



THE PUBLIC SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

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Code of Conduct

Our Vision

To provide a wide range of accessible quality legal services to disadvantaged people of the Solomon Islands for the benefit of all the peoples of the Solomon Islands

Mission Statement

To defend the rights of the disadvantaged peoples of Solomon Islands by providing professional and accessible legal services in an open, efficient and accountable way

Our Values

Integrity

We perform our functions ethically and with dignity and honesty.

Independence

We act in the interests of justice and in the defence of the rights of our clients without fear or favour.

Responsive and Proactive

We understand the needs of our client community.

Professionalism

We are committed professionals and we are aware of the responsibilities, duties and standards of our profession.

Respect

We perform our functions ethically and with dignity and honesty.

Excellence

We are diligent, committed, reliable and innovative in everything we do.

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Introduction

The Public Solicitors Office (PSO) is an independent statutory body established under the *Constitution* to provide legal aid and assistance to the people of the Solomon Islands.

The PSO helps people to understand and protect their legal rights. The PSO achieves this through advice, advocacy, representation and education, focusing on disadvantaged people and communities.

Employees of the PSO are committed to providing an expert service, being inclusive and respectful, and making a difference.

The Code reflects the values of the PSO with a view to enacting our Vision and fulfilling our Mission Statement.

Using this Code

The Code of Conduct describes how we will conduct ourselves in delivering services to the Solomon Islands community.

The Code of Conduct is intended to provide a guide for the ethical behaviour, standards, decisions and actions expected of all employees within the PSO. It outlines the ethical framework expected of all employees and is designed to identify mandatory requirements and best practice conduct.

An ethical culture in public service agencies starts with our Minister and the Public Solicitor and is demonstrated through our senior leaders and all employees.

The Code is not intended to be read as a set of rules, where each word is scrutinised for its legal meaning, rather, it is intended to convey in plain words the obligations and the behaviour expected of all employees.

The Code supports, and should be read in conjunction with, the Code of Conduct for the Solomon Islands Public Service, General Orders of the Public Service, the *Legal Practitioners (Professional Conduct) Rules 1995*, the Employee Induction Manual and the other policies of the PSO.

All employees

We take personal responsibility to uphold this Code and demonstrate the principles and values of the Public Solicitors Office by the way we perform our duties.

This Code recognises that we can all demonstrate ethical leadership in how we perform our role, and is a statement of our commitment to the people of the Solomon Islands, their elected representatives and our colleagues.

Managers and Supervisors

Managerial behaviour sets the tone for the conduct of all employees. Managers (the Public Solicitor, Deputy Public Solicitor, Chief Legal Officers, Advisors and Office Managers) have a responsibility to model and promote this Code.

Managers have the ability to influence others by fostering an ethical environment and demonstrate this awareness in performing their duties and in making decisions.

Managers ensure public service employees understand the Code, and any other relevant legislation, delegations, policies or other information required to satisfactorily perform our duties. Managers also ensure that appropriate development and training is provided allow us to perform our duties.

Upholding this Code

As part of demonstrating our commitment to uphold this Code, we need to identify, and report conduct that is not consistent with this Code.

Managers have a responsibility to make fair, transparent and consistent decisions regarding any allegations of behaviour that does not uphold this Code.

We will support employees who report genuine concerns of wrongdoing and manage any reports of suspected wrongdoing in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

Accountability

Compliance with the Code of Conduct is a requirement under your employment agreement. Failure to abide by the Code will result in disciplinary action, including the possibility of:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Performance management
- Demotion
- Dismissal
- Referral to the Public Service Commission
- Referral to the Bar Association
- Criminal Prosecution

Code of Conduct

Integrity

We perform our functions ethically and with dignity and honesty.

- We treat everyone equally
- We are committed to open, transparent and accountable governance
- We conduct ourselves to the highest ethical standards
- We do not tolerate fraud or corruption
- We never accept gifts without the express permission of the Public Solicitor
- We do not let our personal lives affect the image of the Public Solicitors Office
- We use all our resources efficiently to the benefit of our clients and the community, including internet, motor vehicles and boats
- We ensure that all motor vehicles and boats are solely used for the work of the PSO

Independence

We act in the interests of justice and in the defence of the rights of our clients without fear or favour.

- We do not act where the interest of our client conflicts with our own interests
- We will not represent those with whom we have a relationship, including family, friends or Wontok
- We declare any conflict of interest between current or former clients and take steps to ensure that appropriate procedures are put in place
- We do not accept any other employment without the express permission of the Public Solicitor
- We do not make public comments in the media, including social media, about the Public Solicitors Office, political issues, our clients or cases

Responsive and proactive

We understand the needs of our client community.

- We progress our matters promptly and diligently
- We ensure that all files are up-to-date and properly recorded
- We keep clients informed about their matters
- We always take any complaints seriously and address them appropriately
- We all have an obligation to ensure we have a safe workplace
- We report fraud and corruption, or any suspected impropriety

Professionalism

We are committed professionals and we are aware of the responsibilities, duties and standards of our profession.

- We maintain the highest levels of professionalism
- We promote a professional image, through our behaviour and dress
- We uphold the *Legal Practitioners (Professional Conduct) Rules 1995*
- We will not withdraw from a matter without express permission of the Public Solicitor
- We are permitted to smoke and chew betelnut only in designated areas
- We are punctual and accurately report our absences
- We are always fit for work when we attend our duties
- We maintain our client's confidential information

Respect

We are sensitive to the cultural diversity of our people, our clients and our community.

- We treat everyone with dignity and respect
- We treat people equally, regardless of gender, race or disability
- We strive towards gender equity and social inclusion
- We accommodate those with special needs
- We are committed to a workplace free of harassment, intimidation and bullying
- We keep our office clean and are considerate of others

Excellence

We are diligent, committed, reliable and innovative in everything we do.

- We strive to achieve the best outcomes for our clients
- We always ensure our clients are fully advised of their rights and options
- We always act on our client's signed instructions
- We attend all Continuing Legal Education sessions
- We follow all office policies and procedures
- We are committed to constant improvement in every area of our practice

Annexure 2

Code of Conduct Agreement

I, _____ [name] confirm that I have read the Public Solicitors Office Code of Conduct (the 'Code').

I understand my obligations under the Code and the consequences of failing to comply with my obligations.

I agree to abide by the Code.

[Signature]

[Date]

[Witness]