



Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Gifts and Benefits Policy

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1 Purpose

In the course of their employment departmental employees may be offered gifts or benefits, including hospitality. The purpose of this policy is to provide assistance to employees to determine when it is appropriate to accept a gift or benefit and to identify the circumstances where acceptance could result in real or apparent conflicts of interest.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Employee:

Responsibilities include:

- discussing any offers/acceptances of gifts or benefits, other than those specifically excluded under sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, with their Section Head or immediate supervisor (for EL2 and SES employees and equivalents)
- recording gifts and benefits accepted in accordance with this policy
- informing individuals who offer them a gift or benefit of the department's disclosure policy regarding publication of the details of gifts and benefits offered to its employees on its website
- maintaining all documentation associated with gifts and benefits in accordance with the department's Records Management policy
- ensuring no conflict of interest exists or could be perceived to exist from the acceptance of a gift or benefit
- ensuring that loyalty program points (such as frequent flyer points) they accumulate through official travel and/or other official expenditure are not used for personal benefit or gain
- in deciding to accept a gift or benefit, ensuring their decision is:
 - defensible
 - able to withstand public scrutiny and
 - gives proper regard to the relevant duties and obligations of employees under the PS Act and PGPA Act.

2.2 Designated Contact/Approver

Responsibilities include:

- ensuring employees they supervise are aware of this policy and comply with its requirements
- when advising an employee regarding an offer of a gift or benefit, ensuring any action undertaken is:
 - consistent with the requirements of this policy
 - defensible
 - able to withstand public scrutiny and
 - gives proper regard to the relevant duties and obligations of employees under the PS Act and PGPA Act
- actioning any [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#) entries they receive appropriately and ensuring the entries are accurate and complete
- ensuring no conflict of interest exists or could be perceived to exist from the acceptance of a gift or benefit, and

- maintaining all documentation associated with gifts and benefits in accordance with the department's Records Management policy.

3 Definitions

Cash includes money, cash vouchers, money orders, or shares.

A '**Conflict of Interest**' can be defined as '... a conflict between the public duties and personal interests of an employee that improperly influences the employee in the performance of his or her duties.'¹

A '**Gift**' or a '**Benefit**' includes, but is not limited to:

- Goods, such as bottles of wine, manufacturer's samples or personal items
- promotional materials, including clothing, books, compact discs or DVDs
- a gift or donation made on behalf of an employee or the department
- sponsored travel
- benefits under travel incentive schemes/loyalty programs
- airline competition prizes
- meals or other hospitality (note status of incidental benefits and acceptance of reasonable hospitality)
- accommodation and hire car discounts
- entertainment, such as seats at sporting or theatre events or golf days
- discounts on commercial items (other than Whole of Australian Government (WoAG) arrangements or where they form part of an arrangement established by the department) and
- free or discounted places on training and development courses (other than contra-deals associated with the presentation of papers).

'**Decision Making Roles**' are intended to encompass employees at all levels who are making or influencing:

- regulatory decisions
- funding recommendations, funding decisions or administering grants or
- procurement processes or decisions.

¹ (This definition is based on Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), [Australian Public Service \(APS\) Values and Code of Conduct in practice – Section 5: Conflict of Interest](#), as published on the APSC website.)

4 Requirements in relation to gifts and benefits

4.1 Principles

There are limited circumstances in which an employee can accept a gift or benefit offered in connection with their official duties or because of their position in the department.

Employees must immediately report offers which could be construed as a bribe, commission or any other kind of improper inducement in return for favourable treatment to their Branch Head (or immediate supervisor for SES officers).

All decisions relating to the acceptance of gifts or benefits should be based upon the requirement for employees to uphold the [APS Values](#), [APS Employment Principles](#), the [APS Code of Conduct](#) and the General Duties of Officials under the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#) (PGPA Act). Consistent with these requirements, gifts or benefits of any value should never be accepted when doing so would result in a real or apparent conflict of interest.

