

Evaluation of conflicts of interests policies and procedures in **SAFECOM and the CFS, MFS and SES**

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During an evaluation the policies and procedures of various agencies are reviewed with a view to improving systems for managing integrity risks and preventing and minimising corruption.

What is an evaluation?

An Independent Commission Against Corruption evaluation is **not** an investigation.

Investigations are focused on individual conduct, whereas an evaluation is focused on agencies' policies and procedures.

During an evaluation the policies and procedures of various agencies are reviewed with a view to improving systems for managing integrity risks and preventing and minimising corruption.

Previous Commission evaluations have proved valuable, both for individual agencies in strengthening their systems to prevent corruption, and for public administration more broadly.

Information about past evaluations can be accessed here: www.icac.sa.gov/evaluations-and-reviews.

If a matter is raised during the course of an evaluation that might require investigation, the information will be provided to the Office for Public Integrity (OPI) and will be dealt with separately in accordance with the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2012* (the Act).

Why are SAFECOM and the CFS, MFS and SES being evaluated?

The South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) provides governance, strategic, and policy co-oversight to the Country Fire Service (CFS), Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), and State Emergency Service (SES). These agencies serve crucial public functions in the prevention, preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies and disasters. Actual or perceived corruption can damage such agencies and undermine this important work. It is vital that these agencies have effective systems in place to prevent or minimise corruption.

The poor management of conflicts of interests increases the risk that corruption will occur. Results from previous public integrity surveys conducted by the Commission have shown that a higher proportion of respondents from the emergency services sector rate their agencies to be vulnerable to undeclared or unmanaged conflicts of interest, as compared with respondents from the public sector overall.

This perception that the emergency services may be vulnerable to corruption or other wrongdoing as a result of undisclosed or poorly managed conflicts of interests is supported by information available from matters previously referred to the Commission by the Office for Public Integrity.

This is **not** to say that corruption is occurring, or has occurred, at any of these agencies, only that some information suggests there **may** be a vulnerability to corruption if conflicts of interests are not managed well. This supports the need for an evaluation to examine this further and identify areas for improvement if necessary.

What is the scope of the evaluation?

The evaluation will examine the policies and procedures of SAFECOM that apply to the CFS, MFS and SES with respect to the management of conflicts of interests. It will consider how these policies and procedures are:

- developed and reviewed by SAFECOM
- communicated to staff, contractors and volunteers in each agency (as applicable)
- enforced among staff, contractors and volunteers in each agency (as applicable).

The evaluation will consider whether these policies and procedures, and the manner in which they are developed, reviewed, communicated and enforced, provide adequate safeguards to control against corruption.

How can I participate in the evaluation?

If you would like to take the opportunity to share any information relevant to the scope of the evaluation, please contact evaluation@icac.sa.gov.au.

A small number of staff from each agency may receive a meeting request from the evaluation team. If this is you, please don't be alarmed. The meetings are intended to provide staff with an opportunity to inform the evaluation team about relevant policies and procedures and how they are developed, reviewed, communicated and enforced.

Participation in a meeting is voluntary. We encourage you to take part as we want to hear what you think SAFECOM, the CFS, MFS and SES are doing well and where you think there are opportunities to improve.

Is the information I provide confidential?

Any information you provide will be treated confidentially. This includes information provided to us during a meeting or in writing. We will use information provided to us to inform general comments in the final report.

While we take every step to protect a person's confidentiality, we cannot guarantee it. We are obliged to comply with any lawful obligation to disclose information collected.

If you have any concerns about confidentiality, please contact a member of the evaluation team via email (evaluation@icac.sa.gov.au) or on (08) 8463 5199.

Can I tell anyone what I have discussed with the Commission?

The Act requires that a person who **receives** information knowing that it is connected with an evaluation must not disclose that information unless they are authorised by the Commissioner to do so, or for specific purposes permitted under section 54 of the Act.

Should you wish to disclose information other than for a purpose already permitted by the Act, please speak to a member of the evaluation team.

What if I have previously made a complaint or report to the Office for Public Integrity or ICAC regarding the SAFECOM, the CFS, MFS, or SES?

Complaints and reports are dealt with separately to an evaluation. This includes complaints and reports which have been made to the Office for Public Integrity or the South Australian Ombudsman.




Am I bound by existing professional confidentiality obligations in relation to information I wish to provide to the evaluation team?

There is no provision in the Act that releases you from any obligation of professional confidentiality you may have as an employee. If you are in doubt about whether you can disclose certain information to the evaluation team you should speak with your manager.

How long will the evaluation take?

The Commission anticipates that the data and information collecting phase of the evaluation will be completed by late 2024 and that a report will be delivered to both Houses of Parliament in the first half of 2025.

CONTACT US

-  GENERAL ENQUIRIES
(08) 8463 5191
-  LEVEL 9, 55 CURRIE ST
ADELAIDE SA 5000
-  @ICAC_SA

ICAC.SA.GOV.AU



ICAC

Independent Commission
Against Corruption
SOUTH AUSTRALIA