



VICTORIA POLICE

CODE OF CONDUCT



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CHIEF COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

Victoria Police continues to evolve to meet the needs and expectations of a growing and changing Victorian community. While the organisation adapts, our objective remains constant: a safe Victoria where everyone is safe and feels safe.

Achieving this objective depends on the trust and confidence of the community we serve. That trust is earned through what we deliver to keep the community safe and the professionalism, integrity and accountability of our people. Every decision we make, and every action we take—whether on or off duty—shapes how Victoria Police is perceived and determines the strength of our relationship with the community.

Victoria Police is firmly committed to living our Values, creating and maintaining a safe workplace, and upholding the highest professional and ethical standards at every level of the organisation. Accountability and transparency are fundamental to this commitment. The Victoria Police Code of Conduct reflects our ongoing focus on integrity and professionalism.

The Code of Conduct establishes eight standards that all personnel are expected to understand and uphold. These standards align with the Victoria Police Values, the S.E.L.F. test—ensuring decisions can withstand scrutiny, and are ethical, lawful and fair—and the Oath and Affirmation of Office. Together, they provide a clear framework for behaviour and decision-making that consistently serves the public interest.

I am proud of the professionalism, diligence and ethical commitment of our people. We should all take pride in our roles in Victoria Police, knowing that the community depends on us.

I expect every Victoria Police employee to use the Code of Conduct as the benchmark for their behaviour and decision-making. It must guide us to act with integrity, professionalism and accountability as we work together to reduce crime, reduce harm in our communities and on our roads, and strengthen trust and confidence in Victoria Police.

Mike Bush CNZM
Chief Commissioner



INTRODUCTION

Policing plays an essential role upholding the rule of law in a democratic society. Since 1853 Victoria Police has been protecting and serving the Victorian community. For those who choose to serve, policing is a rewarding profession that can make a positive impact on people's lives.

The community recognises that policing can be a demanding profession that carries risk. To ensure they can perform their duties safely and effectively, Victoria Police personnel hold significant powers, discretion, and responsibility. This authority also comes with a public expectation that all Victoria Police personnel conduct themselves ethically and professionally. Upholding the standards under the Code of Conduct is crucial to maintaining the trust and support of the community Victoria Police serves.

The Victoria Police Code of Conduct is a publicly available document issued under section 61A of the *Victoria Police Act 2013* by the Chief Commissioner of Police. It sets out eight standards for all personnel. These standards are reflective of contemporary community expectations of Victoria Police and reflect the standards the vast majority of personnel already demonstrate day-to-day.

The role of policing can be both physically and emotionally challenging, with Victoria Police personnel often required to make decisions in difficult or dynamic circumstances. The Code of Conduct guides personnel to exercise discretion fairly, ethically, and in the interests of the community. The Code of Conduct also allows the community to understand the standard of service they can expect from Victoria Police.

Victoria Police's acknowledgement of the Aboriginal people of Victoria



Victoria Police acknowledges the Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the lands of Victoria. Victoria Police has a responsibility to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in ways that are culturally safe, work in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Victoria to support self-determination and uphold human rights.

Historic and systemic issues within the Victorian justice system have caused significant harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Improving the accountability and culture of Victoria Police through adherence to the Code of Conduct is a crucial step to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Victoria Police is an organisation made up of personnel such as Police Officers, Protective Service Officers, Police Reservists and Victorian Public Service (VPS) employees, as defined as in the *Victoria Police Act 2013*. Victoria Police personnel will encounter varied and complex situations. Whatever the circumstances, decisions made must be lawful, informed, professional and ethical.

Whilst legislation and organisational policies direct or inform Victoria Police personnel on how to deal with certain matters, they cannot prescribe a response to every situation or experience. Existing frameworks for ethical decision making, including our Values, the S.E.L.F. test and the obligations under the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* can guide personnel to make decisions that reflect expectations of the community and Victoria Police.

The eight standards within the Victoria Police Code of Conduct are intended to set minimum standards for the conduct and behaviour of our personnel. Victoria Police personnel are required to comply with this Code of Conduct in conjunction with organisational policies. Failure by Police Officers and Protective Services Officers to comply with the standards within the Code of Conduct may constitute a breach of discipline under section 125(1)(ca) of the *Victoria Police Act 2013*.