Real or apparent conflicts of interest are more likely to occur where a gift or benefit is offered to an employee in a decision-making role and the person or organisation offering the gift or benefit:

- May benefit from a pending or active departmental process
- is in an existing or potential contractual relationship with the department
- receives, or is seeking, Commonwealth assistance or
- has a primary purpose of lobbying Ministers, Members of Parliament, departments or agencies.

While the value of a gift or benefit is an important factor in determining whether it can be accepted (see 4.2), employees must consider the circumstances under which a gift or benefit is offered. For example, a person or organisation may offer a particular employee an inexpensive gift or benefit, but on a regular rather than one-off basis. To determine whether it is appropriate to accept the gift or benefit in that particular situation the employee must apply the principles specified in this policy, while also taking account of the cumulative value of the gifts and benefits and the timing and regularity with which gifts and benefits are offered to them.

To avoid a breach of the [APS Values](#), [APS Employment Principles](#), the [APS Code of Conduct](#), the [Commonwealth Procurement Rules](#), the General Duties of Officials and potentially the commission of an offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#), employees should not:

- accept any amount of cash or financial benefit
- accept personal fees for the performance of their duties, or
- solicit any gift or benefit in connection with their official duties.

4.2 Application

This policy does not cover the provision/giving of official hospitality or gifts. Information regarding these issues is provided in the [International Travel intranet page](#) and following Finance Business Rules:

- [Finance Business Rule R2.3](#) - Hospitality
- [Finance Business Rule R10.2](#) – Disposing of relevant property

This policy is consistent with and should be read in conjunction with the:

- Ethical framework for APS employees outlined in the [APS Values](#), [APS Employment Principles](#) and the [APS Code of Conduct](#)
- the 'General Duties of Officials' specified in Part 2-2, Division 3, Subdivision A of the PGPA Act
- [Commonwealth Procurement Rules](#), in particular clauses 6.6 – 6.8 and
- relevant departmental [Accountable Authority Instructions and Finance Business Rules](#).

Some [practical scenarios](#) are provided to highlight examples of situations in which departmental employees may be offered gifts or benefits by individuals or organisations external to the department.

4.3 Accepting and Recording Gifts and Benefits

Employees must record accepted gifts or benefits valued at \$20 or more on the department's [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#).

Gifts that are accepted by employees in the course of their work, other than those excluded under section 4.3.1, immediately become [relevant property](#) when received and must be managed in accordance with section 4.6.

4.3.1 Gifts or benefits employees may accept which don't need to be recorded

The following gifts and benefits can be accepted by employees and do not need to be recorded on the department's [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#):

- 'Incidental benefits' such as:
 - inexpensive items provided on a one-off basis, where acceptance would not create a real or apparent conflict of interest (e.g. items such as diaries, calendars, inexpensive pens, paperweights, hats, mouse pads and stationery which are provided as part of attendance at a conference, seminar or training course)
 - food and beverages consumed during the course of working lunches and dinners
 - shared taxi fares
 - use of work items such as use of equipment and room facilities
 - reasonable hospitality for social events and Christmas functions, and
 - reasonable hospitality associated with business presentations and seminars.
- gifts valued at less than \$20. For example, an inexpensive gift provided to an employee as a sign of appreciation for participation in a conference
- access to corporate discount arrangements where established by the department as part of a departmental initiative (e.g. discounted gym memberships made available to employees as an element of the department's [Wellbeing initiatives](#)) and

4.3.2 Gifts or benefits employees may accept which must be recorded

In addition to items specified in section 4.3.1, other gifts or benefits employees may accept, subject to the principles outlined in section 4.1 and the item being recorded in the [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#), include:

- A gift on behalf of the department as part of a formal exchange of gifts between Australian and foreign government representatives, noting the security requirements applying to gifts or benefits received or offered from foreign officials specified in section 4.4. In these situations,

it may be appropriate for an employee to accept a gift on behalf of the department, rather than on their own behalf

- where there are possible adverse consequences to Australia's interests which may flow from the non-acceptance of the gift, for example, where refusal could cause cultural offence
- reasonable offers of hospitality where it can be demonstrated to genuinely assist the department to develop and maintain constructive relationships with stakeholders. This includes undertaking appropriate industry consultation and relationship management with stakeholders, where it forms an important part of an employee's role and
- gifts presented to an employee at the conclusion of a conference or seminar at which they have spoken
- access to promotional offers from [WoAG Air Travel Services panel airlines](#) (e.g. discounted travel APS employees, as well as family and friends). These offers will be clearly identified as being made on a WoAG basis to all APS employees and will specify any requirements for participation (e.g. the family and friends must be included in the employee's booking, they must travel in the company of the employee, the employee must be the primary contact for the booking and the employee must provide their work email).

