

# Public Interest Disclosure Policy

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## CEO message

At Legal Aid NSW we take reports of wrongdoing seriously. We are committed to building a 'speak up' culture where everyone is encouraged to report any conduct that they reasonably believe involves wrongdoing. Our Public Interest Disclosure (PID) policy is part of that commitment.

Our organisation is dedicated to fostering an environment where employees feel safe and empowered to come forward and report any wrongdoing. This policy provides the steps we will take to protect and support individuals who make such reports.

I encourage all employees, as well as volunteers, contractors, and subcontractors, to report any serious wrongdoing. I appreciate the time and effort it can take to compile a report and understand it may be a confronting process. We are committed to providing robust support and protection for those who report serious wrongdoing, ensuring that no detrimental action is taken against them.

Reporting wrongdoing is a normal and essential aspect of working within our organisation. It aligns with our commitment to maintaining the integrity of our services and is consistent with our established procedures, including the Code of Conduct, Unacceptable Conduct Policy, Fraud and Corruption Control Framework, and Workplace Complaints Guidelines.

Everyone within our organisation has a responsibility to speak up when they become aware of serious wrongdoing. In turn, we will ensure that those who report are protected, reinforcing our Legal Aid values of integrity and accountability.

**Monique Hitter**

## Purpose

All agencies in NSW are required to have a Public Interest Disclosure (**PID**) Policy under section 42 of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 (PID Act)*.

At Legal Aid NSW we take reports of serious wrongdoing seriously. We are committed to building a 'speak up' culture where everyone is encouraged to report any conduct that they reasonably believe involves wrongdoing.

The integrity of our agency relies upon our staff, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors speaking up when they become aware of wrongdoing.

This policy sets out:

- how Legal Aid NSW will support and protect you if you come forward with a report of serious wrongdoing
- how we will deal with the report and our other responsibilities under the PID Act
- who to contact if you want to make a report
- how to make a report
- the protections which are available to you under the PID Act.

This policy also documents our commitment to building a speak up culture. Part of that speak up culture is having in place a framework that facilitates public interest reporting of wrongdoing by:

- protecting those who speak up from detrimental action
- imposing duties on agencies who receive reports of wrongdoing to take appropriate action to investigate or otherwise deal with them.

In NSW, that framework is the PID Act.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Legal Aid NSW Code of Conduct, Unacceptable Conduct Policy, Gift and Benefits Policy, Fraud and Corruption Control Framework and Workplace Complaints Guidelines

## Accessibility of this policy

This policy is available on Legal Aid NSW publicly available website as well as on the Legal Aid NSW's intranet. A hard copy of the policy can be requested from Human Resources (HR) by emailing [workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

## Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to, and for the benefit of, all public officials in NSW. You are a public official if you are:

- a person employed in or by an agency or otherwise in the service of an agency
- a person having public official functions or acting in a public official capacity whose conduct or activities an integrity agency is authorised by another Act or law to investigate
- an individual in the service of the Crown
- a statutory officer

- a person providing services or exercising functions on behalf of an agency, including a contractor, subcontractor or volunteer
- an employee, partner or officer of an entity that provides services, under contract, subcontract or other arrangement, on behalf of an agency or exercises functions of an agency, and are involved in providing those services or exercising those functions
- a judicial officer
- a Member of Parliament (**MP**), including a Minister
- a person employed under the *Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013*.

Section 14 of the PID Act contains a complete list of public officials.

The Chief Executive Officer and other nominated disclosure officers within Legal Aid NSW have specific responsibilities under the PID Act. This policy also provides information on how people in these roles will fulfil their responsibilities. Other public officials who work in and for the public sector, but do not work for Legal Aid NSW may use this policy if they want information on who they can report wrongdoing to within Legal Aid NSW.

## Who does this policy not apply to?

This policy does not apply to:

- people who have received services from an agency and want to make a complaint about those services
- people, such as contractors, who provide services to an agency. For example, employees of a company that sold computer software to an agency.

This means that if you are not a public official, this policy does not apply to your complaint (there are some circumstances where a complaint can be deemed to be a voluntary PID, see section 1(i) of this policy for more information).

However, you can still make a complaint to Legal Aid NSW. This can be done by:

- Online  
Complete the [online form](#) or email [Feedback and Complaints](#).
- Phone  
Call us on 9219 5000.
- In writing

Write to us at:  
Complaints Legal Aid NSW  
PO Box K847  
Haymarket NSW 1238

## What is contained in this policy?

This policy will provide you with information on the following:

- ways you can make a voluntary PID to Legal Aid NSW under the PID Act
- the names and contact details for the nominated disclosure officers in Legal Aid NSW
- the roles and responsibilities of people who hold particular roles under the PID Act and who are employees of Legal Aid NSW
- what information you will receive once you have made a voluntary PID
- protections available to people who make a report of serious wrongdoing under the PID Act and what we will do to protect you
- Legal Aid NSW procedures for dealing with disclosures
- Legal Aid NSW procedures for managing the risk of detrimental action and reporting detrimental action
- Legal Aid NSW record-keeping and reporting requirements
- how Legal Aid NSW will ensure it complies with the PID Act and this policy.

