

# Integrity Essentials

## What does **corruption** look like?

Integrity in public administration is not an abstract ideal – it is the foundation on which public trust, public services and responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds are built. Every action and decision made within government carries consequences for the people of South Australia. When that integrity is compromised, the impacts extend far beyond the individual responsible.

Corruption in public administration is sometimes described as victimless crime. This characterisation is misleading. Corruption diverts resources, undermines trust and harms the very communities that public institutions exist to serve.

A single act of corrupt conduct can derail the efforts of many – undermining good governance, damaging organisational culture, and depriving the community of services and opportunities meant for them.

## Community impact of corruption

Corruption, like other crimes, often occurs behind closed doors, but its consequences are felt widely.

When an elected representative misappropriates public funds intended for a not-for-profit education program, the loss is not limited to a financial ledger. That money represents opportunities for disadvantaged young people – support programs, learning resources or pathways that could shape their future.

When a procurement or tender process is manipulated to favour a predetermined outcome, it undermines fair competition and wastes public resources. The community may receive poorer services, other businesses are denied a fair opportunity, and taxpayers ultimately carry the cost.

In every case, the victims are the people of South Australia – those who pay taxes, rely on public services or seek to work fairly with government.

# Corruption looks like...

Corruption in public administration can take many forms. While the circumstances vary, the underlying feature is the deliberate misuse of public power or resources for private gain.

Below are examples that illustrate how corruption can occur and why preventing it matters.

## **Bribery for favourable outcomes**

A public official responsible for approving licenses or permits asks a business owner for a personal payment in exchange for a faster approval.

### **IMPACT:**

This behaviour undermines fairness and confidence in government processes. Decisions should be based on merit and lawful criteria, not personal gain.

## **Nepotism and favouritism in hiring**

A manager in a public agency arranges for a family member or close friend to be appointed to a position without a fair recruitment process.

### **IMPACT:**

Public sector jobs must be filled based on merit. When personal relationships influence hiring decisions, it reduces confidence in the integrity and capability of public institutions. Conflicts of interest must be disclosed.

## **Theft of public resources**

A public employee deliberately misuses government funds or resources for personal benefit.

### **IMPACT:**

Public money is intended to support essential services such as schools, hospitals and community programs. Every dollar misappropriated reduces the resources available for those services.

## **Manipulating procurement for a 'mate'**

An employee involved in a government tender process ensures a friend's company wins the contract, despite other suppliers offering better value or capability.

### **IMPACT:**

This deprives the community of the best possible service outcome and denies other businesses a fair opportunity to compete.

## **Selling confidential information**

A government employee sells sensitive information obtained through their role to a private party.

### **IMPACT:**

Confidential information may include personal data, commercial details or security-related material. Misusing it compromises privacy, safety and the public's trust in government.



# Why reporting corruption matters

Corruption in public administration is not a victimless crime. Every dollar misused and every decision influenced by personal interests ultimately comes at the expense of the South Australian community.

By recognising the signs of corruption and reporting concerns, we can all play a role in protecting the integrity of public administration, while ensuring that public resources are used for the people they are intended to serve.

Corruption cannot be addressed if it remains hidden.

Every report helps strengthen accountability and protect public resources. People who report suspected corruption – whether public officers, contractors or members of the community – play a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of South Australia’s public administration.

If you pay taxes, access community services, or do business with government, corruption affects you.

Report corruption to the Office for Public Integrity (OPI):



To learn more about the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), visit **[icac.sa.gov.au](https://icac.sa.gov.au)**.