

# Workplace Investigations

## Contributing Editors

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## 09. What additional considerations apply when the investigation involves whistleblowing?

### Australia

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A complaint will be a whistleblowing complaint where a complainant has reasonable grounds to suspect that the information they are disclosing about the organisation concerns misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances. The information can be about the organisation or an officer or employee of the organisation engaging in conduct that:

- breaches the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth);
- breaches other financial sector laws;
- breaches any other law punishable by 12 months' imprisonment; or
- represents a danger to the public or the financial system.

Since 2020, all public companies, large proprietary companies and trustees of registrable superannuation entities in Australia are required to have a whistleblower policy. Employers conducting an investigation will need to follow the processes outlined in their policy.

One of the key differences when conducting an investigation that involves whistleblowing is identity protection and the ability of the whistleblower to disclose anonymously and remain anonymous.

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### South Korea

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Aside from the legal obligations imposed on the company when dealing with a whistleblower who is subject to the WPA as discussed in question 1, there are also practical considerations the company should keep in mind when dealing with a whistleblower, regardless of whether the whistleblower falls under the WPA.

For example, there have been instances where an employee who raised allegations filed a complaint with Korean authorities (such as the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC) or the Labour Office)

that the company took retaliatory action against the whistleblower. The company should carefully review the legal risks before taking action, such as personnel action or civil or criminal action, against an employee who raises allegations if that employee was also involved in the wrongdoing.

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## Switzerland

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If an employee complains to his or her superiors about grievances or misconduct in the workplace and is subsequently dismissed, this may constitute an unlawful termination (article 336, Swiss Code of Obligations). However, the prerequisite for this is that the employee behaves in good faith, which is not the case if he or she is (partly) responsible for the grievance.

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