If you require further information about this policy, how public interest disclosures will be handled and the PID Act you can:

- confidentially contact a nominated disclosure officer within Legal Aid NSW
- The Disclosure Coordinator for Legal Aid NSW.  
The Disclosures Coordinator for Legal Aid NSW is the Manager, Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards contact by email: [workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)
- contact the PID Advice Team within the NSW Ombudsman by phone: (02) 9286 1000 or email: [pidadvice@ombo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:pidadvice@ombo.nsw.gov.au), or
- access the NSW Ombudsman's PID guidelines which are available on its website.

If you require legal advice with respect to the PID Act or your obligations under the PID Act, you may need to seek independent legal advice.

# 1. How to make a report of serious wrongdoing

## (a) Reports, complaints and grievances

When a public official reports suspected or possible wrongdoing in the public sector, their report will be a PID if it has certain features which are set out in the PID Act.

Some internal complaints or internal grievances may also be PIDs, as long as they have the features of a PID. If an internal complaint or grievance is a report of serious wrongdoing, we will consider whether it is a PID. If it is a PID, we will deal with it as set out in this policy, but we will also make sure we follow our Workplace Complaints Guidelines.

It is important that we quickly recognise that we have received a PID. This is because once a PID is received, the person who has made the report is entitled to certain protections.

## (b) When will a report be a PID?

There are three types of PIDs in the PID Act. These are:

2. *Voluntary PID*: This is a PID where a report has been made by the public official because they decided, of their own accord, to come forward and disclose what they know.
3. *Mandatory PID*: This is a PID where the public official has made a report about serious wrongdoing because they have a legal obligation to make that report, or because making that report is an ordinary aspect of their role or function in an agency.
4. *Witness PID*: This is a PID where a person discloses information during an investigation of serious wrongdoing following a request or requirement of the investigator.

This policy mostly relates to making a voluntary PID and how we will deal with voluntary PIDs. People who make a mandatory PID or a witness PID are still entitled to protection. More information about protections is available in section 2 of this policy.

You can find more information about mandatory and witness PIDs in the Ombudsman's guidelines 'Dealing with mandatory PIDs' and 'Dealing with witness PIDs'.

Voluntary PIDs are the kind of PIDs most people have in mind when they think about public interest reporting and 'whistleblowing'.

They involve a public official making a report because they have information that they believe shows (or tends to show) serious wrongdoing, where they are not under a legal obligation to make that report and where it is not an ordinary part of their role to report such wrongdoing.

A report is a voluntary PID if it has the following five features, which are set out in sections 24 to 27 of the PID Act:

1. A report is made by a public official

2. It is made to a person who can receive voluntary PIDs

3. The public official *honestly and reasonably believes* that the information they are providing *shows (or tends to show) serious wrongdoing*

4. The report was made orally or in writing

5. The report is voluntary (meaning it is not a mandatory or witness PID)



If the report has all five features, it is a voluntary PID.

You will not be expected to prove that what you reported actually happened or is serious wrongdoing. You *do* have to honestly believe, on reasonable grounds, that the information you are reporting shows or tends to show serious wrongdoing.

Even though you do not have to prove the serious wrongdoing happened or provide evidence, a mere allegation with no supporting information is unlikely to meet this test.

If we make an error and do not identify that you have made a voluntary PID, you will still be entitled to the protections under the PID Act.

If you make a report and believe we have made an error by not identifying that you have made a voluntary PID, you should raise this with a nominated disclosure officer or your contact officer for the report. If you are still not satisfied with this outcome, you can seek an internal review or we can seek to conciliate the matter. You may also contact the NSW Ombudsman. Further information on rights to internal review and conciliation is found in section 7 of this policy.

### **(c) Who can make a voluntary PID?**

Any public official can make a voluntary PID — see ‘Who this policy applies to’. You are a public official if:

- you are employed by Legal Aid NSW
- you are a contractor, subcontractor or volunteer who provides services, or exercises functions, on behalf of Legal Aid NSW, or
- you work for an entity (such as a non-government organisation) who is contracted by Legal Aid NSW to provide services or exercise functions on behalf of Legal Aid NSW — if you are involved in undertaking that contracted work.

A public official can make a PID about serious wrongdoing relating to *any* agency, not just the agency they are working for. This means that we may receive PIDs from public officials outside our agency. It also means that you can make a PID to any agency, including an integrity agency like the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and the NSW Ombudsman. Annexure B of this policy has a list of integrity agencies.

### **(d) What is serious wrongdoing?**

Reports must be of one or more of the following categories of *serious wrongdoing* to be a voluntary PID (in addition to having the other features set out here). Serious wrongdoing is defined in the PID Act as:

- *corrupt conduct* — such as an employee accepting a bribe
- *serious maladministration* — such as an agency systemically failing to comply with proper recruitment processes when hiring staff
- *a government information contravention* — such as destroying, concealing or altering records to prevent them from being released under a Government Information Public Access application
- *a local government pecuniary interest contravention* — such as a senior staff member recommending a family member for a contract and not declaring the relationship

- *a privacy contravention* — such as unlawfully accessing a person’s personal information on an agency’s database
- *a serious and substantial waste of public money* — such as an agency not following a competitive tendering process when contracting with entities to undertake government work.

