



Parliamentary
Ethics Committee

Inquiry into the review of the Members Code of Conduct

July 2026

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About the Committee

The Parliamentary Ethics Committee is a Joint Parliamentary Committee introduced under the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024*.

Functions

- (1) The functions of the Parliamentary Ethics Committee are—
- (a) to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with—
 - (i) the effectiveness of the Members Statement of Values and Members Code of Conduct; and
 - (ii) the ethical obligations of members of Parliament; and
 - (b) to review the Members Code of Conduct at least once every 4 years and to report to the Parliament on the review; and
 - (c) to promote the Members Code of Conduct to the Parliament and the public; and
 - (d) to prepare guidance materials in relation to the ethical obligations of members of Parliament; and
 - (e) to provide information and training sessions to members of Parliament on integrity and ethical issues; and
 - (f) to receive reports from the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission in relation to the ethical obligations of members of Parliament; and
 - (g) to monitor and review the performance of the duties and functions of the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser; and
 - (h) to report to the Parliament on any matter connected with the performance of the duties and functions of the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser that may require the attention of the Parliament; and
 - (i) to consider any proposed appointment of the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser under section 92 of the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* and to exercise a power of veto in accordance with that Act; and
 - (j) to carry out any other function conferred on the Parliamentary Ethics Committee by or under the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024*.

- (2) The first review under subsection (1)(b) must be commenced within 12 months after the first appointment of members of the Parliamentary Ethics Committee.
- (3) Despite anything to the contrary in subsection (1), the Parliamentary Ethics Committee cannot investigate a matter relating to particular conduct the subject of—
 - (a) a referral to the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission under the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024*; or
 - (b) a particular disclosure determined by the IBAC under section 26 of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012* to be a public interest complaint; or
 - (c) any advice given by the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser to a current or former member of Parliament, Minister or Parliamentary Secretary.

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Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: That no changes be made to the Members Code of Conduct at this time.

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RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Parliamentary Ethics Committee, the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser, and the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission establish ongoing annual meetings to discuss de-identified issues arising from the operation of the Members Code of Conduct, with a view to supporting continuous improvement of the parliamentary integrity framework.

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RECOMMENDATION 3: That the parliamentary departments ensure that, at an early stage in the 61st Parliament, new members are made aware of the Members Code of Conduct as part of induction programs.

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Acronyms and terms

The Code	The Members Code of Conduct
The Committee	The Parliamentary Ethics Committee
PWSIC	Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission
PIA	Parliamentary Integrity Adviser

Inquiry into the review of the Members Code of Conduct

1.1 Introduction

The Members **Code of Conduct** (the Code) is set out in Part 3 Sections 5 to 16 of the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978*.¹

The Code provides guidance to Members on how to conduct themselves when carrying out their public duties.²

The Code is accompanied by the **Statement of Values** which is set out in Part 2 Section 4 of the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978*.³

The Code sets out the manner in which a member demonstrates the Statement of Values.

The Code and the Statement of Values were incorporated into the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* following amendments on 20 March 2019.

Further amendments to the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978*, taking effect on 31 December 2024, introduced sections 6A and 6B, which specifically address:

- appropriate workplace behaviour
- upholding parliamentary standards and integrity.⁴

1.2 The Code of Conduct and Statement of Values

The Code guides a Member's conduct and includes:

- Upholding democracy and respecting others regardless of background
- Appropriate workplace behaviour
- Upholding parliamentary standards and integrity
- Conflicts of interest
- Using position for profit
- Outside employment and activities

¹ *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* ss 5–16.

² *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* s 5.

³ *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* s 4.

⁴ *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* ss 6A–6B.

- Accepting any gift, hospitality or other benefit
- Use of influence
- Use of public resources
- Personal conduct
- Managing confidential and personal information
- Post-retirement activities.⁵

The Statement of Values provides that:

Members should demonstrate the following values in carrying out their public duties—

- (a) serving the public interest;
- (b) upholding democracy;
- (c) integrity;
- (d) accountability;
- (e) respect for the diversity of views and backgrounds within the Victorian community;
- (f) diligence;
- (g) leadership.⁶

1.3 Role of the Parliamentary Ethics Committee

Section 4 of the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* establishes the Parliamentary Ethics Committee (the Committee), the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission (PWSIC), and the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser (PIA) to uphold Victoria's parliamentary standards and integrity framework.⁷

Section 8 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* sets out the functions of the Committee. In relation to the Code, Section 8(1)(a)–(b) provides that the Committee is responsible for reporting to Parliament on the effectiveness of the Statement of Values and the Code, reviewing the Code at least every four years and reporting to Parliament on that review.⁸

Section 8(2) of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* requires that the first review of the Code commence within 12 months of the Committee's establishment.⁹ This inquiry and report have been undertaken in fulfilment of that obligation.

