Integrity@WERQ

The major research phase of Whistling While They Work 2: Improving managerial responses to whistleblowing in public and private sector organisations

What is Integrity@WERQ?

Integrity@WERQ is the main phase of the 3-year collaborative research Whistling While They Work 2, led by Griffith University’s Centre for Governance & Public Policy. The project is investigating how responses to public interest whistleblowing can be improved across the public and private sectors in Australia and New Zealand. For more information, see our site: www.whistlingwhiletheywork.edu.au.

What’s involved?

Organisations should have first completed the threshold Survey of Organisational Processes and Procedures for managing internal reporting of wrongdoing. This is completed one per organisation and was open April to July 2016 (contact us for current availability).

For organisations proceeding to full participation, Integrity@WERQ then follows – the major survey of your organisation’s staff, managers and whistleblowing systems, involving:

- Administration of the Workplace Experiences and Relationships Questionnaire to the largest possible sample of your organisation’s staff, officers, managers and where relevant, contractors and volunteers (typically, for accuracy and representativeness, at least 90% of all employees) over an agreed period between October 2016 and April 2017;
- Collection of further, more detailed data about your organisation’s whistleblowing management practices, including an extended Survey of Processes and Procedures and qualitative assessment of your policies against current and international standards.

What is ‘WERQ’?

WERQ stands for Workplace Experiences and Relationships Questionnaire – the survey of an organisation’s staff and managers used to collect much of the primary data for evaluating the role of whistleblowing in organisations, including how well your whistleblowing policies are working.

WERQ was first administered in 2006 across 118 Australian public sector organisations, from all levels of government, as part of the Australian Research Council Linkage Project Whistling While They Work. Its findings broke new ground in assisting governments to reform whistleblower protection laws, and organisations to adopt better whistleblowing policies and procedures.

WERQ is not just a survey of whistleblowers, nor just about whistleblowing. It is a comprehensive, independent survey of staff and manager experience of what works well and less well in the relationships that underpin integrity, performance, health and wellbeing in modern organisations.
Who can participate?

Any organisation with more than 10 employees, based or with significant operations in Australia or New Zealand, is invited to participate in Integrity@WERQ.

There is no cost to participate. General findings, and lessons from the research will be available for free to participating organisations. Most organisations will also have the option of receiving an individual report on their results, benchmarking their disclosure procedures and whistleblowing processes against other organisations, and against best practice as currently known.

What kind of indicators does the survey provide?

Responses to the survey will provide organisation-wide indicators including:

- Staff confidence in reporting processes
- Whether there are staff who perceive wrongdoing but are not speaking up via hotlines or internal reporting channels
- How well current reporting and support processes are working
- What factors can help equip managers to ensure best outcomes for the organisation and staff, when wrongdoing concerns are raised.

Entities who take advantage of an organisation-specific report can use these results to evaluate the performance of their processes against the wider results of the study, and receive an assessment of their procedures against current best practice. Reports of varying depth and cost will be available, depending on organisational need, with reduced rates for not-for-profits.

How is the data collected?

Staff and managers responses to the Workplace Experiences and Relationships Questionnaire are collected independently, directly and securely by Griffith University – not by the organisation.

Participation in the project is confidential, with anonymity ensured for all participants. No results will be used or published that could enable any participant to be identified. Where necessary, with smaller organisations or low response rates, this may preclude organisations receiving an organisation-specific report.

Who will know the results?

Participation in the project is confidential. No participating organisation will be identified in any project reports, publications or findings, unless with its full prior consent.

All data is held securely by the participating universities – Griffith University, University of Sydney, Australian National University and Victoria University of Wellington – under supervision of their Human Research Ethics Committees.

The research team includes both university and partner researchers (from CPA Australia, Office of Commonwealth Ombudsman, NSW Ombudsman, Australian Securities & Investments Commission and New Zealand State Services Commission). However, partner researchers will not have access to original responses or raw data. Organisation-specific results will be known only to the university researchers who conduct the analysis and prepare the anonymised and/or confidential reports.

Benefits of participating

- A new picture of the challenges and options for managing reporting across organisations, leading to lessons for best practice in all sectors
- New data on which organisational responses work and which don’t, for use by governments considering law reform in this area
- Unique opportunity for independent benchmarking of your organisation’s current processes and performance against other organisations in your sector, for the first time
- Capability to monitor outcomes over time, and evaluate effectiveness into the future.