When you make your report, you do not need to state to Legal Aid NSW what category of serious wrongdoing you are reporting or that you are reporting serious wrongdoing.

## **(e) Who can I make a voluntary PID to?**

For a report to be a voluntary PID, it must be made to certain public officials.

### ***Making a report to a public official who works for Legal Aid NSW***

You can make a report inside Legal Aid NSW to:

- Chief Executive Office, Monique Hitter
- Disclosure Coordinator, Manager - Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards, HR
- a Disclosure Officer for Legal Aid NSW — a list of disclosure officers for Legal Aid NSW and their contact details can be found at Annexure A of this policy
- your manager — this is the person who directly, or indirectly, supervises you. It can also be the person who you directly, or indirectly, report to. You may have more than one manager. Your manager will make sure that the report is communicated to a disclosure officer on your behalf or may accompany you while you make the report to a disclosure officer.

### ***Making a report to a recipient outside of Legal Aid NSW***

You can also make your report to a public official in another agency (meaning an agency you do not work for) or an integrity agency. These include:

- the *head of another agency* — this means the head of any public service agency
- an *integrity agency* — a list of integrity agencies is located at Annexure B of this policy
- a *disclosure officer for another agency* — ways to contact disclosure officers for other agencies is located in an agency’s PID policy which can be found on their public website
- a *Minister or a member of a Minister’s staff* but the report *must be made in writing*.

If you choose to make a disclosure outside of [agency name], it is possible that your disclosure will be referred back to Legal Aid NSW so that appropriate action can be taken.

### ***Making a report to a Member of Parliament or journalist***

Disclosures to MPs or journalists are different to other reports. You can only disclose a report of wrongdoing as a voluntary PID to an MP or journalist in the following circumstances:

- You must have first made substantially the same disclosure (described here as a ‘previous disclosure’) to someone who can receive disclosures.
- The previous disclosure must be substantially true.
- You did not make the previous disclosure anonymously.
- You did not give a written waiver of your right to receive information relating to your previous disclosure.

- You did not receive the following from Legal Aid NSW:
  - notification that Legal Aid NSW will not investigate the serious wrongdoing and will also not refer the previous disclosure to another agency, or
  - the following information at the end of the investigation period:
    - notice of Legal Aid NSW decision to investigate the serious wrongdoing
    - a description of the results of an investigation into the serious wrongdoing
    - details of proposed or recommended corrective action as a result of the previous disclosure or investigation.

Investigation period means:

- after six months from the previous disclosure being made, or
- after 12 months if you applied for an internal review of Legal Aid NSW’s decision within six months of making the disclosure.

If all the above requirements are met, your disclosure to an MP or journalist may be a voluntary PID.

## **(f) What form should a voluntary PID take?**

You can make a voluntary PID:

- *in writing* — this could be an email or letter to a person who can receive voluntary PIDs.
- *orally* — have a private discussion with a person who can receive voluntary PIDs. This can be face-to-face, via telephone or virtually.
- *anonymously* — If you don’t feel comfortable or safe speaking out internally about any wrongdoing you may have experienced, witnessed or are aware of, you have the option to report it to Legal Aid NSW’s external and independent whistleblowing service provider, [Your Call Whistleblowing Solutions \(“Your Call”\)](#).

You can use Your Call to provide feedback and observations that you would like Legal Aid NSW to be aware of but do not feel comfortable identifying yourself. Your Call provides an independent third party service, receiving anonymous disclosures 24/7 online. We’ve contracted them to receive and manage your report with impartiality and confidentiality.

## **(g) What should I include in my report?**

You should provide as much information as possible so we can deal with the report effectively.

The type of information you should include is:

- date, time and location of key events
- names of person(s) involved in the suspected wrongdoing, their role, title and how they are involved
- your relationship with the person(s) involved, such as whether you work closely with them
- your explanation of the matter you are reporting
- how you became aware of the matter you are reporting
- possible witnesses
- other information you have that supports your report.

## **(h) What if I am not sure if my report is a PID?**

You should report all wrongdoing you become aware of regardless of whether you think it is serious wrongdoing. It is important for Legal Aid NSW to understand what is or may be occurring.

We are then responsible for making sure your report is handled appropriately under the PID Act, or if it is not a PID, in line with our other procedures. Even if your report is not a PID, it may fall within another one of the agency's policies for dealing with reports, allegations or complaints.

## **(i) Deeming that a report is a voluntary PID**

The CEO can, in certain circumstances, determine that a report is a voluntary PID even if the report does not otherwise have all the features of a voluntary PID. This 'deeming power' is found in s 29 of the PID Act. By deeming that a report is a voluntary PID, it ensures that reporters are provided with protections under the PID Act.

If you make a report that has not met all the requirements of a voluntary PID, you can refer your matter to the CEO to request that they consider deeming your report to be a voluntary PID. A decision to deem a report to be a voluntary PID is at the discretion of the CEO.