Whilst this Code of Conduct specifically outlines eight standards for Victoria Police personnel, the *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Service employees of special bodies* also prescribes the conduct expected of VPS employees employed in accordance with the *Public Administration Act 2004*. A failure by VPS employees to comply with that Code of Conduct may constitute misconduct under s 61(6) of the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

FRAMEWORKS TO SUPPORT DECISION MAKING

Our Values

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|  | COMPASSION We act with compassion through tolerance, understanding and impartiality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Have respect for difference through inclusiveness and open-mindedness.» Build positive relationships with the community and our colleagues through empathy and active listening.» Prioritise crime prevention and the needs of victims.» Act with genuine kindness, empathy and understanding of the diverse needs of the community. |
|  | COURAGE We act with courage and uphold the values in the face of adversity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Make robust and ethical decisions in challenging circumstances.» Challenge inappropriate behaviours and encourage others to do the same.» Show humility and strength of character.» Be innovative. |
|  | RESPECT We treat everyone fairly, with dignity and respect; they are valued and included. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Treat each other and every community member with respect and understanding.» Celebrate and value equity, diversity and inclusion.» Value the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as First Nations people, and their rich history and culture, along with the diverse backgrounds of other community members. |
|  | INTEGRITY We act with integrity and honour, being fair and respectful of both the law and human rights. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Be honest, objective and impartial.» Respect and champion human rights and commit to lawful and fair processes.» Place the good of the community before our own interests.» Build the trust and confidence of the community. |
|  | PROFESSIONALISM We are accountable and professional; committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct and presentation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Behave in a manner that reflects positively on ourselves and our organisation.» Perform our duties with care and skill, provide services that are engaging, accessible and equitable.» Take pride in the way we look and act.» Be open, adaptable and resilient, and value collaboration and teamwork. |

FRAMEWORKS TO SUPPORT DECISION MAKING (continued)

The S.E.L.F. test

The S.E.L.F. test helps guide personnel to exercise judgement by considering the reasonableness of their decisions.

SCRUTINY

- » Will the decision withstand public scrutiny by the community, Victoria Police, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and other relevant parties?

ETHICAL

- » Is the decision ethical and in compliance with Victoria Police policies?
- » Does the decision align with the Victoria Police Code of Conduct?

LAWFUL

- » Is the decision lawful having regard to the law, regulations, and Victoria Police instructions?
- » Does the decision properly consider human rights?

FAIR

- » Is the decision fair to the community, colleagues, myself, and others?
- » Does the decision support the community's expectation of the individual's right to equality?

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter) contains twenty human rights that promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, agency, equality and dignity. Human rights are relevant to every aspect of the work of Victoria Police. All personnel have a legal obligation to not act incompatibly with human rights and to give proper consideration to relevant human rights before making a decision.

Both the Code of Conduct and the Charter will support personnel to make ethical and lawful decisions that uphold the human rights of the community they serve.

THE EIGHT STANDARDS

1. Honesty and integrity

Whether on or off duty we behave honestly and with integrity. Our actions do not discredit Victoria Police or undermine community confidence

Whether on or off duty, Victoria Police personnel must uphold the Values of Victoria Police and demonstrate integrity in the performance of their duties. Victoria Police personnel are expected to take accountability for their actions and omissions.

The Victorian community relies on Victoria Police personnel to behave with integrity in the performance of their duties and in their dealings with the public, colleagues and the judicial system. Victoria Police personnel must not make false, misleading or inaccurate records or statements unless lawful and with appropriate authority to do so.

2. Duty to uphold the law fairly and impartially

We uphold the law and fulfil our duties fairly and impartially. We manage any conflicts of interest that arise in favour of the public interest

Victoria Police personnel must comply with the law, whether on or off duty and must perform their duties fairly and impartially. Conduct that compromises, has the potential to, or can be perceived to compromise a personnel's ability to perform their duties fairly and impartially undermines public confidence in Victoria Police.

Victoria Police personnel are responsible for the management of any interest that may conflict with their duties and are expected to place the good of the community before their own interests. Any financial or private interest that does, has the potential to, or may be perceived as compromising a Victoria Police personnel's ability to perform their duties fairly or impartially, will be considered a conflict of interest. This can include a:

- » gift, benefit or hospitality offered or received, or
- » secondary employment, or
- » an outside interest such as volunteer work, club or membership, or
- » a personal relationship or association.

Victoria Police personnel must identify and report any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest in adherence to the organisation's policies. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that conflict of interest risk management plans are only approved and managed if they align with the public interest.

THE EIGHT STANDARDS (continued)

3. Respect and adherence to Human Rights

We act respectfully, with compassion and tolerance, treating members of the community and colleagues with dignity and courtesy in line with our Values and in accordance with Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

In carrying out their duties, Victoria Police employees must treat the public and their colleagues with respect, fairness and dignity. Personnel must understand and comply with the obligations under the Charter. Personnel must act compatibly with human rights and give proper consideration to relevant human rights before making a decision. The obligations apply whether personnel are exercising police or other statutory powers afforded to them.

