



Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Objectives

(1) This policy states CFA's position on:

- a. responding to offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality;
- b. and providing gifts, benefits and hospitality.

(2) This policy is intended to support CFA members and CFA to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain high levels of integrity and public trust.

(3) CFA has issued this policy to support behavior consistent with the [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#), and the Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities and [CFA Volunteer Code of Conduct](#).

Section 2 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to all CFA members performing in their official capacity or function or representing the CFA. For the purpose of this policy CFA Employees includes Labour hire contractors.

(5) This policy does not apply to:

- a. CFA (including brigades or groups) receiving donations (including goods) or conducting fundraising on behalf of CFA in line with legislation and government or CFA policy.
- b. Internal offers/acceptance of gifts, benefits or hospitality between CFA colleagues or contained within personal relationships at work and funded personally except where the gift, benefit or hospitality could create a conflict of interest about a business decision (eg. a promotion decision).

(6) This policy is not intended to limit bona fide donations (including tax deductible gifts) made to brigades, groups or CFA that assist the organisation in carrying out its functions. However, as with all situations conflicts of interest must always be considered.

Section 3 - Policy

(7) This policy has been developed in accordance with requirements outlined in the minimum accountabilities for the management of gifts, benefits and hospitality issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC).

(8) CFA is committed to and will uphold the following principles in applying this policy:

- a. Impartiality - CFA members have a duty to place the public interest above their private interests when carrying out their official functions. They will not accept gifts, benefits or hospitality that could raise a reasonable perception of, or actual, bias or preferential treatment. Individuals do not accept offers from those about whom they are likely to make business decisions (this includes gifts between CFA members).
- b. Accountability - CFA members must:

- i. declare all non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality (excluding CFA volunteers);
- ii. decline non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality, or where an exception applies under this policy, seeking approval to accept the offer; and
- iii. Ensure compliance with the responsible provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality.

(9) CFA members with direct reports are accountable for overseeing management of their direct reports' acceptance or refusal of Non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality, modeling good practice and promoting awareness of gift, benefits and hospitality policies and processes.

(10) Integrity: CFA members strive to earn and sustain public trust through providing or responding to offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality in a manner that is consistent with community expectations. Individuals must refuse any offer that may lead to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest.

(11) Risk-based approach: CFA, through its policies, processes and Audit and Finance Committee (AFC), will ensure gifts, benefits and hospitality risks are appropriately assessed and managed. Individuals with direct reports must ensure they are aware of the inherent risks their team's work and functions are likely to be exposed to and regularly monitor those risks.

Minimum accountabilities

(12) Under the Instructions supporting the [Standing Directions](#) of the Minister for Finance 2018, the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) has set binding minimum accountabilities for the appropriate management of gifts, benefits and hospitality. CFA compliance with these minimum accountabilities is required.

Part A - Offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality

(13) This section sets out the process for accepting, declining and recording offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality. Any exceptions to this process must have the prior written approval of the General Manager Governance, Legal and Risk.

Conflict of interest and reputational risks

(14) When deciding whether to accept an offer, individuals should first consider if the offer could be perceived as influencing them in performing their duties, or lead to reputational damage. The more valuable the offer, the more likely that a conflict of interest or reputational risk exists.

G	Giver	Who is providing the gift, benefit or hospitality and what is their relationship to me? Does my role require me to select suppliers, award grants, regulate industries or determine government policies? Could the person or organisation benefit from a decision I make?
I	Influence	Are they seeking to gain an advantage or influence my decisions or actions? Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered to me publicly or privately? Is it a courtesy or a token of appreciation or a valuable non-token offer? Does its timing coincide with a decision I am about to make?
F	Favour	Are they seeking a favour in return for the gift, benefit or hospitality? Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered honestly? Has the person or organisation made several offers over the last 12 months? Would accepting it create an obligation to return a favour?
T	Trust	Would accepting the gift, benefit or hospitality diminish public trust? How would the public view acceptance of this gift, benefit or hospitality? What would my colleagues, family, friends or associates think?

Requirement for refusing offers

(15) CFA members should consider the GIFT test (above) and the requirements below to help decide whether to refuse

an offer. Individuals must refuse offers:

- a. likely to influence them, or be perceived to influence them, in the course of their duties or that raise an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest;
- b. could bring them, CFA or the public sector into disrepute;
- c. made by a person or organisation about which they will likely make or influence a decision (this also applies to processes involving grants, sponsorship, regulation, enforcement or licensing), particularly offers:
 - i. made by a current or prospective supplier;
 - ii. made during a procurement or tender process by a person or organisation involved in the process; or
 - iii. likely to be a bribe or inducement to make a decision or act in a particular way;
 - iv. that extend to their relatives or friends;
 - v. of money, or used in a similar way to money, or something easily converted to money;
 - vi. where, in relation to hospitality and events, the organisation will already be sufficiently represented to meet its business needs;
 - vii. where acceptance could be perceived as endorsement of a product or service, or acceptance would unfairly advantage the sponsor in future procurement decisions;
 - viii. made by a person or organisation with a primary purpose to lobby Ministers, Members of Parliament or public sector organisations; or
 - ix. made in secret.