## **(j) Who can I talk to if I have questions or concerns?**

Anyone wishing to ask questions about the PID process can contact the Disclosure Coordinator for Legal Aid NSW:

Manager, Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards, Human Resources

Email: [workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)

## **2. Protections**

### **(a) How is the maker of a voluntary PID protected?**

When you make a voluntary PID you receive special protections under the PID Act.

We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to protect you from detriment as a result of having made a PID. We are also committed to maintaining your confidentiality as much as possible while the PID is being dealt with.

We will not tolerate any type of detrimental action being taken against you because you have made a report, might make a report or are believed to have made a report.

The maker of a voluntary PID is protected in the following ways:

- *Protection from detrimental action*
  - A person cannot take detrimental action against another person because they have made a voluntary PID or are considering making a PID. Detrimental action includes bullying, harassment, intimidation or dismissal.
  - Once we become aware that a voluntary PID by a person employed or otherwise associated with Legal Aid NSW that concerns serious wrongdoing relating to Legal Aid NSW has been made, Legal Aid NSW will undertake a risk assessment and take steps to

mitigate the risk of detrimental action occurring against the person who made the voluntary PID.

- It is a criminal offence for someone to take detrimental action against a person because they have made or may make a voluntary PID. It is punishable by a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units or imprisonment for five years or both.
- A person may seek compensation where unlawful detrimental action has been taken against them.
- A person can apply for a court order (injunction) where detrimental action is threatened or has occurred (for example, an order to prevent dismissal or to require reinstatement).

Note that a person who makes a PID can still be subject to reasonable management action (such as ordinary performance reviews and performance management). Provided such action is not taken because of the PID, it is not detrimental action under the PID Act.

- *Immunity from civil and criminal liability*

Section 26 of the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* imposes a duty of confidentiality on all Legal Aid NSW employees that prevents them disclosing certain information they obtain or become aware of at work. Sometimes, in order to make a PID, public officials will need to breach or disregard such confidentiality duties. If that happens, a public official cannot be disciplined, sued or criminally charged for breaching confidentiality.

A significant number of Legal Aid NSW employees are also subject to a duty of confidentiality through legal professional privilege. The disclosure of confidential information protected by legal professional privilege may not be covered by the protection from liability in the PID Act. Please refer to section 8 of the PID Act and seek independent legal advice.

- *Confidentiality*

Public officials and agencies must not disclose information tending to identify a person as the maker of a voluntary PID unless doing so is permitted by the PID Act.

- *Protection from liability for own past conduct*

Pursuant to section 41 of the PID Act, the Attorney General can give the maker an undertaking that a disclosure of their own past conduct will not be used against them if a person discloses their own wrongdoing or misconduct while making a report. This undertaking can only be given on application by an integrity agency to the Attorney General.

## **(b) Protections for people who make mandatory and witness PIDs**

Apart from PIDs that are made voluntarily by public officials, there are other types of reports that are recognised as PIDs under the PID Act:

- *A mandatory PID:* This is a PID where the public official has made the report about serious wrongdoing because they have a legal obligation to make that report, or because making that report is an ordinary aspect of their role or function in an agency.
- *A witness PID:* This is a PID where a person discloses information during an investigation of serious wrongdoing following a request or requirement of the investigator.

Protections for makers of mandatory and witness PIDs are detailed in the table below.

Protection	Mandatory PID	Witness PID
Detrimental action — It is an offence to take detrimental action against a person based on the suspicion, belief or awareness that a person has made, may have made or may make a PID.	✓	✓
Right to compensation — A person can initiate proceedings and seek compensation for injury, damage or loss suffered as a result of detrimental action being taken against them.	✓	✓
Ability to seek injunction — An injunction can be sought to prevent the commission or possible commission of a detrimental action offence against a person. For example, an order to prevent dismissal or to require reinstatement.	✓	✓
Immunity from civil and criminal liability — a person will not incur civil or criminal liability if the person breaches a duty of confidentiality while making a disclosure. This means that legal action cannot be taken against a person for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• breaching a duty of secrecy or confidentiality, or</li> <li>• breaching another restriction on disclosure.</li> </ul>	✓	✓

### 3. Reporting detrimental action

If you experience adverse treatment or detrimental action, such as bullying or harassment, you should report this immediately. You can report any experience of adverse treatment or detrimental action directly to Legal Aid NSW, or to an integrity agency. To make a report you should contact a disclosure officer as set out in Annexure A, or your manager who will refer the matter on. A list of integrity agencies is located at Annexure B of this policy.

### 4. General support

Making a disclosure can be a difficult process and would like to take this opportunity to remind you about the [wellbeing support resources](#) available to you on the Intranet.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides short term counselling/coaching and wellbeing support. The program is external to Legal Aid NSW and promotes an early intervention approach to assist individuals to resolve a broad range of work or personal issues before they impact adversely on them and cause deterioration in their health and wellbeing.

