



Solomon Islands Government

Code of Conduct

Solomon Islands Public Service



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Foreword

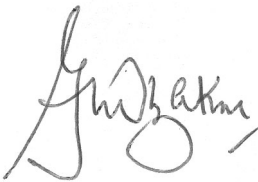
Since gaining Independence on 7th July 1978, the Solomon Islands public service has been striving for a standard of excellence and service delivery which will see it recognised as a benchmark for the provision of public services in the region.

While we are making progress, there is still some way to go. This Code of Conduct has been developed to assist us in creating and upholding a professional image of the public service while maintaining an ethical culture of which we can all be proud.

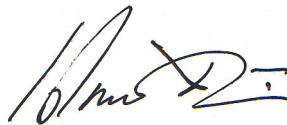
As officers of the public service, we are required to achieve and maintain a high standard of conduct and work performance to ensure that individuals, and the public service as a whole, are beyond reproach. Only then, will we earn public confidence and a regional reputation for delivering 'best practice' public services.

Accordingly, we commend this Code of Conduct to all public officers and ask for your commitment in 'making it happen'.

God bless Solomon Islands.



Hon. Milner Tozaka, M.P.
Minister for Public Service
Solomon Islands Government
Honiara
Solomon Islands



Mr. Ishmael M. Avui, M.B.E
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Public Service
Honiara
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Definitions

Responsible officer – means the Permanent Secretary or any officer vested with delegated authority (see General Orders for full definition).

Conflict of interest – means any action taken that is not in the best interests of the organisation and has the potential to involve some personal gain.

Discrimination – occurs when someone makes a preference or excludes another person from equal opportunity in employment because of issues such as race, age, gender or disability.

Harassment – is offensive, humiliating or threatening behaviour directed at an individual worker or group of workers.

Lawful and reasonable directions – occur when the direction does not require any law or policy to be broken or involve potential endangerment or harm to any person.

Misconduct – is defined under Part III of the Leadership Code (Other Provisions) Act 1999.

Natural justice – involves people being afforded a fair hearing prior to any decision being made and ensuring that the decision maker is impartial.

Public officer – means the holder of a public office as defined under the General Interpretation Act including any person appointed to act in a public office and members of essential and disciplined services.

Sexual harassment – means any unwelcome or unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated.

Wantok – means extended family and/or people from the same language group.

These definitions are not intended as legal definitions; they are provided to explain the terminology used in this document.

Applying the Code of Conduct

This Code provides a minimum standard of conduct and work performance for public officers and may be complemented by other professional codes.

Why do we need a Code of Conduct?

- Create an ethical culture of which we can all be proud;
- Support the Vision and Mission of the Government of Solomon Islands;
- Establish minimum standards of behaviour required by all public officers;
- Act as a guide for ethical decision making.

Who does the Code of Conduct apply to?

- All public officers whether permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time or casual;
- Any person who holds a public office.

When does the Code of Conduct apply?

- At all times in the workplace, including during training, conferences and other events in Solomon Islands or overseas;
- During periods of absence including leave and suspension.

How should we apply the Code of Conduct?

- Fairly and equitably and in accordance with the principles of natural justice;
- In conjunction with other relevant legislation and policies including:
 - *The Constitution;*
 - *Public Service Act;*
 - *Public Service Commission Regulations;*
 - *Labour Act;*
 - *Employment Act;*
 - *Leadership Code (Further Provisions) Act 1999;*
 - *General Orders;*
 - *Any other applicable legislation, policies or procedures.*

What happens to officers who do not comply with this Code of Conduct?

- Possible outcomes or consequences include:
 - *Verbal warning;*
 - *Written warning;*
 - *Charge of misconduct under Part VII of the Public Service Commission Regulations;*
 - *Reprimand;*
 - *Dismissal.*
- It is important for all officers to understand that dismissal is a possible consequence of breaching this Code of Conduct.

When will the Code of Conduct take effect?

- This Code will take effect from the date of approval by the Public Service Commission;
- This Code will not apply retrospectively.

Key Principles

There are five key ethical principles which form the basis of public sector administration and conduct.

