

# The role of a PID Support Officer

## Relevant Legislation

The purpose of the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010](#) (the PID Act) is to facilitate the disclosure, in the public interest, of information about wrongdoing in the public sector and to provide protection for those who make disclosures.

As a public sector agency, the University has obligations under the PID Act, and the Integrity Unit is responsible for ensuring that these obligations are met. The Director of the Integrity Unit is responsible for PID management at the University and is the delegated 'PID Coordinator.'

## The PID Support Officer

The management of a PID requires a PID Support Officer to provide separate support to employees who are either a discloser or a witness. A PID Support Officer may also be required for a subject officer.

The PID Support Officer is a defined role under the [PID Standards](#). PID Support Officers will be drawn from a pool of HR staff who have received training in relation to the University's PID obligations and procedures.

Disclosers should not suffer any form of harm (i.e. reprisal) as a result of making a PID, nor should any witness involved. PID Support Officers have a very important role to help the Integrity Unit assess the likelihood of them suffering reprisal as a result of the PID.

## Independence

A PID Support Officer can support both a complainant and a witness at the same time, but this cannot extend to the subject officer due to the inherent role conflict this would present. Each subject officer will therefore require their own PID Support Officer.

It is important that the PID Support Officer is independent from the investigation or management of the PID to avoid any potential or perceived bias.

## PID Support Officer Responsibilities

- **Proactively contact** the discloser, witness or subject officer to check on their welfare, establish the frequency and method of contact, and manage their expectations. Until the management of the PID is finalised, the PID Support Officer should provide updates on the progress of an investigation or other processes taken by the University.
- **Support** the discloser, witness or subject officer by helping them access specific support services that they might need from the University (e.g. the Employee Assistance Program or a change to their work arrangements), addressing their concerns (as far as practicable and appropriate) and helping them understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to the PID.

- **Assess the risk of reprisal** (i.e. harm) to a discloser or a witness.
- **Maintain strict confidentiality** of the matter. Wherever possible, do not include details that might identify a discloser or witness in any correspondence related to the PID (e.g. in emails).
- **Maintain adequate records** of all their communication involving the PID (e.g. emails and file notes of telephone conversations).

Please note, it is not the role of a PID Support Officer to provide counselling services, to investigate the PID or to discuss the particulars of the PID, its investigation or other processes at any length. Professional boundaries must be maintained.

## Assessing and Preventing Reprisal

Reprisal often involves some sort of detriment to the discloser or witnesses. Such behaviour takes many forms and can include:

- Intimidation or harassment
- Physical or physiological harm
- Unreasonable performance management action
- Denial of career opportunities
- Withholding resources needed to perform their role
- Reputational harm
- Financial loss

The PID Support Officer is required to assess the risk of reprisal by considering both its actual or potential impact and consequences. Key considerations include:

- Risk identification - What are the discloser or witness's main concerns?
- How likely is reprisal? What is the extent of the Subject Officer's power and influence?
- How does the impact affect or potentially affect their work-life and potentially their personal wellbeing?
- Are the consequences short, medium or long-term in nature?
- What strategies would remove or minimise the risk of reprisal?

The Integrity Unit will conduct regular risk assessments for every PID, however, to be effective these assessments rely on feedback and information received from the PID Support Officer and other sources.

The PID Support Officer must **immediately** inform their Integrity Unit contact person of any emerging risk or concern.

## Resources for PID Support Officers

[Queensland Ombudsman | PID Support Guide](#)

[Integrity Unit | Public Interest Disclosures](#)

[UQ Public Interest Disclosure Policy & Procedure](#)