(16) If a CFA member considers they have been offered a bribe or inducement, the offer must be reported to next in charge for advice or any criminal or corrupt conduct should be reported to Victoria Police or the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC). Note – CFA cannot take reports of corruption these must be made directly Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

Token Offers

(17) A token offer is an offer of a gift, benefit or hospitality that is of inconsequential or trivial value to both the person making the offer and the individual. It may include promotional items such as pens and note pads, and modest hospitality that would be considered a basic courtesy, such as light refreshments during a meeting.

(18) The minimum accountabilities state that token offers cannot be worth more than \$50.

(19) CFA members may generally accept token offers without approval or declaring the offer on CFA's register, as long as the offer does not create a conflict of interest or lead to reputational damage.

Non-token offers

(20) CFA employees can only accept non-token offers if they have a legitimate business benefit. All accepted non-token offers must be approved in writing by the individual's manager or Governance, Legal and Risk, recorded in the gifts, benefits and hospitality register and be consistent with the following requirements:

- a. it does not raise an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest or have the potential to bring the individual, CFA or the public sector into disrepute; and
- b. there is a legitimate business reason for acceptance. It is offered in the course of the individual's official duties, relates to the individual's responsibilities and has a benefit to CFA, public sector or the State.

(21) CFA employees may be offered a gift or hospitality where there is no opportunity to seek written approval from their manager prior to accepting. For example, they may be offered a wrapped gift that they later identify as being a non-token gift. In these cases, the individual must seek approval from their line manager within five business days.

(22) Where the gift would likely bring an individual or CFA into disrepute, the gift should be returned. If the gift represents a conflict of interest, the gift should be returned or ownership should be transferred to CFA to mitigate this risk.

(23) In an effort to conserve public funds associated with the returning of gifts the Gifts Officer may also:

- a. Donate the gift to a Charity or a Community organisation outside of the CFA or;
- b. If it is perishable, dispose of it.

Employees and FRV Secondees Recording non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality

(24) All non-token offers to CFA employees and FRV Secondees whether accepted or declined, must be recorded in CFA's [gifts, benefits and hospitality register](#). The business reason for accepting the non-token offer must be recorded in the register with sufficient detail to link the acceptance to the individual's work functions and benefit to CFA, public sector or State.

(25) Offers that are required to be recorded by this policy must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the offer being received. CFA employees and FRV Secondees can record a declaration by submitting a [Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Declaration Form](#).

(26) A Non-token offer with a legitimate business benefit that has been accepted by a CFA employee or FRV Secondee for their work or contribution may be retained by the individual where the gift is not likely to bring them or CFA into disrepute, and where the relevant General Manager / Deputy Chief Officer or above has provided written approval.

(27) CFA members must transfer to CFA official gifts or any gift of cultural significance or significant value.

Volunteers and recording non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality

(28) CFA volunteers are only required to declare non-token gifts in the following circumstances:

- a. Any circumstance outlined under clause 14.
- b. Accepting the gift would bring the CFA volunteer or CFA into disrepute.
- c. It is related to Fire Equipment Maintenance or similar activities where the brigade is remunerated for their services.

(29) Offers that are required to be recorded must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the offer being received. CFA volunteers can record a declaration by submitting a [Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Declaration Form](#).

(30) CFA members must transfer to CFA or their Brigade/Group official gifts or any gift of cultural significance or significant value.

Gifts or benefits offered in particular circumstances

(31) CFA may from time to time accept gifts or benefits to offer / distribute to CFA volunteers. An example of this is during significant operational activity, a corporation or community group may seek to thank / show appreciation to CFA volunteers by offering a gift or benefit where the monetary value exceeds the \$50 threshold. This may include tickets to events and discounts. In circumstances where it is proposed to extend the offer / benefit to CFA volunteers, the following applies:

- a. Any offers of gifts and benefits must be forwarded to the Gifts Officer (gifts@cfa.vic.gov.au) who will declare / register the gift or benefit on the Gifts and Benefits register.
- b. The Gifts Officer will make a recommendation as to whether to accept or decline the gift or benefit, having

particular regard this Policy;

- c. The recommendation by the Gifts Officer will be forwarded to General Manager Governance, Legal and Risk for endorsement and then forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for approval;
- d. Where a gift or benefit is approved by the Chief Executive Officer to be accepted under the conditions of this section, the Gifts Officer shall notify the Communications and Stakeholder Relations who will arrange for CFA members to be notified;
- e. A gift or benefit accepted under the conditions of this section will be offered to CFA volunteers by way of an official email and/or placed on the intranet.
- f. A CFA volunteers who takes advantage of a gift or benefit communicated as part of this clause is not required to complete a declaration.

