an employee, regarding the sanction decision, that statement of reasons or those statements of reasons.

Appropriate procedures if an employee moves to a different Agency

27. This clause applies if:
- a. an ongoing CGC employee is suspected of having breached the Code; and
 - b. the employee has been informed of the details of the suspected breach of the Code and the sanctions that may be imposed under subsection 15(1) of the PS Act; and
 - c. the matter has not been resolved; and
 - d. a decision has been made that, apart from this clause, would result in the movement of the employee under section 26 of the PS Act to another Agency (including on promotion).
28. Unless the Secretary and the new Agency Head agree otherwise, the movement (including on promotion) does not take effect until the matter is resolved.
29. For this clause, the matter is taken to be resolved when:
- a. a determination in relation to the suspected breach is made; or
 - b. it is decided that a determination is not necessary.

Note: this clause restates the requirements of sections 46.5 and 46.6 of the Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2022.