
Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy

1 What are gifts, benefits and hospitality?

A **gift** is defined as free or heavily discounted items, intangible benefits or hospitality exceeding common courtesy that are offered to VAEA Board members and/or VAEA employees in association with their work.

A **benefit** is defined as preferential treatment, privileged access, favours or other advantage offered. They include invitations to sporting, cultural or social events, access to discounts and loyalty programs and promises of a new job. While their value may sometimes be difficult to quantify in dollars, they may be highly valued by the intended recipient and therefore used to influence their behaviour.

Hospitality is defined as the friendly reception and treatment of guests, ranging from offers of light refreshment at a business meeting to restaurant meals and sponsored travel and accommodation.

2 Offers and Acceptance of Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

It is part of normal business practice for people or organisations to exchange tokens of esteem and/or to provide hospitality or entertainment to business associates. Great care needs to be exercised in the receiving of offers and accepting of gifts, benefits and hospitality, to ensure they do not compromise the integrity of VAEA nor create the impression of the VAEA's integrity having been compromised.

It is expected that VAEA Board members and VAEA employees will exercise reasonable discretion and prudent judgement in relation to receiving gifts, benefits and/or hospitality.

In exercising their judgement VAEA Board members and employees will be guided by the following:

- Placing the public interest above their private interests
- Not accepting gifts, benefits or hospitality that could raise a reasonable perception of, or actual, bias or preferential treatment
- Not accepting offers from those about whom they are likely to make business decisions
- Refusing gifts, benefits and/or hospitality that are money, items used in a similar way to money, or items easily converted to money

For further guidance click on [Gifts-benefit-and-hospitality-flow-chart.pdf](#) - it will take you to the VPSC decision tree relating to gifts, benefits and hospitality.

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It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish a gift, benefit and hospitality and judgement needs to be exercised. Some examples of gifts or favours that have more than a nominal value and as such are subject to this policy are given below:

- lunches or dinners at which a specific work or business issue is a minor topic of discussion (note that not all lunches and dinners are a 'gift or benefit' – eg a meal in the course of a function for networking with industry peers or a seminar/training session is not a 'gift or benefit')
- free or discounted tickets to sporting events or other entertainment
- free or discounted products for personal use for example, wine or, merchandise or services
- free or discounted travel and accommodation
- free or discounted use of facilities such as gyms, conference rooms and car parking.

4 Recording Receipt or Offer of a Gift, Benefit or Hospitality

Any VAEA Board member or VAEA employee who receives or is offered a gift, benefit or hospitality valued in excess of \$50 shall record the following in the VAEA Gift, Benefit and Hospitality Register:

- The nature of the gift, benefit or hospitality
- The name of the individual (and where relevant the company or organisation) who offered the gift, benefit or hospitality
- The date that the gift, benefit or hospitality was offered and/or received
- The VAEA's Board member and/or employee's response (that is was the gift, benefit or hospitality accepted or declined)
- Whether the offer of a gift, benefit or hospitality was a repeat offer

The Register will be maintained by the VAEA Chief Executive Officer and tabled at each VAEA Board meeting.

5 Providing Hospitality

It is accepted that there will be times when it is appropriate for the VAEA to provide hospitality to external guests and/or VAEA employees and/or Board members.

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In all cases, hospitality should be reasonable and balanced and ensure the responsible use of public funds. This means ensuring that hospitality costs are kept to a minimum and that catering and/or entertainment arrangements are appropriate for the nature of the event.

6 Provision of Alcohol

The decision to provide alcohol at a VAEA function must be made by the VAEA Chief Executive Officer. In making such a decision the VAEA Chief Executive Officer will consider the requirements of the responsible serving of alcohol guidelines, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, the Australian Alcohol Guidelines (National Health and Medical Research Council) and the Liquor Laws of Victoria.

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