⁵ *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* ss 6–15.

⁶ *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* s 4.

⁷ *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* s 4.

⁸ *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* s 8(1)(a)–(b).

⁹ *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* s 8(2).

The *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* further states that one of the functions of the PWSIC is to assist the Committee to review the Code.¹⁰

1.4 Promoting the Code of Conduct

1.4.1 Education and engagement

Section 8 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* states that the Committee is responsible for promoting the Code to both Parliament and the public. This includes developing guidance materials on the ethical obligations of members, as well as providing information and training on integrity and ethical issues.¹¹ The *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* further provides that the PIA¹² and the PWSIC¹³ support the Committee in carrying out these functions.

The Committee has taken an active role in promoting awareness and understanding of the Code among Members. It considered it essential that Members first have a strong working knowledge of the Code before undertaking a formal review, to enable informed feedback.

The Committee worked in collaboration with the PIA, Professor Charles Sampford, and the PWSIC to offer and deliver education sessions to Members.

Group sessions were arranged for the Government caucus, Coalition Members and Greens Members. The Committee also offered equivalent sessions to all crossbench Members across both Houses.

1.4.2 Member feedback

Feedback collated by the PWSIC following these sessions indicated that:

- Most Members were “somewhat familiar” with the Code but expressed the need for clearer, more practical guidance
- Members considered the Code difficult to access and written in a very formal style
- Members sought short, practical guidance, clear pathways to advice and scenario-based examples reflecting real-world situations
- Members would like more regular, tailored and interactive training, including annotated guidance and case examples.

¹⁰ *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* s 45(g).

¹¹ *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* s 8.

¹² *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* s 87(1)(d).

¹³ *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* s 45(g).

1.4.3 Awareness initiatives

To further promote the Code, the Committee developed posters for display in Members' areas within Parliament House. These posters:

- Emphasise the importance of the Code
- Include a QR code linking to the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978*
- Provide contact details for the Committee, PIA, and PWSIC.

The Committee has ensured that the Code is available on the Members' Intranet, along with a link to the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978*.

1.5 Review of the Code of Conduct

1.5.1 Consultation process

We invited input from key stakeholders, including parliamentary committees, integrity bodies, presiding officers, parliamentary officers, and all Members of the Victorian Parliament.

1.5.2 Responses

Correspondence was received from:

- Will Fowles MP
- Tim Read MP
- Parliamentary Integrity Adviser
- Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission.

1.5.3 Findings

Following consideration of these responses and the operation of the Code within the broader integrity framework, we find that:

- the Code is operating effectively
- there is currently no compelling evidence to support amendment to the Code.

We agree with the advice of the PWSIC that the Code remains:

- fit for purpose
- contemporary
- aligned with modern integrity expectations.

In his response to the Committee, the PIA recommended annual discussions between the Committee, PWSIC and PIA on de-identified issues arising from the Code. We support this approach and encourage its implementation by future Committees.

Member awareness of the Code is not as strong as it should be. In the next Parliament, new members should be made aware of the Code as part of induction programs run by the departments of the Parliament.

1.6 Supporting View of the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission

The PWSIC also recommended that no changes be made, noting that:

- the integrity framework has been in operation for less than 12 months
- it is too early to draw definitive conclusions
- the evidence base is not yet sufficiently developed.

We agree with the PWSIC that additional time is needed for the framework to become fully established before changes are contemplated.

1.7 Future Reviews

We suggest that the next Parliamentary Ethics Committee undertake a further review at an appropriate point in the next Parliament. This would allow for a more comprehensive evidence base and a more complete assessment of the Code and the parliamentary integrity framework.

1.8 Conclusion

The Committee affirms its strong support for the Code and recognises the important role it plays within Parliament's integrity framework. On the available evidence, we consider that the Code is effectively meeting its objective of guiding Members in the performance of their public duties. This view is supported by the fact that, to date, the PWSIC has not reported on any breach of the Code by a Member of Parliament.

Noting the results of the survey conducted by the PWSIC with Members, including feedback that the Code is difficult to access and that more tailored training and clearer guidance are needed, the Committee will continue to promote awareness and understanding of the Code. In doing so, the Committee will also ensure it fulfils its statutory obligations under the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*.

We acknowledge and thank the PIA and the PWSIC for their ongoing assistance and collaboration.