As a Legal Aid NSW employee, you and your immediate family members have access to six (6) free confidential individuals sessions per year through our EAP provider, Converge International. You can call them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1300 687 327.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities of Legal Aid NSW employees

Certain people within Legal Aid NSW have responsibilities under the PID Act.

### (a) Chief Executive Officer

The CEO is responsible for:

- fostering a workplace culture where reporting is encouraged
- receiving disclosures from public officials
- ensuring there is a system in place for assessing disclosures
- ensuring the Legal Aid NSW complies with this policy and the PID Act
- ensuring that the Legal Aid NSW has appropriate systems for:
  - overseeing internal compliance with the PID Act
  - supporting public officials who make voluntary PIDs, including by minimising the risk of detrimental action
  - implementing corrective action if serious wrongdoing is found to have occurred
  - complying with reporting obligations regarding allegations or findings of detrimental action
  - complying with yearly reporting obligations to the NSW Ombudsman.

### (b) Disclosure Coordinator

The CEO has designated the Manager, Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards as the Disclosure Coordinator who is responsible for:

- receiving reports from other disclosure officers and taking over management of the PID process from that point
- ensuring a contact person is appointed, in consultation with the maker of the PID
- assessing disclosures, making recommendations to the CEO and overseeing corrective action in consultation with the Director of Human Resources, and
- assisting the CEO in the performance of their duties (above) as Head of the Agency.

### (c) Disclosure officers

Disclosure officers are responsible for:

- receiving reports from public officials
- receiving reports when they are passed on to them by managers
- ensuring reports are dealt with appropriately, including by referring the matter to the Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards team
- ensuring that any oral reports that have been received are recorded in writing.

### (d) Managers

The responsibilities of managers include:

- receiving reports from persons that report to them or that they supervise
- ensuring that any oral reports that have been received are recorded in writing, and
- passing on reports they receive to a local disclosure officer, or directly to disclosure coordinator.

### **(e) All employees**

All employees must:

- report suspected serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- use their best endeavours to assist in an investigation of serious wrongdoing if asked to do so by a person dealing with a voluntary PID on behalf of Legal Aid NSW
- treat any person dealing with or investigating reports of serious wrongdoing with respect.

All employees must not take detrimental action against any person who has made, may in the future make, or is suspected of having made, a PID.

## **6. How we will deal with voluntary PIDs**

### **(a) How Legal Aid NSW will acknowledge that we have received a report and keep the person who made it informed**

When a disclosure officer in Legal Aid NSW receives a report which is a voluntary PID, or looks like it may be a voluntary PID, it should be referred to the Disclosure Coordinator. The person who made the report will then receive the following information:

- You will receive an acknowledgment that the report has been received. This acknowledgement will:
  - state that the report will be assessed to identify whether it is a PID
  - state that the PID Act applies to how Legal Aid NSW deals with the report
  - provide clear information on how you can access this PID policy
  - provide you with details of the disclosure coordinator and/or a contact person from the Industrial Relation and Workplace Standards team who will coordinate the PID process.
  - Provide you with details of the available supports and, if appropriate, a referral to the Safety, Health and Wellbeing team, Human Resources
- If the report is a voluntary PID, we will inform you as soon as possible how we intend to deal with the report. This may include:
  - that we are investigating the serious wrongdoing
  - that we will refer the report to a different agency (if appropriate) to deal with the voluntary PID. If we do this, we will provide you with details of this referral
  - If we decide to not investigate the report and to not refer it to another agency for it to be investigated, we will tell you the reasons for this decision. We will also notify the NSW Ombudsman of this decision.
- If we decide to investigate the serious wrongdoing, we will provide you with updates on the investigation at least every three months. During this time, if you would like more frequent updates, you should contact the contact person who was nominated when you made the report.



- If we investigate the serious wrongdoing, we will provide you with the following information once the investigation is complete:
  - a description of the results of the investigation — that is, we will tell you whether we found that serious wrongdoing took place.
  - information about any corrective action as a result of the investigation/s — this means we will tell you what action we took in relation to the person who engaged in the serious wrongdoing or if the serious wrongdoing was by our agency, what we have put in place to address that serious wrongdoing.
  - Corrective action could include taking disciplinary action against someone or changing the practices, policies and procedures that we have in place which led to the serious wrongdoing.

There may be some details about both the findings made as a result of the investigation and the corrective action taken that cannot be revealed to you. We will always balance the right of a person who makes a report to know the outcome of that report, with other legal obligations we have.

If you have made an anonymous report, in many cases we may not be able to provide this information to you.

## **(b) How Legal Aid NSW will deal with voluntary PIDs**

Once a report which may be a voluntary PID is received by the Disclosure Coordinator, an assessment will be undertaken as to whether the report is a voluntary PID or another type of disclosure. If it is a voluntary PID, Legal Aid NSW will comply with the requirements in the PID Act.

