

# Departmental Liaison Officers and other departmental officers in ministerial offices

## Administrative Guideline

Number: 2026/01 | Issue: 1.0

# Acknowledgement of Country

**The Victorian Government acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of Country.**

We respectfully acknowledge all First Peoples of Victoria and celebrate their enduring connection to land, skies and waters. We thank First People for their care of Country and contributions to Victorian communities. We honour and pay our respects to First Peoples' Elders past and present.

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# ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

Issued under s36A of the *Public Administration Act 2004*

**Date:** 20 May 2026

**Number:** 2026/01

## Departmental Liaison Officers and other departmental officers in ministerial offices

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Departmental Liaison Officers (DLOs) play an important role in ensuring the Victorian Public Service fulfils its duty to ably support the government of the day. DLOs support clarity and efficiency of communication flows between departments and ministerial offices, and support ministerial staff with departmental procedures and protocols.
- 1.2. In most cases, DLOs are appointed for a short period. This provides an opportunity for a greater number of public service employees to gain valuable experience working in a ministerial office. This also protects the apolitical character of DLOs and reinforces that they remain subject to the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees and must comply with the Victorian Public Sector Values.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1. This Guideline provides advice to departments regarding the role and function of Victorian Public Service employees who are located in ministerial offices.
- 2.2. A key purpose of this Guideline is to ensure a clear understanding about the role of a DLO, and the functions that they can and cannot perform.
- 2.3. At times, the Guideline notes that other Victorian Public Service employees may be located in ministerial offices. These additional roles may influence the functions and duties performed by a DLO in a given ministerial office (such as whether a DLO has some supervisory duties).
- 2.4. Other Victorian Public Service employees that may be located in ministerial offices include Departmental Liaison Advisers (DLA), and Administration Information Officers (AIO). These roles assist the minister's office in an administrative capacity and support DLOs. In some instances, they may report to a DLO (or Senior DLO). Obligations that apply to DLOs under this Guideline also apply to these Victorian Public Service employees. Parts 5 and 6 of this Guideline cover additional information about appropriate duties and activities of Victorian Public Service employees in ministerial offices.

### 3. Application and commencement

- 3.1. This Guideline is issued pursuant to section 36A of the *Public Administration Act 2004* (PAA).
- 3.2. This Guideline applies to all departments (as defined in section 10 of the PAA).
- 3.3. This Guideline commences from 20 May 2026.

3.4. If a department operates, or intends to operate, in a manner that is inconsistent with this Guideline, the Secretary of that department is required by the PAA to provide written reasons for doing so to the Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

## 4. Role of a Departmental Liaison Officer

- 4.1. DLOs are public service employees appointed and employed by departments and allocated to ministers. DLOs provide a central point of contact and facilitate strong communication, efficient and effective flow of information and advice, and a cooperative working relationship between the department and the minister and their office.
- 4.2. DLOs assist the minister's office to operate efficiently and effectively with the department. DLOs provide knowledge of departmental and governmental operations and an understanding of the relevant portfolio.
- 4.3. In some cases, it may be appropriate for more senior DLOs to be responsible for overseeing other departmental staff within the ministerial office. Such staff may be appointed to provide general office administration support where this is required.
- 4.4. DLOs are subject to the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees (VPS Code of Conduct), issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission, and are required to observe the Public Sector Values. Departmental officers working in ministers' offices must adhere to this code and must not function as an extension to the ministerial staff or act in ways that are, or could be perceived to be, politically partisan.
- 4.5. Human resource matters relating to DLOs are managed through their respective departments and they remain subject to departmental policies. A DLO's reporting line is to the department as outlined in section 7. Like all public servants, they are not subject to direction by ministerial staff. DLOs should receive continued human resources and people management support from departments.

## 5. Duties

- 5.1. DLOs facilitate efficient communication and an effective working relationship between a minister's office and the department that serves them by:
  - identifying the particular style and practice preferences of the minister and communicating them to the department to ensure that the requirements are met in a timely manner
  - ensuring that paper flows are appropriately routed and tracked, including correspondence, briefs and other products
  - facilitating a timely flow of information and advice in relation to Cabinet, including briefings and submissions, and legislative and parliamentary business, including parliamentary questions and briefings
  - providing clarification on requests for information and advice, contributing to quality assurance of products in relation to both timeliness and format, and liaising with the department on requested changes
  - communicating information about key positions and their responsibilities within both the office and the department to ensure that requests for information and advice are appropriately and efficiently directed
  - identifying opportunities to improve administrative, operational and communication protocols between the department and the office.

## 6. Duties beyond the scope of a DLO or other Victorian Public Service officer

- 6.1. DLOs' roles must be limited to their designated departmental liaison function. DLOs are not appointed to ministerial offices and should not perform any role usually performed by ministerial staff.
- 6.2. In some cases, it may be appropriate for Victorian Public Service officers located in a minister's office to assist with more general office administration matters. This may include handling certain correspondence matters, and supporting the Senior DLO.
- 6.3. In such instances, the scope of that administrative work should be carefully defined and monitored to ensure that it does not lead to the Victorian Public Service officer undertaking duties more appropriately performed by ministerial staff. Activities carried out to assist in general office administration must not include any of the activities described under paragraphs 6.4 or 6.5.
- 6.4. Duties and activities that should not be undertaken by DLOs or other Victorian Public Service officers located in a ministerial office include:
  - conducting policy development or research work
  - providing policy advice
  - drafting or editing briefs or correspondence
  - preparing speeches, media releases, ministerial statements, parliamentary questions and answers, or other similar documents
  - organising calendars, meetings or events on behalf of the minister or his or her office
  - initiating communication with external parties, including Members of Parliament or other ministers' offices
  - involvement in electorate office matters or any other party-political activities.
- 6.5. DLOs and other Victorian Public Service officers should not participate in activities in ministerial offices which could compromise their apolitical character, such as office planning sessions, group chats where political matters are discussed, strategy meetings, and other similar activities. DLOs may participate in other activities that support productive interactions and relationships, such as office morning teas, or that relate to the general operation of the minister's office.

## 7. Appointment and allocation

- 7.1. DLOs are appointed by their respective departments, and report to the Secretary or another senior officer of the department.
- 7.2. DLOs are required to complete a declaration of private interests before commencing the role. Secretaries and ministerial chiefs of staff should have regard to any private interests or activities which could compromise the DLO's apolitical character.
- 7.3. Within the parameters set by this Guideline and other relevant requirements, the number of officers appointed and their specific duties are subject to the discretion of the Secretary and are determined with reference to the requirements of the minister and the department.
- 7.4. To protect the apolitical character of a DLO, appointments should generally be for 12 to 18 months and should not be longer than 24 months. Extensions should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

## 8. Authorisation and amendments

8.1. Authorised by the Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria, under section 36A(1) of the PAA Act.



Jeremi Moule

20 / 5 / 2026

SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

**Date:** 20 May 2026

**Number:** 2026/01

**Compliance note:** Under section 36A of the *Public Administration Act 2004*, if a public service body or a public entity to which guidelines have been issued operates, or intends to operate, in a manner that is inconsistent with those guidelines, the relevant public service body Head or public entity Head must provide written reasons for doing so to the Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

This Guideline may be subject to periodic amendment. For the latest version of the Guideline, see: <https://www.vic.gov.au/guidelines-working-government>

### Contact

For further information regarding this circular please contact Cabinet and Governance Branch, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Email: [publicsectorgovernance@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:publicsectorgovernance@dpc.vic.gov.au)