1.9 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: That no changes be made to the Members Code of Conduct at this time.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Parliamentary Ethics Committee, the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser, and the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission establish ongoing annual meetings to discuss de-identified issues arising from the operation of the Members Code of Conduct, with a view to supporting continuous improvement of the parliamentary integrity framework.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the parliamentary departments ensure that, at an early stage in the 61st Parliament, new members are made aware of the Members Code of Conduct as part of induction programs.

**Adopted by the Parliamentary Ethics Committee
Parliament of Victoria, East Melbourne
17 June 2026**

Appendix A

Statement of Values

Source: *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* s 4.

4 Statement of Values

Members should demonstrate the following values in carrying out their public duties—

- (a) serving the public interest;
- (b) upholding democracy;
- (c) integrity;
- (d) accountability;
- (e) respect for the diversity of views and backgrounds within the Victorian community;
- (f) diligence;
- (g) leadership.

Appendix B

Members Code of Conduct

Source: *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978* ss 6–15.

6 Upholding democracy and respecting others regardless of background

A Member must—

- (a) make the performance of their public duties their prime responsibility; and
- (b) exercise reasonable care and diligence in performing their public duties; and
- (c) submit themselves to the lawful scrutiny appropriate to their office; and
- (d) treat all persons with respect and have due regard for their opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities.

6A Appropriate workplace behaviour

- (1) A Member must foster a healthy, safe, respectful and inclusive environment in the parliamentary workplace, free from bullying, sexual harassment, assault and discrimination.

...

6B Upholding parliamentary standards and integrity

- (1) A Member must demonstrate respect for the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission and the Parliamentary Integrity Adviser.

...

7 Conflicts of interest

- (1) A Member must avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interests with their private interests.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), a Member has a conflict of interest if the Member—
 - (a) participates; or
 - (b) makes a decision—

in the execution of the Member's office which furthers the private interests of the Member or the private interests of a specified person.

- (3) Without limiting subsection (1), a Member does not have a conflict of interest if the Member or a specified person is affected as a member of the public or a broad class of persons.

8 Using position for profit

- (1) A Member must not—
- (a) receive a fee, payment, retainer or reward; or
 - (b) permit any compensation to accrue to their beneficial interest or the beneficial interest of a specified person—
- for, or on account of, or as a result of the use of, their position as a Member.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to any parliamentary salary or work-related parliamentary allowances, the Budget, electorate allowances, expense allowances (if any), the motor vehicle allowance (if claimed) or other prescribed allowances or other public resources under the **Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968**.

9 Outside employment and activities

A Member may engage in employment, business and community activities outside of their duties as a Member but must avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest that might arise from those activities, including where the activities compromise the Member's ability to fulfil their public duties.

10 Accepting any gift, hospitality or other benefit

- A Member must not accept any gift, hospitality or other benefit which—
- (a) creates an actual or perceived conflict of interest; or
 - (b) might create a perception of an attempt to influence the Member in the exercise of their public duties.

11 Use of influence

- A Member—
- (a) must exercise their influence as a Member responsibly; and
 - (b) must not use their influence to improperly further their private interests or the private interests of a specified person.

12 Use of public resources

A Member must comply with—

- (a) the **Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968** and any regulations made under that Act; and
- (b) any other law, rule or guidance regarding the use of public resources.

13 Personal conduct

- (1) A Member must ensure that their conduct as a Member does not bring discredit upon the Parliament.
- (2) A Member—
 - (a) must act ethically, reasonably and in good faith when using, and accounting for the use of, public resources in relation to the performance of their public duties; and
 - (b) must not deliberately mislead the Parliament or the public about any matter relating to the performance of their public duties.
- (3) A Member must be fair, objective and courteous—
 - (a) in their dealings with the community; and
 - (b) without detracting from the importance of robust public debate in a democracy, in their dealings with other Members.

14 Managing confidential and personal information

- (1) A Member must not use confidential information gained in the performance of their public duties to further their private interests or the private interests of a specified person.
- (2) A Member must respect the confidentiality of information they receive in the course of their public duties.

15 Post-retirement activities

- (1) A former Member must not take improper advantage of any office held as a Member of Parliament after they cease to be a Member.
- (2) In this section, ***improper advantage*** means—
 - (a) using official information—
 - (i) that is not in the public domain; or
 - (ii) that was obtained in the course of their public duties—
for advantage or benefit to themselves or another person; or

- (b) breaching confidentiality obligations regarding information obtained in the course of their public duties for financial or commercial advantage or benefit to themselves or another person; or
- (c) using their status as a former Member to obtain preferential treatment or privileged access to Government after ceasing to be a member of Parliament.