Fact sheet

Defining Integrity

The Australian Public Service (APS) has a unique and privileged role in serving the Australian community. As APS employees, we support the development and delivery of policies, services and initiatives that affect the lives of all Australians – and are trusted to act in the best interest of the Australian community. The integrity of the APS - its employees, systems and practices - is fundamental to maintaining this trust.

While a central aspect to the work of the public service, integrity can be a complex concept and interpreted differently. To that end, the adoption of common language on integrity will enable greater consistency across the APS when integrity matters are discussed, supporting the ‘one APS’ model.

## What do we mean when referring to integrity?

Integrity in the APS is the pursuit of high standards of professionalism—both in *what* we do and in *how* we do it. It is the foundation of trust on which public service effectiveness is built. Integrity is the craft of bringing ethics and values to life through our work and our behaviour, and earning the trust of the public in our ability to deliver the best outcomes for Australia.

**From a public service context, integrity is:**

*‘the pursuit of high standards of APS professionalism, which in turn means doing the right thing at the right time to deliver the best outcomes for Australia sought by the government of the day.’[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Integrity covers several different and overlapping aspects that relate to our conduct, how we work individually and as a collective, and includes:

* **compliance** with legislative frameworks, policies and practices, including those set by APS agencies – compliance ensures standards for integrity are being met
* a **values-based approach** that promotes ethical decision-making and reflection in how we undertake work as APS employees
* **institutional integrity**, where organisational systems, policies and practices are purposeful, legitimate and trustworthy
* **pro-integrity culture**, in which there is a positive, conscious effort to make integrity a central consideration of all activities.

1. 2020, Stephen Sedgwick AO, [*Report into consultations regarding APS approaches to ensure institutional integrity*](https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/report_into_consultations_regarding_aps_approaches_to_ensure_institutional_integrity.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)