

Public Interest Disclosures e-News



15 September 2011 : Issue 9

Hello Colleague

Please pass on this e-newsletter to executive management and people interested in public interest disclosures in your organisation.

Changes to the PID Act

Free PID training

NSW Parliament passes PID Amendment Bill 2011

The NSW Parliament passed the anticipated changes to the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994* (PID Act) on 7 September 2011. These changes come into force when the [Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Act 2011](#) is proclaimed, which is expected to occur shortly.

Policy changes

NSW public sector agencies will need to incorporate those changes relevant to their organisation into their public interest disclosures policy.

We recognise that, due to these recent changes to the PID Act, some agencies will have difficulty meeting the deadline of 1 October 2011 to have their public interest disclosure policy in place.

Our updated [Fact Sheet 1](#) and our model internal reporting policies for [state government](#) and [local government](#), incorporating the latest changes, are available on our website. We will be releasing updated versions of all our guidance and facts sheets to include the changes.

The amended PID Act has made the following changes:

- All references to 'protected disclosures' in the PID Act are changed to 'public interest disclosures'.
- The responsibilities of the head of an agency are explained.
- Agencies need to provide half-yearly data to the Ombudsman on their compliance with the PID Act.
- All agency PID policies need to state that a person who makes a public interest disclosure will receive the agency's PID policy and an acknowledgment of the receipt of their disclosure within 45 days of making it.
- All agencies need to refer any evidence of detrimental action to the Police or the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (not the Director of Public Prosecutions as previously required).
- Public interest disclosures about councils can now be made

PID training for staff

In August 2011, **Armidale – Dumaresq Council** was the first public sector organisation to take advantage of our free PID training for their staff.

Over two days in Armidale, **Charlene Joyce**, Senior Training and Education Officer PID Unit, trained more than 170 Council staff, giving them an overview of public interest disclosures.

Charlene also ran a special training session for the Council's PID co-ordinators.

Taking bookings

This month, we have bookings for PID training sessions in Orange, Maitland, North Sydney, Sydney CBD and Newcastle.

And in the following months we have bookings for Moss Vale, Griffith, Shellharbour, Snowy River and the Central Coast.

Book now!

Available dates are filling up, so please book your training sessions now at: pid@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

If your organisation is in a nearby location to the areas mentioned, please contact **Charlene** about the possibility of training

externally to the Division of Local Government (DLG), Department of Premier and Cabinet.

- Information Commissioner is included on the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee.

All the PID changes, except the change about the provision of agencies reporting half-yearly statistical information, will come into force when the Bill is proclaimed. We will advise you when this happens. The half-yearly reporting requirement for agencies will come into force from 1 January 2012.

If you need more information or advice about these changes, please contact us at pid@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

sessions in your area at: pid@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Contact us at:
pid@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Visit us at:
www.ombo.nsw.gov.au and use the green PID button.

Help in handling your PID cases

Maya Borthwick, Senior Investigation Officer PID Unit, has ten years' experience with administrative investigations and she is available to help public agencies that need practical assistance with handling their public interest disclosures.

Maya provides advice to agencies on complex PID matters, helps agencies to understand their obligations and advises them on the importance of communicating with all the parties involved in the disclosure process.

"In my experience, a public interest disclosure is another category of complaint," said Maya. "If you have effective complaint handling procedures in place, you should be well-equipped to handle any disclosures."

Maya's role in the PID Unit also includes investigating disclosures made to the NSW Ombudsman.

We can provide practical PID help

"I provide practical advice on how to handle PIDs," said Maya, "and on how to handle all the people involved in the PID process, including the subject of the disclosure."

You can contact **Maya** on (02) 9286 1098 or at: mborthwick@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

Public interest disclosures speeches are now available

NSW Ombudsman **Bruce Barbour** and Deputy Ombudsman **Chris Wheeler** spoke about public interest disclosures at the recent Museum of Sydney breakfast event, jointly organised with the Corruption Prevention Network.

Their speeches will be available on our website shortly. In the meantime, you can request both speeches from **Tom Millett**, Senior Policy Officer PID Unit, at: pid@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

PID e-learning

Sandra Duke, Senior Training and Education PID Unit, is available to talk with public sector organisations interested in using our first *PID Awareness* e-learning module for their staff.

We are currently taking requests for the PID e-learning module which will be available from October 2011.

Initially, we are making our PID e-learning programs available on CD to organisations wanting to use this form of training or to supplement other PID training.

Please contact **Sandra** on: (02) 9265 0488 or at: pid@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

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