Repeat Offers

(32) Receiving multiple offers (token offer or non-token offer) from the same person or organisation can generate a stronger perception that the person or organisation could influence you. CFA members should refuse repeat offers from the same source if they create a conflict of interest or may lead to reputational damage.

Ceremonial Gifts

(33) Ceremonial gifts are official gifts provided as part of the culture and practices of communities and government, within Australia or internationally. Ceremonial gifts are the property of the organisation, irrespective of value, and should be accepted by individuals on behalf of CFA. The receipt of ceremonial gifts should be recorded on the CFA's register but this information does not need to be published online.

Hospitality provided by Victorian public sector organisations (including Brigade Dinners or Functions)

(34) Victorian public sector organisations may provide hospitality to stakeholders, as part of their functions. When offered hospitality by a Victorian public sector organisation, CFA members should consider the requirements of the minimum accountabilities.

(35) Accepted hospitality offered by a Victorian public sector organisation as part of official business do not need to be declared or reported, where the reason for the CFA members's attendance is consistent with CFA's functions and objectives and with the individual's role.

(36) In line with clause 33 and 34 CFA employees (including FRV Secondees) are not required to declare attendance at events as such as Brigade dinners or functions.

Part B - Providing gifts, benefits and hospitality

(37) This section sets out the requirements for providing gifts, benefits and hospitality.

Requirements for providing gifts, benefits and hospitality

(38) Gifts, benefits and hospitality may be provided when welcoming guests, to facilitate the development of business relationships, further public sector business outcomes and to celebrate achievements.

(39) When CFA members are deciding whether to provide gifts, benefits or hospitality or the type of gift, benefit or hospitality to provide, CFA members must ensure:

- a. any gift, benefit or hospitality is provided for a business reason that furthers the conduct of official business or other legitimate organisational goals, or promotes and supports government policy objectives and priorities;
- b. that any costs are proportionate to the benefits obtained for the State, and would be considered reasonable in terms of community expectations (the 'HOST' test below is a good reminder of what to think about in making

this assessment); and

c. it does not raise an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

H	Hospitality	To whom is the gift or hospitality being provided? Will recipients be external business associates, or individuals of the host organisation?
O	Objectives	For what purpose will hospitality be provided? Is the hospitality being provided to further the conduct of official business? Will it promote and support government policy objectives and priorities? Will it contribute to staff wellbeing and workplace satisfaction?
S	Spend	Will public funds be spent? What type of hospitality will be provided? Will it be modest or expensive, and will alcohol be provided as a courtesy or an indulgence? Will the costs incurred be proportionate to the benefits obtained?
T	Trust	Will public trust be enhanced or diminished? Could you publicly explain the rationale for providing the gift or hospitality? Will the event be conducted in a manner which upholds the reputation of the public sector? Have records in relation to the gift or hospitality been kept in accordance with reporting and recording procedures?

Providing Gifts For a Business Reason

(40) CFA may provide gifts, benefits or hospitality for the purposes of:

- a. receiving guests (e.g. a visiting delegation from another jurisdiction);
- b. facilitating relationships between third party organisations that are in the interests of the State (e.g. an event where community sector and business organisations can meet to establish partnerships);
- c. celebrating the opening of an event, exhibition, or the establishment of a new public body; or
- d. launching an initiative (e.g. a new community awareness campaign).

(41) The following questions must be considered to determine whether the gift, benefit or hospitality is provided for a business reason:

- a. Will the provision of the gift, benefit or hospitality foster the conduct of public sector business?
- b. Will the provision of the gift, benefit or hospitality help to promote or support the government's policy objectives?
- c. In providing the gift, benefit or hospitality, can you be confident that the reputations of both the public sector and the external guests are upheld?

CFA Members

(42) Gifts for events for CFA employees or FRV Secondees such as birthdays, marriages, bereavement or the birth of a child should not be funded by CFA. CFA may provide gifts to CFA employees or FRV Secondees, for example as part of an organisational reward and recognition program, this should only occur in exceptional circumstances and any gifts should be token.