4.3.3 Actions when offered a gift or benefit

Employees must discuss the offer and/or acceptance of a gift or benefit (other than excluded items specified in section 4.2.1) with their Designated Contact/Approver (as specified in the table at section 4.3.4) either:

- a) Prior to acceptance when possible (e.g. an invitation to attend a future event) so the manager/supervisor can:

- request the employee decline the offer or
- inform the employee they may accept the offer.

If the gift or benefit is accepted it must be recorded in the Central Gifts and Benefits Register and the Designated Contact/Approver will approve the relevant entry.

OR

- b) After acceptance but prior to recording in the department's Central Gifts and Benefits Register when employees cannot discuss acceptance beforehand. In these circumstances, the employee must notify the relevant Designated Contact/Approver of the acceptance of the gift or benefit as soon as possible upon their return to work. The Designated Contact/Approver can:

- Inform the employee that acceptance of the gift or benefit was inappropriate and require the employee to return or decline the offered gift or benefit if possible.

NOTE:

If the gift or benefit is returned or declined it is not recorded in the Central Gifts and Benefits Register.

If the gift or benefit cannot be returned or declined it must be recorded in the Central Gifts and Benefits Register and the relevant Designated Contact/Approver will confirm the details of the relevant entry.

OR

- Confirm acceptance of the gift or benefit was appropriate. The gift or benefit must then be recorded in the Central Gifts and Benefits Register and the relevant Designated Contact/Approver will approve the relevant entry.

4.3.4 Designated Contacts/Approvers

The following table outlines the Designated Contact/Approver for:

- a) discussion/notification of offers/acceptance or gifts and benefits, and
- b) entries for accepted gifts and benefits in the department's Gifts and Benefits Register.

Level/Role	Contact/Approver
APS1 – EL1 (and equivalents)	Section Head (EL2 and equivalents)
EL2 (and equivalents)	Branch Head (SES1 and equivalents)
SES1 (and equivalents)	Division Head (SES2 and equivalents)
SES2 (and equivalents)	Deputy Secretary (SES3 and equivalents)
Deputy Secretary (and equivalents)	Chief Operating Officer
Chief Operating Officer	Chief Financial Officer or Deputy Chief Financial Officer
Secretary	Chief Financial Officer

4.4 Security Requirements

All gifts or benefits offered or received from foreign officials, regardless of value, should be registered in the department's [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#) and provided to the Protective Security Section as soon as possible. If it is determined the gift does not present an ongoing security risk, it will be returned to the relevant area for display, or disposal in accordance with section 4.6 of this policy.

Contact security@health.gov.au to determine if a non-IT gift needs to be examined / scanned to ensure there is no present or ongoing security risk.

Any gifted IT item or device, such as USB connections or CDs designed to interact with IT systems, **must not be used** and **must be destroyed**. Email security@health.gov.au for further information regarding gifted IT items or devices and to arrange for items to be securely destroyed.

Any gifted software **must not be downloaded** unless a reasonable business justification has been completed and sent to the Cyber Security team for review. The Cyber Security team can be contacted at cyber.security@health.gov.au for further information.

4.5 Additional information for specific gifts or benefits

4.5.1 Complimentary airline lounge memberships

The department's Secretary and Deputy Secretaries are commonly gifted airline lounge memberships, including those which are invitation-only.

Paragraph 35 of the APSC [Guidance for Agency Heads - Gifts and Benefits](#) requires gifted airline lounge memberships (including those which are invitation-only) to be reported in the department's [Gifts and Benefits Register](#).

