

IAID 2024 joint statement

‘Mainstreaming’ access to information a must for IAID 2024

Information commissioners and ombudsmen highlight the importance of mainstreaming access to information and participation

26 September 2024

To mark International Access to Information Day (IAID, also known as IDUAI), which is celebrated annually on 28 September, we join together in highlighting that access to government information should be the norm.

Ensuring transparency, inclusiveness and accessibility of government information empowers citizens, counters disinformation and helps to prevent corruption.

The theme for this year’s IAID – mainstreaming access to information and participation in the public sector – underscores the importance of community access to government-held information.

We are fortunate in Australia to have legislation which supports the public sector to uphold its duties of accountability and stewardship. Legislation that actively advances a robust pro-disclosure culture that will assist in building trust in government.

It provides avenues to enable transparency so that government decision making is open to scrutiny, discussion, comment and review.

Transparency in government improves service delivery, and decisions supported by input and participation from an informed and engaged public.

We are committed to supporting agencies to achieve these objectives. Our work includes providing guidance and reporting data to assist agencies to adopt best practice approaches to make information access easier for the community.

Mainstreaming access to information and participation requires a true collective effort across the public sector, and in particular, the commitment of senior leaders.

Some key steps for public sector agencies to support access to information are to:

- Provide regular training to increase the culture of proactive publication and compliance with information access legislation
- Regularly monitor information access applications and agency performance
- Invest in information asset management
- Identify connections between information provided and published in response to formal information requests and what should be routinely published
- Identify categories of information that can be published proactively
- Promote feedback mechanisms, including providing clear information about how people can make a complaint or provide feedback.

Promoting the right to access information as a mainstream or core capability in government and fostering an ‘open by design’ culture will ensure that we all enjoy a more participative and robust democracy.

IAID provides an important opportunity to promote the principles of access to information, celebrate the work of those across the public sector who help to ensure it, and raise awareness in the community of their rights to access information.

Information held by government agencies is managed for public purposes and must be treated as a national resource. The public’s right to access that information is a natural extension of that, and helps support and fortify our healthy democracy.

Co-signed by

Elizabeth Tydd, Australian Information Commissioner
Toni Pirani, Australian Freedom of Information Commissioner
Iain Anderson, Australian Capital Territory Ombudsman
Sean Morrison, Information Commissioner, Victoria
Penny Eastman, Public Access Deputy Commissioner, Victoria
Richard Connock, Ombudsman, Tasmania
Catherine Fletcher, Information Commissioner, Western Australia
Emily Strickland, Ombudsman, South Australia
Joanne Kummrow, Information Commissioner, Queensland
Stephanie Winson, Right to Information Commissioner, Queensland
Peter Shoyer, Information Commissioner, Northern Territory
Rachel McCallum, Information Commissioner, New South Wales