The process to be followed is as follows:

1. The receiving Disclosure Officer (or manager if they choose to refer it directly) will refer the PID to the Disclosure Coordinator and provide any other information relevant to the circumstances of the making of the PID, for example issues pertaining to the wellbeing of the maker of the PID or details of any risk of detrimental action.
2. The Disclosure Coordinator will provide a copy of the PID and any other relevant information received, to the Director Human Resources. The Disclosure Officer will conduct an assessment of the PID and decide how Legal Aid NSW should deal with the report and provide a recommendation to the Director of Human Resources. Disclosure Coordinator may also refer the assessment and recommendation to the CEO directly.
3. The CEO or Director Human Resources will determine whether an investigation or other action is required. Other action may include referral to the ICAC or to another integrity agency. If the CEO or Director Human Resources determines that an investigation is required, the CEO or Director Human Resources will also determine whether it will be conducted by an external investigator or by an internal investigator. The CEO or Director Human Resources will take into account the complexity of the matter and the other relevant surrounding circumstances in making these determinations.

Where an investigation is required, the following processes apply:

1. Where it is determined an investigation is required, the matter will be referred to the Disclosure Coordinator in accordance with the determination.

2. The investigator's report along with the recommendations for appropriate action from the Director of Human Resources and the Disclosure Coordinator will be provided to the CEO for a decision.
3. The CEO will make findings which will identify any corrective action required and nominate those responsible for attending to each aspect of corrective action.
4. The maker of the PID will be notified by the Director Human Resources or the Disclosure Coordinator of the outcome of the PID investigation and any proposed corrective action, noting that certain details may not be able to be revealed as set out in section 6(a).

### ***Where the report is a voluntary PID***

If the report is a voluntary PID:

- In most cases we will conduct an investigation to make findings about whether the serious wrongdoing disclosed in the report occurred, who was involved, who was responsible, and whether the people involved, or the agency engaged, in serious wrongdoing. There may be circumstances where we believe an investigation is not warranted — for example, if the conduct has previously been investigated.
- There may also be circumstances where we decide that the report should be referred to another agency, such as an integrity agency. For example, reports concerning possible corrupt conduct may be required to be reported to the ICAC in accordance with section 11 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.
- Before referring a matter, we will discuss the referral with the other agency, and we will provide you with details of the referral and a contact person within the other agency.
- If we decide not to investigate a report and to not refer the matter to another agency, we must let you know the reasons for this and notify the NSW Ombudsman.

### ***Report not a voluntary PID***

Even if the report is not a voluntary PID, it will still need to be dealt with in a manner consistent with our Workplace Complaint Guidelines. The complaint or disclosure will be referred to the Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards team for review.

If the report is not a voluntary PID, we will let you know that the PID Act does not apply to the report and how we will deal with the concerns raised in the report.

If you are not happy with this assessment or otherwise disagree with it, you can raise it with the person who has communicated the outcome with you or a disclosure officer, request an internal review or request that the matter be conciliated. Legal Aid NSW can, but do not have to, request the NSW Ombudsman to conciliate the matter.

### ***Cease dealing with report as voluntary PID***

Legal Aid NSW may stop dealing with a voluntary PID because it is not actually a voluntary PID (meaning it does not have all the features of a PID). The maker of the disclosure will be notified in writing and provided with reasons. Legal Aid NSW may proceed to manage the disclosure through the Workplace Complaints Guidelines.

### **(c) How Legal Aid NSW will protect the confidentiality of the maker of a voluntary PID**

We understand that people who make voluntary PIDs may want their identity and the fact that they have made a report to be confidential.

Under the PID Act, information tending to identify a person as the maker of a voluntary PID (known as identifying information) is not to be disclosed by a public official or an agency.

There are certain circumstances under the PID Act that allow for the disclosure of identifying information. These include:

- where the person consents in writing to the disclosure
- where it is generally known that the person is the maker of the voluntary PID because of their voluntary self-identification as the maker
- when the public official or Legal Aid NSW reasonably considers it necessary to disclose the information to protect a person from detriment
- where it is necessary the information be disclosed to a person whose interests are affected by the disclosure
- where the information has previously been lawfully published
- when the information is disclosed to a medical practitioner or psychologist for the purposes of providing medical or psychiatric care, treatment or counselling to the individual disclosing the information
- when the information is disclosed for the purposes of proceedings before a court or tribunal
- when the disclosure of the information is necessary to deal with the disclosure effectively
- if it is otherwise in the public interest to disclose the identifying information.

We will not disclose identifying information unless it is necessary and authorised under the PID Act.

We will put in place steps to keep the identifying information of the maker and the fact that a report has been made confidential. It may not be possible for us to maintain complete confidentiality while we progress the investigation, but we will do all that we practically can to not unnecessarily disclose information from which the maker of the report can be identified. We will do this by:

- We will limit the number of people who are aware of the maker's identity or information that could identify them.
- If we must disclose information that may identify the maker of the PID, we will still not disclose the actual identity of the maker of the PID, unless we have their consent to do so or authorised under the PID Act.
- We will ensure that any person who does know the identity of the maker of a PID is reminded that they have a legal obligation to keep their identity confidential.
- We will ensure that only authorised persons have access to emails, files or other documentation that contain information about the identity of the maker.
- We will undertake an assessment to determine if anyone is aware of the maker's identity and if those persons have a motive to cause detrimental action to be taken against the maker or impede the progress of the investigation.