1. Respect for the Law and Government

- *Upholding all applicable Solomon Islands laws;*
- *Complying with any lawful and reasonable directions given by appropriate authorities.*

2. Respect for People

- *Respecting the dignity, rights and views of others;*
- *Actively contributing to a harassment free workplace;*
- *Acting in a manner which does not endanger the health, safety and/or wellbeing of self or others.*

3. Integrity

- *Maintaining the independence and good reputation of the Solomon Islands public service at all times;*
- *Acting with honesty, integrity and transparency;*
- *Maintaining confidentiality;*
- *Avoiding or disclosing any conflict of interest;*
- *Disclosing any known fraud, corruption and/or maladministration;*
- *Declining any inappropriate gifts or benefits.*

4. Diligence

- *Complying with all relevant policies and procedures;*
- *Performing in a competent, unbiased, accurate and timely manner;*
- *Maintaining a high level of work attendance and punctuality.*

5. Economy and Efficiency

- *Ensuring that public resources are not wasted, abused or used improperly;*
- *Ensuring that proper records are maintained and kept.*

1. Respect for the Law and Government

- 1.1 We must uphold the laws of the Solomon Islands and carry out official public service decisions and policies faithfully and impartially.
- 1.2 We must comply with all reasonable and lawful instructions. The only time an officer may refuse to comply with an instruction is if they can demonstrate that:
 - o *the instruction is unlawful and/or breaches public service policy, and/or the national security of Solomon Islands;*
 - o *they do not have the resources or competence to comply.*
- 1.3 We are expected to implement the relevant policies and decisions of the elected Government. While we may have personal views that differ from these policies and decisions, our personal views must not interfere with the decision-making and/or performance of our duties.
- 1.4 We are expected to be familiar with, and contribute towards the goals, targets and objectives of our workplaces.
- 1.5 If charged with any criminal offence, under the Penal Code or any other law or legislation, we must report the charge immediately to our Permanent Secretary and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Service before resuming our duties.

2. Respect for People

- 2.1 We must treat each other, and members of the public, honestly and fairly, and with proper regard for their rights and obligations.
- 2.2 We must treat each other, and members of the public, with mutual respect and courtesy, even when the other person's views may differ from our own.
- 2.3 We must ensure that our actions and language are not offensive or discriminatory to others. When confronted by abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour, we must remain calm and not return the abuse.
- 2.4 We must be cooperative and pleasant in our dealings with one another and work as a team to achieve results.
- 2.5 We all have a responsibility to ensure that our workplace is free from harassment, including sexual harassment, by ensuring that our own behaviour is not offensive, intimidating, humiliating, threatening or inappropriate.
- 2.6 We must be mindful that any statement about a public officer or official matter, either verbal or written, must be made in an appropriate forum and manner, and then only if it is verifiable and constructive in nature.

- 2.7 Violent or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated in any form. We must be aware that any such behaviour could result in criminal charges.
- 2.8 Officers who are supervising other staff must:
 - o *ensure staff understand the performance standards expected of them;*
 - o *ensure that staff performance is objectively assessed against these standards;*
 - o *avoid favouritism, such as when granting permission for annual leave or attendance at professional development activities.*

3. Integrity

- 3.1 To gain public trust and confidence, we must demonstrate integrity in the workplace by:
 - o *properly exercising our official powers or position and not allowing our authority or position to be improperly used, even when pressured by wantoks;*
 - o *ensuring that any conflict which may arise between our personal interests and official duties is resolved in favour of the public interest;*
 - o *disclosing fraud, misconduct or any other inappropriate behaviour, in a timely manner to the responsible officer, or other appropriate authority such as the Leadership Code Commission.*
- 3.2 There must not be any reprisal or punishment for any officer who honestly discloses fraud, misconduct or other inappropriate behaviour to their responsible officer or other authority.
- 3.3 We must protect the privacy and confidentiality of information obtained in the course of our duties.

