



Office of the Victorian  
Information Commissioner

## Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 9 December 2024

**Location:** 2:00pm – 3:00pm

**Attendees:** Penny Eastman, Public Access Deputy Commissioner, OVIC (Chair)  
Tyrrell Davidson, Assistant Commissioner, Reviews and Regulation, OVIC  
Artemis Boyce, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Public Access Operations and Compliance, OVIC  
Monica Barnes, Manager, FOI, Department of Education and Training  
Rebecca Cato, Legal Counsel FOI & Privacy, WorkSafe Victoria  
Peter Gannoni, Senior Governance Officer, City of Melbourne  
Andrew Mariadason, Legal Counsel – Manager Medico-Legal Services, The Royal Melbourne Hospital  
Michael Mazza, FOI Division, Victoria Police  
Morgan McNally, City of Melbourne  
Cameron Montgomery, Executive Manager Safety Governance and Risk, City of Ballarat  
Jade Papathanasiou (DFFH), Acting Manager FOI, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
Paul Pittorino, Senior Manager FOI, Department of Justice and Community Safety  
Lisa Vescovi, FOI Manager, Suburban Rail Loop Authority (SRLA)

**Apologies** Shantelle Ryan, Assistant Commissioner Public Access Operations and Compliance, OVIC

Lisa Scholes, Manager FOI, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Andrew Weston, Manager, Freedom of Information (FOI), Department of Transport

Robin Davey, Manager, FOI Division, Victoria Police

Delilah Nicols (TAC)

University of Melbourne

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## Summary of key Agenda Items

### 1. Previous Meeting Minutes

Confirmed – All attendees confirmed minutes of 26 August 2024

### 2. Action items

Nil action items from 26 August 2024 meeting.

### 3. OVIC Policy and Public Access operational updates

Staffing update provided in relation to OVIC's Public Access team.

OVIC appeared at a public hearing of the Integrity and Oversight Committee looking at the annual performance of integrity agencies.

#### *FOI Guidelines*

OVIC has almost finished updating the FOI Guidelines, to reflect the amendments made to the FOI Act by the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Act 2024. The updated guidelines can be downloaded from OVIC's website.

The updates to Parts 6 and 6A are almost ready, and should be published shortly. These changes provide a legislated pathway for OVIC to informal resolve reviews and complaints, and introduce a duty for OVIC staff to assist an individual to make a complaint in writing if they are unable to do so.

For more information on the amendments made by the Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Act 2024, a summary of the changes on OVIC's website in a news post from 10 September 2024.

#### *Public Access caseload*

OVIC currently has 556 cases, being 7 access charges matters, 277 complaints and 272 reviews.

This is our highest case load in recent years.

In the year to date we have received about 20% more review applications and compared to this time last year.

OVIC exploring range of ways to best manage our caseload with fewer staff members and vacancies, with an ongoing focus still being on trying to improve timeliness.

#### *Upcoming FOI events*

New privacy and FOI training up on the website for December and February.

#### *FOI projects*

OVIC continues to welcome any feedback from members on the FOI Guidelines, to ensure they remain their currency and useful and also on the Proactive and Informal Release agency policy template / guidance.

## 4. Update on PAARG consultation for the updated FOI Professional Standards

Members were advised KPMG provided OVIC with its final report (the report), making 27 recommendations to uplift and improve the operation of the Standards. OVIC considered the recommendations and support or agree with the vast majority of them, with OVIC's response available online.

After considering the remaining recommendations, updated Standards were prepared and shared with PAARG members for its initial feedback in the spirit of this being a reference group for the FOI sector.

OVIC's plan is to consider the views of PAARG members, make any relevant updates and then go out for public consultation for February for 28 days.

OVIC's goal is to have new standards in action for 1 July 2025.

Members were provided with a summary of the general feedback OVIC received from PAARG members to date and specific feedback in relation to five draft amended or new standards. Further discussion was had in relation to the general feedback and the highlighted amended/new standards.

## 5. Agency updates

Several members provided updates in relation to factors impacting their FOI functions. Discussion had on the challenges associated with recruiting FOI staff in the current market and the impact this has on their FOI functions. However, several agencies reported that they had successfully recruited staff.

There has been a peak in FOI requests in the Local Government sector during the election period seeking access to statistics rather than for documents.

Discussion had on challenging correspondence received from FOI applicants and the impact that this is having on staff.

Suggestions made regarding options for OVIC having recorded FOI training sessions available online to better meet agency officer demand, as well as running tailored training sessions in 2025 aimed at more experienced FOI staff. These suggestions will be further explored and OVIC will facilitate, where possible.

## 6. Other Business

PAARG members were provided with additional time to provide feedback on the draft Professional Standards, until early January 2025.

Meeting closed: 3:00pm

*Meeting dates for 2025 will follow.*