- We will provide information to the maker of the PID about the importance of maintaining confidentiality and advising them how best to protect their identity, for example, by telling them not to discuss their report with other staff.

If confidentiality cannot be maintained or is unlikely to be maintained, Legal Aid NSW will:

- advising the person whose identity may become known
- updating the agency's risk assessment and risk management plan
- implementing strategies to minimise the risk of detrimental action
- providing additional supports to the person who has made the PID
- reminding persons who become aware of the identifying information of the consequences for failing to maintain confidentiality and that engaging in detrimental action is a criminal offence and may also be a disciplinary matter.

#### **(d) How Legal Aid NSW will assess and minimise the risk of detrimental action**

Legal Aid NSW will not tolerate any detrimental action being taken by any person against a person who has made a PID, investigators, witnesses or the person the report is about.

Legal Aid NSW will assess and take steps to mitigate detrimental action from being taken against the maker of a voluntary PID, the person whose conduct is the subject of a PID, investigators and witnesses.

Legal Aid NSW will take steps to assess and minimise the risk of detrimental action by:

- If appropriate, HR will undertake a risk assessment, and a risk management plan will be created.
- A list of protections will be offered to the maker of the disclosure. Legal Aid NSW will discuss protection options with the maker.

Detrimental action against a person is an act or omission that causes, comprises, involves or encourages detriment to a person or a threat of detriment to a person (whether express or implied). Detriment to a person includes:

- injury, damage or loss
- property damage
- reputational damage
- intimidation, bullying or harassment
- unfavourable treatment in relation to another person's job
- discrimination, prejudice or adverse treatment
- disciplinary proceedings or disciplinary action, or
- any other type of disadvantage.

Detrimental action does not include:

- lawful action taken by a person or body to investigate serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- the lawful reporting or publication of a finding of serious wrongdoing or other misconduct

- the lawful making of adverse comment, resulting from investigative action
- the prosecution of a person for a criminal offence
- reasonable management action taken by someone in relation to a person who made or may make a PID. For example, a reasonable appraisal of a PID maker's work performance.

**(e) How Legal Aid NSW will deal with allegations of a detrimental action offence**

The victim of detrimental action can contact the Manager, Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards. If Legal Aid NSW becomes aware of an allegation that a detrimental action offence has occurred or may occur, Legal Aid NSW will:

- take all steps possible to stop the action and protect the person(s)
- take appropriate disciplinary action against anyone that has taken detrimental action
- refer any evidence of a detrimental action offence to the Commissioner of Police and the ICAC or the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (whichever is applicable)
- notify the NSW Ombudsman about the allegation of a detrimental action offence being committed.

**(f) What Legal Aid NSW will do if an investigation finds that serious wrongdoing has occurred**

On receipt of an allegation of a disclosure, HR will proceed to assess the matter and determine the appropriate response – informal resolution or formal investigation. This assessment process will have regard to:

- the seriousness of the matter
- whether the conduct was wilful, blatant or accidental, unintentional (an 'honest mistake')
- whether the alleged misconduct occurred as part of a pattern of behaviour or an isolated incident
- relevant complaint and performance history of the employee
- likelihood of establishing the facts of the matter
- public interest considerations.

The appropriate response should be proportionate to the seriousness and complexity of the alleged misconduct. Although a workplace complaint may raise an allegation of misconduct, it may still be appropriate to address it informally, particularly where the conduct is minor and isolated.

If, after an investigation, it is found that serious wrongdoing or other misconduct has occurred, Legal Aid NSW will take the most appropriate action to address that wrongdoing or misconduct. This is also known as corrective action.

Corrective action can include:

- a formal apology
- improving internal policies to adequately prevent and respond to similar instances of wrongdoing
- providing additional education and training to staff where required

- taking employment action against persons involved in the wrongdoing (such as termination of employment, relocation, a caution or reprimand) in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act)
- payment of compensation to people who have been affected by serious wrongdoing or other misconduct.

## 7. Review and dispute resolution

### (a) Internal review

People who make voluntary PIDs can seek internal review of the following decisions made by Legal Aid NSW:

- that Legal Aid NSW is not required to deal with the report as a voluntary PID
- to stop dealing with the report because Legal Aid NSW decided it was not a voluntary PID
- to not investigate the serious wrongdoing and not refer the report to another agency
- to cease investigating the serious wrongdoing without either completing the investigation or referring the report to another agency for investigation.

Legal Aid NSW will ensure internal reviews are conducted in compliance with the PID Act.

If you would like to make an application for an internal review, you must apply in writing within 28 days of being informed of the relevant decision. The application should state the reasons why you consider the relevant decision should not have been made. You may also submit other relevant material with your application.

Applications for an internal review should be sent to the Disclosure Coordinator. The internal review will be conducted by the Director of Legal Services and In-House Counsel. The reviewer will be provided with all the relevant documentation from the PID process conducted to date, along with the written application for an internal review. The review process will be completed within one (1) month of receipt of the written application. In matters of exceptional complexity or for other compelling reasons, this period may be extended with the approval of the CEO.