- 3.4 We must not disclose any information which could jeopardise the national security of Solomon Islands and/or its international relations.
- 3.5 Outside or secondary employment may adversely affect, or create a conflict of interest, with our official duties. Therefore, we must not engage in any form of outside employment or business venture without first seeking authorisation from the Permanent Secretary for the Public Service and the Leadership Code Commission.
- 3.6 Public officers, their business associates, their families and/or wantoks must not accept or seek any gifts or other personal benefits in exchange for official duties or work-related favours.
- 3.7 We must record and keep accurate and proper records of all Government business and transactions.
- 3.8 To maintain a proper and professional image of the public service, we must ensure that our uniforms and general appearance are clean, neat and tidy at all times.
- 3.9 We need to ensure that any trade union, professional association or political activity we engage in is not seen to compromise the impartiality and independence of the public service.

4. Diligence

- 4.1 We must not hinder or obstruct the work of another officer or pressure any other officer to participate in illegal activity, misconduct or any other inappropriate behaviour.
- 4.2 When providing advice or assistance to a Minister, Permanent Secretary or any other senior official, we must take all reasonable steps to ensure that factual, relevant and accurate information is provided within the required timeframe.
- 4.3 We must make sure that the principles of workplace equality and occupational health and safety are observed and exercised.
- 4.4 We must ensure that our attendance at work is punctual and that any absences are reported and appropriately recorded.
- 4.5 If leaving the workplace due to illness, family or other personal commitments, we must first notify our responsible officer. We all have an obligation to manage our own time efficiently and effectively in the workplace and ensure that a reasonable balance is maintained between work, family and other personal commitments.
- 4.6 While it is recognised that betel nut is an important part of our culture and village life, we must understand that chewing betel nut in the workplace reflects on our professional image and diligence. Therefore, we must not chew betel nut or smoke in Government buildings, vehicles or while performing official duties.

- 4.7 We must ensure that the use of alcohol, betel nut, drugs or any other substance does not adversely affect our work performance or adversely affect the safety of others.
- 4.8 Under no circumstances may any officer, regardless of position or status, drive a Government vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- 4.9 Use of alcohol in Government buildings during social events must first be approved by the relevant Permanent Secretary and must not result in any damage to Government property or resources or affect the safety of any person.

5. Economy and Efficiency

- 5.1 In the performance of our duties, we must ensure that resources, including motor vehicles and laptops, are not abused, wasted or used improperly.
- 5.2 We must comply with all Government instructions, policies and procedures relating to use of Government resources such as motor vehicles, computers and internet.
- 5.3 We must comply with all Government instructions, policies and procedures relating to use of financial resources such as allowances and fares. This means we must not falsely or dishonestly claim any allowance or other form of remuneration unless we are entitled to do so.

- 5.4 Government resources such as telephone, fax and photocopier may be used from time to time for private reasons as long as any such usage is reasonable and kept to a minimum. If there any is any doubt as to what constitutes 'reasonable usage', the responsible officer should be consulted.
- 5.5 Internet and email usage has increased dramatically in the Solomon Islands in recent years. As a result, we must be aware of and comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including copyright and licensing legislation.
- 5.6 While it is acceptable to use the internet for research and other work purposes, we must ensure that personal usage of the internet during work hours is kept to a reasonable level and does not adversely affect our work performance.
- 5.7 Under no circumstances may any officer use the internet to view, download, email or send any material which is offensive, vulgar or pornographic in nature.
- 5.8 We must not use the internet to download music, games or movies to Government computers or file servers unless it is for work purposes. This is to prevent serious computer problems and viruses which can occur in these circumstances.
- 5.9 We must not use the internet or email in a way that could reasonably insult, harass, abuse or offend another officer, member of the public or organisation (remember, what is considered threatening or offensive is defined by the receiver, so if unsure, do not send).

- 5.10 We must not deliberately gain unauthorised access to another person's computer for any inappropriate reason.
- 5.11 We must not deliberately gain unauthorised access to, or damage, any information or data which is confidential or protected.
- 5.12 We must not attempt to hide the origin of any message, or download material under any assumed internet address, or otherwise disguise our user identity.
- 5.13 We must not use the internet or email to endanger the national security and/or international relations of Solomon Islands.