Containing costs

(43) CFA members should contain costs involved with providing gifts, benefits and hospitality wherever possible, and should comply with the financial probity and efficient use of resources guidance outlined in the [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#). The following questions should be considered to decide on the type of gift, benefit or hospitality to provide:

- a. Will the cost of providing the gift, benefit or hospitality be proportionate to the potential benefits?
- b. Is the gift symbolic, rather than financial, in value?

c. Will providing the gift, benefit or hospitality be viewed by the public as excessive?

Speak up

(44) CFA members who consider that gifts, benefits and hospitality or conflict of interest within CFA may not have been declared or is not being appropriately managed should speak up and notify their manager or the Gifts Officer gifts@cfa.vic.gov.au. CFA members who believe they have observed corrupt conduct in their colleagues may also make a protected disclosure directly to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

(45) CFA will take decisive action, including possible disciplinary action, against CFA members who discriminate against or victimise those who speak up in good faith.

Section 4 - Related Procedure

(46) Nil.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	21st June 2023
Review Date	21st June 2026
Approval Authority	Chief Executive Officer
Approval Date	21st June 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Accountable Officer	[REDACTED] General Manager Governance, Legal and Risk
Responsible Officer	[REDACTED] Manager Governance and Business Support
Author	[REDACTED] Manager Governance and Business Support
Enquiries Contact	Governance and Business Support

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"CFA member" - Refers to all CFA volunteers, volunteer auxiliary workers, officers, employees and secondees.

"Benefit" - The preferential treatment, privileged access, favours, or other advantage offered, taken or accepted by CFA employees, contractors, secondees, volunteers, and Board Members. A benefit is not restricted to monetary or material benefits and may be tangible or intangible, including the unauthorised provision of access to or disclosure of information. A benefit may also be obtained by a third party rather than, or in addition to, the perpetrator of the fraudulent or corrupt act or any other illegal activity such as burglary.

"CFA employee" - Any person who is directly employed by CFA, including those employees on a fixed term or casual employment contract.

"CFA volunteer" - An officer, member, or volunteer auxiliary worker who receives no remuneration for their services in relation to a brigade but does not include an officer or member of an industry brigade.

"FRV Secondee" - An officer or employee of Fire Rescue Victoria made available to CFA under section 25B of the FRV Act.

"Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC)" - The Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) was established on 1 April 2014 through an amendment to the Public Administration Act 2004. VPSC is headed by a single Commissioner and has a range of legislated functions to achieve its objectives. These are to: Strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and capability of the public sector in order to meet existing and emerging needs and deliver high quality services Maintain, and advocate for, public sector professionalism and integrity.

"Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC)" - The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) is Victoria's agency responsible for preventing and exposing public sector corruption and police misconduct. Our jurisdiction covers state and local government, police, parliament and the judiciary.

"Labour hire contractor" - Personnel provided by a staffing agency for a fee. These personnel are employees of the agency and not CFA.

"Ceremonial gifts" - Ceremonial gifts are official gifts provided as part of the culture and practices of communities

and government, within Australia or internationally. Ceremonial gifts are usually provided when conducting business with official delegates or representatives from another organisation, community or foreign government. Ceremonial gifts are the property of the public sector organisation, irrespective of value, and should be accepted by individuals on behalf of the public sector organisation. The receipt of ceremonial gifts should be recorded on the register but does not need to be published online.

"Conflict of interest" - Actual: There is a real conflict between an employee's public duties and private interests. Potential: An employee has private interests that could conflict with their public duties. This refers to circumstances where it is foreseeable that a conflict may arise in future and steps should be taken now to mitigate that future risk. Perceived: The public or a third party could reasonably form the view that an employee's private interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions, now or in the future.

"Gift" - Gifts are free or discounted items or services and any item or service that would generally be seen by the public as a gift. These include items of high value (e.g. artwork, jewellery, or expensive pens), low value (e.g. small bunch of flowers), consumables (e.g. chocolates) and services (e.g. painting and repairs). Fundraising by public sector organisations that is consistent with relevant legislation and any government policy is not prohibited under the minimum accountabilities.

"Hospitality" - Hospitality is the friendly reception and entertainment of guests. Hospitality may range from light refreshments at a business meeting to expensive restaurant meals and sponsored travel and accommodation.

"Token offer" - A token offer is a gift, benefit or hospitality that is of inconsequential or trivial value to both the person making the offer and the recipient (such as basic courtesy). The minimum accountabilities state that token offers cannot be worth more than \$50.

"Non-token offer" - A non-token offer is a gift, benefit or hospitality that is, or may be perceived to be by the recipient, the person making the offer or by the wider community, of more than inconsequential value. All offers worth more than \$50 are non-token offers.

"Next in Charge" - Next in Charge - the supervisor or manager directly in charge of a CFA member or Labour Hire Contractor e.g. for a volunteer this would be a Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Group Officer, Group Officer or Commander; for an employee / labour hire contractor this would be their direct manager.