To ensure the department meets the reporting requirements of the APSC guidance on gifted airline lounge memberships:

- all such memberships held in October of each year will be publicly reported, and

- where circumstances change, for example on the appointment of a new Deputy Secretary, the arrangement will be reported in the relevant financial quarter.

Executive Officers to relevant Senior Executives (i.e. the Secretary or Deputy Secretary) are requested to support the timely reporting of gifted airline lounge memberships in the department's [Gifts and Benefits Register](#).

While airline lounge memberships are most commonly gifted to Agency Heads and Deputy Secretaries, the requirement to report gifted airline lounge memberships in the Gifts and Benefits Register applies to all employees of the department.

4.5.2 Travel Incentive Schemes / Loyalty Programs

Finance Business Rules [R2.4](#) (Rule 5, clauses n-p) and [R2.5](#) (Rule 4, clause d) outline departmental requirements regarding participation in travel incentive schemes, including the management of any loyalty program reward points (or frequent flyers points) accumulated by an employee as a result of official travel or offers resulting from membership in a loyalty program (irrespective of the source of payment of the traveller's loyalty program membership). These requirements are consistent with the [WoAG Air Travel Services panel airlines](#), which state that employees travelling on official business should not receive a personal benefit from undertaking Commonwealth activities.

4.5.3 Sponsored travel

Sponsored travel is where transport, accommodation or living costs are met by a person or organisation external to the department and APS.

The following principles apply in regard to offers of sponsored travel:

- the department should meet the expenses associated with work undertaken on its behalf by its employees, and
- employees should avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts.

Offers of sponsored travel by a person or organisation external to the department and APS should be treated in the same manner as gifts and other benefits described in this policy.

Acceptance of sponsored travel may be considered where the offer is made:

- by an inter-governmental or international agency, another government, an educational institution, a non-profit organisation, a recognised humanitarian organisation or broad-based industry group or
- on a general rather than a particular basis (e.g. industry familiarisation tours or where a body such as the World Health Organization sponsors participants in a seminar).

In such cases, the source of the funding should be reputable and apolitical, and no real or apparent conflict of interest should be created as a result of accepting the offer.

Department employees should not accept offers of travel sponsored by private organisations or groups. Acceptance may only be considered in exceptional circumstances where it is determined to be in the department's interest and where practical alternative means of travel or attendance at official expense is not otherwise available, noting the department may help mitigate any potential conflict of interest concerns by offering to contribute to costs incurred.

Additional specific information and department requirements regarding the management and recovery of costs associated with sponsored overseas travel can be found in:

- The [International Travel intranet page](#) and
- [Finance Business Rule R2.5 \(Rule 4, clauses r-t\)](#).

4.5.4 Entertainment

Offers of entertainment are often used by private organisations or groups as a means to create and expand business contacts and relationships.

Acceptance of offers of entertainment and attendance at significant events may be considered by senior employees, generally EL2s and above, where a reasonable case is made that:

- attendance will genuinely assist the department to develop and maintain constructive relationships with its stakeholders
- the event represents a meaningful opportunity to make important business connections of considerable benefit to the department, and
- there is a relevant and important representational role for the employee in attending.

While accompanying a Minister may be a relevant factor in considering whether an employee attends an entertainment event, it is important that senior employees are mindful of their role in promoting the [APS Values](#) and ensure that any decisions to accept an offer of entertainment does not create a real or apparent conflict of interest. The more prominent the event in question, the more important it is for an employee to give due consideration to any adverse perceptions which may be generated by their acceptance. An option for mitigating this issue may be for the employee to pay for the entertainment where it is reasonable and practical to do so.

While circumstances may support senior employees accepting invitations to some events, it is not appropriate for those employees to accept offers of paid travel or accommodation in relation to their attendance.

Any offers of entertainment which are accepted by employees are to be recorded in the department's [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#).

4.6 Retention of Gifts

Employees should not retain gifts accepted in the course of their work, other than those valued at less than \$20. All accepted gifts valued at \$20 or more immediately become [relevant property](#) (i.e. property, other than money, which is owned or held by the Commonwealth or a corporate Commonwealth entity) and must be disposed of in accordance with the requirements of Finance Business Rule R10.2 – Disposal of relevant property.

