

**Date:** 28 April 2025

**Location:** Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC), Training Room 1, Level 34, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne / Microsoft Teams

**Attendees:** Penny Eastman, Public Access Deputy Commissioner, OVIC (Chair)  
Tyrrell Davidson, Assistant Commissioner Public Access Reviews and Regulation, OVIC  
Shantelle Ryan, Assistant Commissioner Public Access Operations and Compliance, OVIC  
Fathia Tayib, Senior Policy Officer, OVIC (Secretariat)  
Andrew Mariadason, Legal Counsel, Manager Medico-Legal Services, The Royal Melbourne Hospital  
Andrew Weston, Manager, Freedom of Information (FOI), Department of Transport  
Rebecca Cato, Legal Counsel, FOI & Privacy, WorkSafe Victoria  
Cameron Montgomery, Executive Manager Safety Governance and Risk, City of Ballarat  
Monica Barnes, Manager, FOI, Department of Education and Training  
Felicity Wright, Information & Privacy Manager  
Lisa Scholes, Acting Director, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
Paul Pittorino, FOI Manager, Department of Justice and Community Safety  
Peter Gannoni, Acting Senior Governance Officer, and Morgan McNally, Governance Officer, City of Melbourne  
Robin Davey, Manager, FOI Division, Victoria Police  
Raffaella Di Maio, FOI Lead, University of Melbourne  
Lisa Vescovi, Manager, FOI, and Courtney Davies, Suburban Rail Loop Authority

**Guests:** Anita Mugo, Senior Policy Officer, OVIC

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Meeting opened at 2:01pm

## Agenda Items

1. Apologies (Penny)

Jay Cadiramen, A/Manager FOI, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

2. Previous Meeting Minutes (Penny)

(a). Confirmed – All attendees confirmed minutes of 9 December 2024 (D24/9572).

(b). Action items

Nil action items from 9 December 2024 meeting.

3. Updated Terms of Reference (Penny)

OVIC welcomes any feedback from members on the refreshed Terms of Reference.

4. Policy updates / Legislative reform (Penny)

OVIC has launched the updated FOI guidelines available on its website to [reflect the minor amendments made to the FOI Act by the \*Justice Legislation Amendment \(Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters\) Act 2024\*](#). OVIC recently commenced work with the Public Records Office of Victoria, aiming to develop joint training materials and guidance over the next 12 months. This work responds to [key recommendations of the \*Monash University's report into the Culture of implementing Freedom of Information in Australia\*](#) that there should be:

- Greater collaboration between public record offices and FOI regulators to strengthen agency knowledge around records management best practice and FOI efficiency.
- Enhanced training offerings, including sector-specific FOI training and training on FOI and records management for wider agency employees, including executives.

OVIC welcomed the Victorian Government's [response](#) of 24 March 2025 to the Integrity and Oversight Committee's inquiry into the operation of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic) (**the inquiry**). The Government's response recognises the importance of FOI laws in enabling the public to exercise their information rights. It acknowledges that the inquiry's recommendations called for substantial and broad-ranging reforms, and advises that more time is needed to comprehensively assess the recommendations before it commits to any such reforms. It was pleasing to see the response highlights the Government's commitment to promote and facilitate the use of proactive and informal release mechanisms.

[Proactive and Informal Release \(PAIR\) – Review of resources \(Anita\)](#)

OVIC discussed project to review PAIR resources and sought feedback from agencies. Overall, members found the resources to be useful and thorough. Some members noted the difficulty of releasing information proactively when majority of the requests they receive relate to documents containing personal information or subject to secrecy provisions. It was noted that the PAIR resources do not provide guidance on this issue.

Suggestions were made to link the resources to the recommendations in the IOC's FOI Inquiry report as well as legislative requirements(e.g., secrecy provisions) and provide more practical guidance or a checklist on how to identify information that is suitable for proactive release or informal release.

## 5. Amendments to the Professional Standards – Update on project (Shantelle)

OVIC received 14 submissions from agencies ranging from large departments to small agencies, as well as councils and health agencies. However, there were no submissions from the public.

Submissions feedback indicated that most of the proposed amendments are supported. Some agencies advised that they have started or already had implemented some of the changes, whereas other agencies highlighted the difficulty to apply these amendments.

Next steps include reviewing the feedback and evaluating potential improvements to the professional standards. The updated standards are on track to be published by the end of the calendar year 2025.

## 6. Agency update / Discussion (ALL)

Several members provided updates in relation to their agencies FOI workloads, resourcing and staff changes.

Discussion had on the challenges associated with increases in the volume of FOI requests received across the sector, coupled with challenging correspondence from applicants. Increased volume of self-represented FOI requests have been received across multiple sectors, along with more topical and complex requests. Some agencies are reducing the FOI backlog by seeking to work with applicants to narrow the request scope (where possible).

Discussion had on the difficulty in recruiting and retaining FOI staff in the current market. However, some members reported that they had successfully recruited staff, including hiring internal candidates.

## 7. Additional OVIC operational updates (Shantelle / Tyrrell)

FOI Annual Survey will be released in July 2025. FOI training sessions will be held pre and post the survey's release. The survey will include questions around proactive and informal release, and how OVIC can better support agencies with limited resources/funding.

Privacy Awareness Week will be held in June 2025. Members can sign up to be a PAW supporter through the OVIC website.

## 8. Other Business (ALL)

Suggestions made regarding options for OVIC having permanent recorded FOI training resources. OVIC will explore developing short introductory modules, along with more intermediate to advanced training and sector-specific sessions. Members further encouraged to direct staff to the existing FOI exemption eLearning modules accessing via OVIC's website.

Upcoming recruitment activity raised.

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Meeting closed: 2:58pm

*Next meetings scheduled: August and November 2025*

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