If a dispute arises between Legal Aid NSW and a person who has made a report which is, or may be, a voluntary PID, we may request the NSW Ombudsman to conciliate the dispute. Conciliation is a voluntary process and will only be suitable for disputes where Legal Aid NSW and the maker of the report are willing to resolve the dispute.

## 8. Other agency obligations

### (a) Record-keeping requirements

Legal Aid NSW must keep full and accurate records with respect to all information received in connection with the PID Act. This ensures that Legal Aid NSW complies with its obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

### (b) Reporting of voluntary PIDs and Legal Aid NSW annual return to the Ombudsman

Each year Legal Aid NSW provide an annual return to the NSW Ombudsman which includes:

- information about voluntary PIDs received by Legal Aid NSW during each return period (yearly with the start date being 1 July)
- action taken by Legal Aid NSW to deal with voluntary PIDs during the return period
- how Legal Aid NSW promoted a culture in the workplace where PIDs are encouraged.

**(c) How Legal Aid NSW will ensure compliance with the PID Act and this policy**

Compliance with the PID Act will be the responsibility of the Disclosure Coordinator who will oversee on behalf of the CEO:

- the establishment and maintenance of a training program in accordance with the requirements of the PID Act.
- monitoring of any corrective measures directed following a PID
- annual audit of PIDs prior to lodgement of the annual return
- provision of compliance report to the Legal Aid NSW Audit and Risk Committee on a quarterly basis

## Annexure A — Names and contact details of disclosure officers for Legal Aid NSW

Disclosure officers are responsible for receiving reports from public officials, receiving reports when they are passed on to them by managers, ensuring reports are dealt with appropriately, including by referring the matter to the appropriate complaint unit, and ensuring that any verbal reports that have been received are recorded in writing. Under the PID Act, disclosure officers are:

- Chief Executive Officer  
Monique Hitter  
CEO, Legal Aid NSW  
[monique.hitter@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:monique.hitter@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)
  
- Disclosure Coordinator  
Tracey Macmillan  
Manager, Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards  
[tracey.macmillan@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tracey.macmillan@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)
  
- Industrial Relations and Workplace Standards Team, HR  
[workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au](mailto:workplacestandards@legalaid.nsw.gov.au)
  
- Legal Aid NSW Board
  
- All Legal Aid NSW Public Service Senior Executives
  
- All Senior Managers  
Senior Manager includes:
  - Associate Director
  - Solicitors In Charge
  - Legal Officers - Grade VI
  - Human Resources Business Partners
  - Managers – Clerk Grade 11/12
  
- The most senior ongoing employee who ordinarily works at a permanently maintained worksite where more than one employee works.



## Annexure B — List of integrity agencies

Integrity agency	What they investigate	Contact information
The NSW Ombudsman	Most kinds of <b>serious maladministration</b> by most agencies and public officials (but not NSW Police, judicial officers or MPs)	<b>Telephone:</b> 1800 451 524 between 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday <b>Writing:</b> Level 24, 580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@ombo.nsw.gov.au">info@ombo.nsw.gov.au</a>
The Auditor-General	<b>Serious and substantial waste of public money</b> by auditable agencies	<b>Telephone:</b> 02 9275 7100 <b>Writing:</b> GPO Box 12, Sydney NSW 2001 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:governance@audit.nsw.gov.au">governance@audit.nsw.gov.au</a>
Independent Commission Against Corruption	<b>Corrupt conduct</b>	<b>Telephone:</b> 02 8281 5999 or toll free on 1800 463 909 (callers outside Sydney) between 9am and 3pm, Monday to Friday <b>Writing:</b> GPO Box 500, Sydney NSW 2001 or faxing 02 9264 5364 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:icac@icac.nsw.gov.au">icac@icac.nsw.gov.au</a>
The Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption	<b>Serious maladministration</b> by the ICAC or the ICAC officers	<b>Telephone:</b> 02 9228 3023 <b>Writing:</b> PO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:oiicac_executive@oiicac.nsw.gov.au">oiicac_executive@oiicac.nsw.gov.au</a>
The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission	<b>Serious maladministration</b> by the NSW Police Force or the NSW Crime Commission	<b>Telephone:</b> 02 9321 6700 or 1800 657 079 <b>Writing:</b> GPO Box 3880, Sydney NSW 2001 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:contactus@lecc.nsw.gov.au">contactus@lecc.nsw.gov.au</a>
The Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission	<b>Serious maladministration</b> by the LECC and LECC officers	<b>Telephone:</b> 02 9228 3023 <b>Writing:</b> GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:oilc_executive@oilc.nsw.gov.au">oilc_executive@oilc.nsw.gov.au</a>
Office of the Local Government	<b>Local government pecuniary interest contraventions</b>	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au">olg@olg.nsw.gov.au</a>
The Privacy Commissioner	<b>Privacy contraventions</b>	<b>Telephone:</b> 1800 472 679 <b>Writing:</b> GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au">ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au</a>
The Information Commissioner	<b>Government information contraventions</b>	<b>Telephone:</b> 1800 472 679 <b>Writing:</b> GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au">ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au</a>