

Commissioner's foreword



Most people engaged in public administration carry out their duties in an honest, diligent and ethical way. They are entrusted to exercise power and discretion appropriately and do so conscientiously.

Unfortunately some public officers choose to act dishonestly, improperly using their position or status to obtain a benefit for themselves or others. Such conduct is an egregious abuse of the trust invested in those public officers.

Corruption in public administration attacks the fundamental principles of proper public administration. Its consequences cannot be underestimated. Corruption can have significant adverse impacts not only on those directly impacted but on agencies within which the conduct occurs and the community more generally.

It is a scourge that ought to be regarded as disgraceful and intolerable.

It is also behaviour that needs to be understood so that individuals and agencies can protect themselves against corruption.

Following an investigation by my office a senior manager at the Yorke Peninsula Council admitted to dishonestly taking over \$200,000 from her employer. Another investigation of a senior manager at TAFE SA revealed that over \$150,000 had been dishonestly appropriated. In both cases the conduct took place over a lengthy period with both public officers breaching their positions of trust and betraying their colleagues and organisations.

The purpose of this report is to explain how the conduct occurred, the impact of the conduct and, importantly, to identify practices that might reduce the prospect of such conduct occurring in the future.

More generally this report explores the phenomenon of the trusted insider who abuses his or her authority.

As this report will explain the conduct of both public officers took a significant toll on the people employed at both agencies.

I acknowledge from the outset the outstanding manner in which staff of both the Yorke Peninsula Council and TAFE SA dealt with these matters once the conduct was detected, which included providing assistance to my investigators and taking proactive steps to reduce opportunities for such conduct to occur in the future.

THE POWER TO MAKE THIS REPORT

Section 42 of the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012* (ICAC Act) provides me with the power to prepare certain reports. Subsection 42(1) relevantly provides:

- (1) *The Commissioner may prepare a report setting out—*
 - (a)
 - (b) *findings or recommendations resulting from completed investigations by the Commissioner in respect of matters raising potential issues of corruption, misconduct or maladministration in public administration; or*
 - (c) *other matters arising in the course of the performance of the Commissioner's functions that the Commissioner considers to be in the public interest to disclose.*

I consider that it is in the public interest to prepare this report.

In doing so, I emphasise that the purpose of this report is not to further punish the public officers involved. Rather this report is intended to promote awareness amongst public officers regarding the nature of the conduct engaged in, how that conduct was able to occur, and what might be done to reduce the opportunity for such conduct to occur in the future.

I thank Dr Andrew Russ of my office for his invaluable assistance in the preparation of this report.