

Submission form for the Proactive and Informal Release of Information in the Victorian Public Sector Discussion Paper

About this form

The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (**OVIC**) is seeking agencies' views on its discussion paper on proactive and informal release of information in the Victorian Public Sector.

OVIC encourages agencies to use this form when making a submission. This form contains space to provide comments on the questions listed in the discussion paper, and space for other general feedback.

More information on the proactive and informal release discussion paper can be found on OVIC's website www.ovic.vic.gov.au.

Collection of personal information

You are not required to provide any personal information in order to make a submission to OVIC's discussion paper. All fields on this form relating to personal information are optional. Where you choose to provide personal information, OVIC may use it to provide you consolidated feedback on the submissions we receive, seek clarification on your submission or follow up with you where you have indicated you wish to be involved further in OVIC's work. If you choose to provide personal information, we ask that you do not include this information anywhere other than the designated fields on this form.

If you choose to make your submission by email, we may be able to identify you from your email address. If you prefer to remain anonymous, you can post your submission to OVIC.

OVIC will not disclose your personal information without your consent, except where required to do so by law. You may contact OVIC to request access to any personal information you have provided to us by emailing enquiries@ovic.vic.gov.au.

For further information on how OVIC handles personal information, please review our privacy policy [here](#).

Publication of submission

OVIC intends to publish submissions received on the discussion paper but will not do so without prior consent. Please indicate below whether you would like your submission to be made public in full, public with personal information removed, or not made public.

Please indicate below if this submission can be published:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Publish in full	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Publish but do not include personal information	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do not publish
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Information about who is making this submission

All fields below are optional.

Name:	
Email:	

If you are making this submission on behalf of an agency or organisation please identify below.

Agency / Organisation:	Mitchell Shire Council
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This submission is made by a:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public sector agency subject to the FOI Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private organisation / Not for profit
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public sector agency outside of Victoria	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Participating in future work with OVIC

A reason for seeking submissions on the discussion paper is to identify future work for OVIC in relation to the proactive and informal release of information in the Victorian public sector.

Please indicate below if you would be interested in participating in future OVIC work, events, or provide additional information to OVIC regarding proactive and informal release in your agency.

If you are interested in being involved in OVIC's work further, please provide your name and contact details in the fields above so we can contact you.

- I am interested in participating in a future OVIC event (for example, a roundtable discussion on proactive and informal release).
- I am interested in being involved in future OVIC work in relation to proactive and informal release.
- I am willing to provide additional information about my agency's proactive and informal release practices (for example, a proactive and/or informal release policy).

Completing this form

To complete this template, insert your response to individual questions, or provide general comments on proactive and/or informal release in the space provided.

Submitting this form

Submissions must be provided to OVIC by **5pm, Friday 1 May 2020**. You can make a submission by:

- **Emailing** your submission to policyteam@ovic.vic.gov.au
- **Posting** your submission to:
Policy team
Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner
PO Box 24274
Melbourne VIC 3001

Do you have any overall comments on the Proactive and Informal Release of Information in the Victorian Public Sector Discussion Paper?

The idea has merit & the potential to spread the load of requests, however training & guidance for those staff being contacted for information, accessing information & assessing & distributing information is essential and may require additional resources than having this centralised/ responsibility of one person/unit.

Do you have any comments on specific questions listed in the discussion paper?

<i>Question No.</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Does your agency proactively release information outside the FOI Act? If yes, what kind of information does your agency typically release proactively?	Yes. Meeting minutes, agendas, annual reports, budgets, public consultation/planning, policies, procedures are all made publicly available on line & may also be available in hard copy.
2	Does your agency collect and/or retain data about its proactive release of information? If yes, what kind of data is collected and/or retained?	No

3	Does your agency's proactive release of information result in it receiving fewer FOI requests? How information is proactively released	Council does not get an abundance of FOI requests Council decisions around budgets & planning works & approvals are provided in meeting agenda & minute documents made available on the website. Community questions & hearings meetings .in which members of the public may attend. Public consultations – letters & surveys – electronic & hard copies FOI are often requesting historical/archived information
4	How does your agency proactively release information? For example, is it available free of charge, for a fee, online?	On line (website), downloadable documents (website), printed hard copies made available at customer service counters.
5	What factors influence the proactive release of information by your agency? Does your agency have a process, policy or procedure for determining whether information can be proactively released? If yes, please specify the role(s) of agency staff who authorise or determine whether information should be released proactively, and any process, policy or procedure supporting this and how it was developed. Barriers, concerns, challenges	No specific Information Disclosure/ Proactive Release of Information Policy currently (the council has FOI & Protected disclosure Policies). Different departments have procedural guidelines dependent on their specific function(s).
6	Are there barriers that affect your agency proactively releasing information? If yes, what kinds of barriers exist?	Functions across departments are not uniform, access to information is restricted to those that require it. Keeping staff up-to-date with requirements Training & high staff turnover in some areas may be problematic. Lack of knowledge by staff as to what they can and cannot release (regardless of training). Different legislative requirements eg: planning and environment act 1987

7	Does your agency have concerns, or experience challenges, with proactively releasing information? If yes, please describe them.	No
8	What factors, assistance, or support would assist your agency to begin or improve proactively releasing information?	Externally lead Training workshops. Examples of how similar organisations have successfully implemented this, what internal guidelines do they use?
10	Does your agency informally release information outside the FOI Act? If yes, what kind of information does your agency typically release informally? What kind of information or FOI requests does your agency typically decide must be processed under the FOI Act, and why? Informal release data	Often FOI requests want information that is already available on our website but require help with navigation to the specific document. The FOI is then of a reduced scope, it not actually addressed & may require the omission of personal/identifying data. Public & employees may not be aware of what information is already available & where it can be found. Planning approval history is regularly requested – but not in high volumes. Information may also be sort via completion of a form supplied to a specific department.
13	How does your agency informally release information?	How information is informally released Written- letter or email, or verbally via telephone
14	What factors influence the informal release of information by your agency? Does your agency have a process, policy or procedure for determining	Department based guidelines or practices dependant on function of the department & potentially other regulations that apply. Often requests are referred to FOI responsible officer to resolve/address enquires or locate & asses information even if it may already be publicly available in addition to when it's an actual FOI request.

	<p>whether information can be informally released? If yes, please specify the role(s) of agency staff who authorise or determine whether information should be released informally, and any process, policy or procedure supporting this process and how it was developed.</p>	
15	<p>Are there barriers that affect your agency informally releasing information? If yes, what kinds of barriers exist?</p>	<p>Resources, personnel & time</p>
17	<p>What factors, assistance, or support would assist your agency to begin or improve informally releasing information?</p>	<p>External training, access to other similar organisations that are doing this well.</p>
18	<p>OVIC has published a practice note on the informal release of information on its website. How can this practice note be improved to better meet the needs of your agency?</p>	<p>May need to be more specifically tailored for our environment/organisation structure.</p>