Victoria Police personnel routinely interact with vulnerable members of the community, whether they are victims or witnesses to a crime or in our custody or care. Victoria Police personnel should take additional care in their interactions with any vulnerable person to ensure their safety and dignity is maintained.

Victoria Police is a diverse and inclusive workplace that supports all personnel. Victoria Police personnel must not engage in inappropriate workplace behaviours including bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination or victimisation.

4. Appropriate use of authority and position

We do not abuse our powers or authority. We must not improperly use our position, Victoria Police information, or resources

Victoria Police personnel hold a position of authority and must exercise their powers and influence in accordance with the law and organisational policies. Victoria Police personnel must not use their position, Victoria Police information or resources for private or professional gain. The community places significant trust in Victoria Police personnel to only access confidential information or use work resources with appropriate authorisation and when it is necessary to perform their roles effectively.

Victoria Police personnel have a responsibility to uphold and respect a person's right to privacy. Victoria Police personnel are required to access and retain sensitive information to perform their duties. To ensure the public feels safe providing personal and confidential information to Victoria Police, Victoria Police personnel must ensure private information is accessed, stored and disclosed in accordance with legislation and policy. Any information gained or accessed by personnel must be for a legitimate business purpose.

Victoria Police personnel are to be aware that a power imbalance will inherently exist with members of the public and subordinate personnel, due to their position and statutory powers. Victoria Police personnel must not use their position to cultivate, or attempt to cultivate, personal relationships beyond what a reasonable person would consider appropriate with people they meet through the course of their employment.

Victoria Police personnel must ensure they exercise their influence, powers, and authority appropriately. Victoria Police personnel must not use their position to exploit, harm, commence or attempt to commence, a sexual or emotional relationship with another person.

5. Appropriate use of police powers and use of force

We use police powers only to the extent that it is lawful, necessary, proportionate, and reasonable in all circumstances

Victoria Police personnel who take an oath or affirmation of office, such as Police Officers and Protective Service Officers, have the authority to use significant and wide-ranging powers. These powers include use of reasonable force, access to information, surveillance, and powers to stop and search or arrest individuals.

The exercise of any police powers must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and justifiable in every circumstance. Misuse of police powers causes harm and erodes public trust and confidence in Victoria Police.

6. Lawful directions and instructions

We give and carry out only lawful instructions. We are aware of, and comply with, Victoria Police policies and procedures

Victoria Police personnel must comply with lawful instructions given to them during their employment. Victoria Police personnel must perform their duties lawfully and in accordance with applicable Victoria Police policies and procedures.

Victoria Police personnel must not act outside their level of authority. It is the responsibility of personnel to seek additional guidance or support from a supervisor if required.

As an organisation, Victoria Police is responsible for providing guidance and training for all personnel to ensure they understand how to lawfully perform their duties. Victoria Police personnel are required to keep up to date with changes to relevant legislation, policies and procedures to ensure they can effectively perform their duties.

7. Fitness for duty and safety

We are fit to perform our duties and prioritise the safety of ourselves and others

Victoria Police is committed to creating and maintaining a working environment where people are, and feel, physically and psychologically safe. Everyone working at Victoria Police shares the responsibility to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others.

Victoria Police is a professional and disciplined organisation. We have an obligation to the community and our colleagues to carry out our duties safely. Victoria Police personnel must be fit to perform their duties and not be impaired from alcohol or other drugs. Supervisors have an obligation to ensure Victoria Police personnel are fit to perform their duties safely. A supervisor must not knowingly allow an impaired Victoria Police personnel to perform any duty.

8. Reporting and challenging unprofessional, unethical or illegal conduct

We report, challenge, and take action against unprofessional, unethical or illegal conduct

To uphold the integrity of Victoria Police, every personnel must report, challenge and take action against unprofessional, unethical or illegal conduct. Unethical conduct by personnel harms the reputation and undermines the good work of Victoria Police.

All supervisors play a key role in promoting and demonstrating ethical leadership within the organisation. Supervisors must support personnel who report unprofessional, unethical or illegal conduct of other personnel. Through fostering a safe working environment, Victoria Police encourages open and honest communication that can support personnel to challenge and report unethical behaviour. Managers and supervisors are expected to take action at the earliest opportunity if any personnel are not upholding the professional and ethical standards of Victoria Police.



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Accessibility

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www.police.vic.gov.au

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