



# Political Activities Policy

Version 1.0 – 8 July 2020

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) officers, as public sector employees, are aware of the protocol and obligation to act in a bipartisan manner when engaging with elected officials and political party candidates.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all officers of QCS, as well as other employees including contractors, temporary staff, work experience and industry placements, trainees and volunteers.

It applies to Federal, State and Local Government elections.

This policy does not apply to QCS staff who are running, or considering running, as candidates in an election. For QCS staff running, or considering running, as a candidate in an election, please refer to your obligations as set out in the 'Political Candidates Policy'

## 3. QCS Operations (business as usual)

### 3.1 Impartiality and Independence

The perceived importance of integrity and impartiality, and the fundamental requirement that those who serve the public do so neutrally and apolitically, has a long-standing historical basis.<sup>1</sup>

This ensures that, irrespective of the government of the day and political persuasions, decisions are made independent of the political party system and free from political bias, thus promoting public confidence.

The obligation upon those who make the choice to enter into public service are clearly laid out in various codes and standards. Choosing a career in the QCS signals an intention and willingness to comply with any professional obligations and to undertake any necessary requirements or conditions of employment.

On that basis, the QCS officers and employees must ensure they are apolitical in their engagement with elected officials such as Members of Parliament (MPs) and political candidates. Further, QCS officers and employees must be politically impartial and may not

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria, Civil Service Commissioner, Report of the Commissioner Appointed to Inquire into and Report upon the Civil Service of the Colony (1859); Hearn, The Government of England: Its Structure and Its Development (1867); Great Britain, Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report of the Commissioner (1914) [Cd 7338].

distribute, promote, or display material that may be considered political in nature whilst representing QCS.

### **3.2 Members of Parliament visiting facilities**

MPs are elected by the public to represent them. Further, MPs are accredited visitors to a corrective services facility in accordance with s 164 *Corrective Services Act 2006*: Refer to the [Custodial Operations Practice Directive – Visitors to a Facility](#).

Accredited visitors may visit a prisoner or access any part of a corrective services facility to perform the functions or exercise the powers of that visitor's office or position.

It is accepted practice that MPs may enquire with the Office of the Minister for Corrective Services to advise of an intent to visit a corrective services facility. The Senior Departmental Liaison Officer (SDLO) will seek advice from the Chief Superintendent of the relevant corrective services facility to ascertain the operational convenience of the visit, to ensure the security and good order of the facility. Once an agreeable time is arranged, this is communicated back to the MP by the SDLO.

### **3.3 Invitations to Members of Parliament or Local Councillors**

Chief Superintendents of a corrective services facility and Superintendents in Community Corrections are expected to maintain effective working partnerships in their local communities; this includes, as a part of their role, regular engagement with elected officials such as MPs and local councillors.

As part of local engagement, it is expected that from time to time, a Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or a Superintendent in Community Corrections, may seek to invite a local MP or local councillor to an event at their facility; typical events may include National Corrections Day, Australia Day, NAIDOC or other recognised celebrations.

Prior to issuing invitations, a Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or a Superintendent in Community Corrections must notify the Chief of Staff, Office of the Commissioner, of an intention to issue an invitation.

The Chief of Staff will consider the matter and seek advice before the invitation is supported. By protocol, as with visits by accredited visitors, Ministerial notification is expected to occur.

Once approval has been provided by the Chief of Staff, the invitation can be issued to the MP.

The Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or Superintendent in Community Corrections is to provide confirmation if the MP will be attending.

## **4. Preparation and lead up to election**

### **4.1 Activities in the lead up to an election**

The circumstances leading up to an election campaign require special attention to ensure the impartiality and independence of the public service and its ability to serve government of the day.



QCS officers and employees are not to use their position, QCS resources, QCS contacts, their ability to access information or access to facilities to support parties or candidates during an election campaign.

QCS officers and employees must not undertake any activity that could call into question their political impartiality. This stipulation extends to online communications, for example social media, in the same way as other activity.

QCS staff are to ensure that public resources are not used for party political purposes. In addition, Political party material, including posters and handouts are not permitted to be displayed or distributed in QCS facilities or distributed by QCS networks (i.e. via QCS email accounts)

QCS staff are not permitted to campaign in their Corrective Services uniforms or to display QCS corporate materials or logos, or to co-opt the use of any QCS related information, images, or logos into their campaign.

QCS officers and employees are reminded of their obligations to uphold the [Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service](#) by committing to and demonstrating the intent and spirit of the ethics principles and values.

#### **4.2 Requests to visit QCS facilities during election periods**

The Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or Superintendent in Community Corrections may experience an increase in the number of requests by elected officials such as MPs and local councillors, to visit facilities during periods leading up to elections.

Further, the Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or Superintendent in Community Corrections may experience an increase in the number of requests by political party candidates (unelected candidates) to visit facilities during periods leading up to elections.

The Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or Superintendent in Community Corrections must ensure their officers maintain impartiality and integrity, particularly regarding party political activities.

If a request is received by a Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or Superintendent in Community Corrections, notification must be provided to the Chief of Staff (Refer to s 3.3 of this procedure concerning invitations to MPs and local councillors).

If a decision is made to refuse a request to host MPs or councillors during election periods, reasons will be provided by the Chief of Staff to the MPs or local councillors to explain the refusal of access approval.

If a decision is made to refuse a request to host a candidate in an election during election periods, it is at the discretion of the Chief of Staff as to whether to provide reasons for the decision to the candidate noting that candidates do not enjoy the same rights, entitlements, and responsibilities as elected officials.



If access approval is granted, the Chief Superintendent of a corrective services facility or Superintendent in Community Corrections must ensure all QCS officers and employees, MPs and/or political party candidates do not distribute, promote or display any printed or electronic material, including but not limited to badges, shirts, caps or other politically affiliated materials.

## 5. Caretaker mode

By convention, the government assumes a caretaker role from the time that the Legislative Assembly is dissolved and in the event of change of government, until the new government is appointed.

QCS officers and employees should be cognisant of the established conventions and practices which govern activities during the election period.

The [Queensland Cabinet Handbook](#) outlines the procedures and conventions for the operation of the Caretaker conventions.

During the caretaker period, QCS is to continue normal business until the incoming government's wishes are known.

The Minister may request factual material from departments. Like all requests for information of a factual nature, the Senior Departmental Liaison Officer will facilitate the request and appropriate authorisation to release the information from the Chief of Staff, Deputy Commissioner, or Commissioner.

In the event requests and consultation are requested by the Opposition, these requests should be directed to the Minister and are dealt with in accordance with [s9.7 Guidelines for consultation by the Opposition](#).

QCS officers and employees must avoid any partisanship during an election campaign; any concerns about maintaining impartiality should be directed immediately to the Chief of Staff.