Customary gifts should be displayed in the department where appropriate, noting the security requirements specified in section 4.4. regarding gifts from foreign officials.

Options available for disposal of other gifts valued at \$20 or more, which have been accepted by employees, include:

- being put on display in the department or transferred to another department
- donation to the Social Club for a raffle or social function
- being purchased by the employee and
- donation to a registered charity or community organisation.

Employees should ensure the method of disposal chosen will not cause offence to the giver.

4.7 Valuation process

An employee who has received a gift or benefit is to obtain a reasonable estimate of its value, which may reflect current market values, the value of similar items held by the department, or a written valuation.

Employees should agree to an approach to determining how best to place a value on the gift or benefit with their manager. The approach should be cost effective relative to the value of the item involved.

As estimated value is not required for gifts from international delegations and/or with cultural value. These gifts are to be recorded on the [Central Gifts and Benefits Register](#) regardless of financial value.

4.8 Applying Additional Local Restrictions

A Branch Head or Division Head can apply additional more restrictive local requirements (where they do not conflict with or reduce the requirements of this policy, associated rules and legislation) on the acceptance and retention of gifts and benefits for individual employees or groups of employees. These additional restrictions should be based on an assessment of the potential ethical and reputational risk that acceptance of gifts and benefits may represent for their employees.

Relevant considerations may include but are not limited to:

- the function that the employee undertakes and the existing or prospective relationships with external entities as a result of carrying out those functions (such as regulatory administration and application and complex compliance actions)
- the employee's actual or perceived level of authority or influence in regard to relevant decision-making or stakeholder engagement and management (including administering grants or undertaking procurement or contract management on behalf of the department), and
- whether there is a clear conflict of interest at a particular point in time (such as during a tender process or grant round).

Local restrictions for accepting and retaining gifts and benefits must:

- be established in consultation with People Branch in People, Communication and Parliamentary Division
- meet the minimum requirements of this policy
- cover any additional local recording requirements, as the department's Central Gifts and Benefits Register cannot accommodate additional local restrictions and associated recording requirements, and
- be approved by the relevant Division Head.

4.9 External Reporting of Gifts and Benefits

In the interests of transparency and consistent with [guidance provided to Agency Heads](#) by the APSC, the Department will periodically publish details of the gifts and benefits accepted by departmental employees on the department's internet site. This requirement covers all gifts and benefits which are valued at \$100 or more and all gifts accepted as part of a formal exchange of gifts between Australian and foreign government representatives. Employees should inform individuals who offer them a gift or benefit of the department's disclosure policy.

5 Further assistance

For any queries regarding the operation of this policy please contact HR Help on (02) 6289 8888. The department's Call Centre will either answer your query directly or refer your question to [Workplace Relations Section](#) in People Branch or the [Financial Governance Section](#) in Financial Management Division.

6 Compliance

Failure to comply with the requirements of this and other departmental policies relating to gifts and benefits or conflict of interest may lead to disciplinary action under the . A range of sanctions may be imposed on an employee found to have breached the APS Code of Conduct, up to and including termination of their employment.

In addition, the acceptance or solicitation of any benefit, in circumstances within the definition of a bribe, can be both a breach of the [PGPA Act](#) and an offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#).

7 Version control

Version Number	Date of issue	Author(s)	Brief description of change
Version No: 1.0	4 /07/2013	Employee Relations	Reviewed and amended
Version No: 2.0	11/10/2017	Workforce Strategy and Policy	Reviewed and amended
Version No: 3.0	6/12/2019	Employment Conditions and Policies	Updated to reflect threshold changes for acceptance, retaining and reporting gifts and benefits offered.
Version No: 4.0	08/08/2025	Workplace Relations Section	Updated to reflect updated Government policy requirements for declaring complimentary airline lounge memberships and Security information for IT and non-IT gifts. Fixed broken links.
Version No: 4.1	12/12/2025	Workplace Relations Section	Updated to clarify and streamline management of Gifts and Benefits Register entries for SES.