



Australian Government
Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority



Curious Conversations

Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) staff participate in regular Curious Conversations to bring risk management to life in their daily work.

Each conversation features an ethical scenario and questions for staff to ponder as teams or individuals.

All IPEA staff come together at regular stand-up sessions to collectively discuss the issues, challenges and risks presented by each scenario.

IPEA recently received an Honourable Mention Certificate in the Enterprise Wide Risk Management category at the Comcover Awards 2018, recognising IPEA's excellence in implementing risk management frameworks, practices and processes.

Curious Conversations...

an innovative way to
learn about risk management

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Curious Conversation Starters...

Some of the ethical example scenarios that our staff have pondered.

Snack Shack Short

Toni is the Secretary for the IPEA Social Club and, as part of her duties, she's responsible for stocking the Snack Shack and collecting and banking the monies daily. It's an honesty system used throughout IPEA – the snacks are available for everyone to buy but they're expected to pay for them there and then... no IOUs!



Toni's been managing this for about eight months and, in the past six weeks or so, she's noticed that the money tin has been a little under when compared to the snack sales and their prices. She hasn't mentioned anything because the loss is around \$40 and they're making a killing on the Snack Shack – it's by far the best fundraiser they've had this year!

One afternoon Troy comes to Toni's desk and says he's just witnessed a colleague taking two \$5 notes from the money tin – in other words, stealing! He tells Toni that he's not about to "dob" on his colleague so won't reveal their name but he thought she should know so the Social Club can come up with a better system for keeping their money safe.

Some insights from staff

- Handle the issue carefully, don't jump to conclusions.
- Don't ignore the need to act, from little things, big things may grow.
- Assess the risks involved and take action to minimise these immediately, for example, start storing money more responsibly. Report all security breaches to your Director or Security Advisor.
- Ask Directors to include the issue on a team meeting agenda to remind staff of their security responsibilities.
- The APS Code of Conduct requires public servants to behave honestly and with integrity in connection with APS employment.
- The APS Values require all public servants to demonstrate leadership, be trustworthy and act with integrity, in all that they do.

Risk Assessment:

Reputational Risk	Operational Risk	Compliance Risk	Political Risk
	✓	✓	



Jason's Leave Lesson

Jason is an APS4 Reporting Officer in the Transparency & Reporting Branch at IPEA. Over the weekend he and his partner went to a travel expo and found an amazing deal on an all-expenses holiday to the Maldives. It was so good they booked and paid for the two week break right there and then.

Jason arrives at work on the Monday, very excited to tell his team that he's off on holidays in three weeks' time. He applies for the annual leave as soon as he'd logged in.

That afternoon Julian, Jason's supervisor, asks to speak to him. Julian tells Jason that he can't approve his two weeks of annual leave. He's already approved leave for two of Jason's team members during that time and, in a team of five, there's no way one person can cover the work of five. It's just not workable. Julian suggests Jason consider another time for his leave – even if he can just delay it by four weeks – the others will be back by then.

Jason's devastated – he had no idea the others already had leave. Shouldn't they be telling him (even as a courtesy) before they apply for leave? He knows that the deal was a one-off – there's no refunds, no date changes, he can't even change the people going so his partner and her sister can go.

Some insights from staff

- Jason and Julian could discuss with the team to see if anyone can change their leave arrangements to cover his leave.
- Jason should talk to HR to seek assistance and all relevant information on leave policies.
- Jason could suggest mobility arrangements with another IPEA staff member who may be able to join their team from a different section to help during the leave period.
- If Jason had an intention to book a trip he should have communicated with his team about any upcoming leave before the weekend, flagging his intention with his manager.
- Jason needs to consider that work should be considered when making any plans for an upcoming trip as there is always the possibility of a leave request being refused due to operational reasons.

Risk Assessment:

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	✓	✓	

'How to Vote' Volunteering

Cedrick is a Travel Administration Officer who commenced with IPEA approximately 12 months ago and, while not publicly vocal about his views, he is supportive of a number of a particular party's policies.



A New South Wales state election is coming up and, despite residing in the ACT, Cedrick has volunteered to hand out "How to Vote" cards for the Independent Party candidate for Monaro. He figures it's a state election and he'll be situated at the Queanbeyan High School so he's not likely to bump into any IPEA clients. For these reasons, Cedrick decides that there's no reason to declare his volunteering work.

On the day of the election, while Cedrick is diligently attempting to engage with voters at the Queanbeyan High School, he's spotted by a former colleague, Susie. She knows he's an employee at IPEA – he used to work for her. Susie doesn't approach Cedrick, instead while she's waiting in line to vote, she emails his current Branch Head and advises what she's seen.

Some insights from staff:

- Cedrick should be aware that there could be at least two IPEA clients (parliamentarians) at the venue – there is at least one Senator for NSW and a federal member for Eden-Monaro. Parliamentarians' staff who are based in Canberra could live in Queanbeyan and be at the venue also.
- IPEA clients might question Cedrick's impartiality by seeing him there in that role.
- Declaring this would not have gotten Cedrick into trouble, it would have opened up the discussion and Cedrick could have sought advice about how to handle his situation and avoid conflicts of interest.
- Instead of reacting to the situation so quickly, Susie could have allowed time to speak to Cedrick and find out if he is still working for IPEA or elsewhere and if he declared his volunteering activities appropriately.

Risk Assessment:

Reputational Risk	Operational Risk	Compliance Risk	Political Risk
✓		✓	✓

Robert's Coffee Conundrum

Robert manages the ICT contracting arrangements for IPEA, and is responsible for sourcing various IT specialists via private sector recruitment agencies.



To try and stay across the market, Robert keeps in regular contact with consultants. He usually has a telephone chat every fortnight and sometimes meets recruitment consultants for coffee.

Robert has always paid for his own coffee – he's aware of the policy relating to gifts and benefits. On one occasion he's even paid for one of the recruitment consultant's coffee when she left her purse back in the office – Robert is nice like that.

Robert arranged a coffee catch up with Danielle from First ICT Solutions. When he arrives at the café Danielle is already there, along with two coffees and a small selection of the mouth-watering pastries. She's already paid as a "thank you" and tells Robert not to worry about it – she'll claim it as an expense.

Some insights from staff

- If Robert drinks the coffee and eats the pastries it is considered a gift and he should disclose or register its approximate value. Even though the gift is low value (and a one-off), in some circumstances it can create a perception of a conflict of interest especially with Robert's role as the IT procurement person.
- Robert could say thank you and that he really appreciates the thought and then advise Danielle he will need to give her the money for his coffee and pastry as he doesn't want there to be a perceived conflict of interest that causes issues in the future.
- Robert could report the situation to his supervisor in an email including the details e.g. that he paid her back for his coffee and pastry.
- Robert should check IPEA's policy on the registration of gifts and benefits to ensure he is following the policy.
- When deciding whether to accept a gift or benefit, the reputation of the APS is paramount. A useful test is for employees to consider how they might answer questions from a parliamentary committee.

Risk Assessment:

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✓		✓	✓