

- Date:** Monday 27 April 2026, 2pm – 3pm
- 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)
Shantelle Ryan, Assistant Commissioner Public Access Operations and Compliance, OVIC
Fathia Tayib, Senior Policy Officer, OVIC (Secretariat)
Andrew Mariadason, Director – Medicolegal Services, Manager Medico-Legal Services, The Royal Melbourne Hospital
Andrew Weston, Acting Director, Privacy and Information Access or Darson Bonett, Manager, Privacy and Information Access, Department of Transport
Rebecca Cato, Legal Counsel, FOI & Privacy, WorkSafe Victoria
Rosie Wright, City of Ballarat
Kate Braentel, Information & Privacy Manager, Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
Kathy Maikousis, Acting Manager, FOI Unit, FOI, Department of Education
Jay Cadiramen, Acting Manager FOI, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Paul Pittorino, FOI Manager, Department of Justice and Community Safety
Peter Gannoni, Acting Senior Governance Officer, City of Melbourne
Robin Davey, Manager, FOI Division, Victoria Police
Raffaella Di Maio, University of Melbourne
- Apologies:** Tyrrell Davidson, Assistant Commissioner Public Access Reviews and Regulation, OVIC
Cameron Montgomery, Executive Manager Governance and Risk, City of Ballarat
Lisa Scholes, Acting Director, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Morgan McNally, Governance Officer, City of Melbourne
Susan Maye, Manager, Information Regulation, University of Melbourne
Lisa Vescovi, Manager, FOI, and Courtney Davies, Senior Lawyer, Suburban Rail Loop Authority

Meeting opened at 2:01pm

Agenda Items

1. Welcome / Apologies

Farewell:

- Monica Barnes no longer manages the FOI team at Department of Education

Welcome:

- Kathy Maikousis, Acting Manager, FOI Unit, FOI, Department of Education

Apologies:

- Tyrrell Davidson, Assistant Commissioner Public Access Reviews and Regulation, OVIC
- Cameron Montgomery, Executive Manager Governance and Risk, City of Ballarat
- Lisa Scholes, Acting Director, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Morgan McNally, Governance Officer, City of Melbourne
- Susan Maye, Manager, Information Regulation, University of Melbourne
- Lisa Vescovi, Manager, FOI, and Courtney Davies, Senior Lawyer, Suburban Rail Loop Authority

2. Previous Meeting Minutes / Annual PAARG Survey Results

All attendees confirmed minutes of 1 December 2025 (D26/285).

OVIC appreciated members' responses to our annual feedback survey. OVIC has reviewed the feedback and will be incorporating some of the suggestions this financial year, where possible.

3. OVIC Deputy Commissioner Updates

(a). OVIC updates

Change in responsible Minister for OVIC

- OVIC has moved from the Attorney-General's portfolio to sit under the new Special Minister for State, Ingrid Stitt MP.

Victorian Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee (IOC) hearing

- In February 2026, OVIC's Information Commissioner, Acting Privacy and Data Protection Deputy Commissioner, and the Public Access Deputy Commissioner appeared before the IOC as part of its inquiry into the performance of Victorian integrity agencies for FY23 and FY24.
- The main areas of inquiry relating to access to information included:
 - stakeholder engagement on development of the FOI Guidelines.
 - OVIC's timeliness target for completing FOI reviews and whether it is a useful reporting measure.

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- the types of documents being requested under the FOI Act that make it to OVIC's review jurisdiction.
- the processes OVIC utilises to facilitate informal resolution of complaints and reviews and the advantages and disadvantages of informal resolution.
- OVIC's review of the FOI Professional Standards.
- OVIC provided responses to questions on notice in late April 2026. OVIC looks forward to the release of IOC's final report in due course.

Staff update

- A long-serving staff member of OVIC's public access team will be retiring soon. OVIC will be seeking to fill in this key role internally in the first instance.

(b). Projects

OVIC has a number of FOI-related projects underway, including:

- reviewing the FOI Professional Standards to come into effect by the end of 2026.
- preparing for the annual FOI survey to go live on 1 July 2026.
- updating OVIC's customisable FOI templates designed for use by agencies (anticipated released date: early FY27).
- undertaking the first major review and update of the FOI Guidelines since it was first published in 2024 (to be released in early FY27).
- updating guidance material on proactive and informal release for agencies, to be released by the end of FY26.

(c). Resources

Changes to the FOI Act (Statewide Treaty Act)

- The Statewide Treaty Act introduces amendments to the FOI Act, which will come into effect on 1 May 2026.
- The amendments impose and introduce new exclusions from the FOI Act and new exemptions from releasing certain information in response to an FOI request.
- OVIC will add these exclusions and exemptions to the FOI Guidelines and OVIC's website.
- Under the Statewide Treaty Act, OVIC is also required to establish cultural safety guidelines and procedures in relation to how OVIC's Information Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioners exercise powers and perform functions in relation to Gellung Warl under the FOI Act and PDP Act. This work is currently underway and OVIC will share further details in the coming months.

AI guidance

- OVIC has also seen an increase in AI generated applications, complaints and general communications with OVIC staff.

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- Some of this correspondence is inaccurate, generic, lengthy and vague, requiring OVIC staff to engage with a review applicant or complainant to better understand what they are seeking.
- Some applicants and complainants are also coming to OVIC with an incorrect understanding of their rights and what OVIC can do for them, after reading and relying on inaccurate information generated by AI.
- To help address these issues, OVIC recently published guidance for the public on what they should know before relying on AI.
- The guidance is intended to be short and simple, setting out the key risks of using AI tools, and top tips on how to best use AI tools.
- Agencies are welcome to adopt or adapt this guidance for their own needs.

(d). Events

Privacy Awareness Week will be held on 4-10 May 2026. Members can sign up to be a PAW supporter through the [OVIC website](#).

4. OVIC Operational Updates

(a). Section 21 and Professional Standards compliance data and regulatory action

In March 2026, OVIC wrote to a number of agencies regarding their compliance with section 21 of the FOI Act, and the professional standards for first half of FY26. OVIC will review the compliance data for the second half of the FY26 in July 2026 and will share proposed findings with agencies, with the opportunity to respond to any proposed findings.

The updated Standards have been drafted and are now under internal review. They will not come into effect on 1 July 2026 as previously shared with members. However, OVIC is preparing to publish the updated standards by the end of 2026, and will provide sufficient notice to agencies.

OVIC will also update existing guidance and host information access sessions on the updated standards.

(b). Complaints and reviews data/trends

OVIC recorded a significant increase in complaints for the period between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026. OVIC:

- received 802 complaints (which is an 32% increase for same period last year)
- finalised 554 complaints (a 11% increase), with 58% dismissed or not accepted and the remainder resolved informally.

Most complaints (72%) were related to delays in agency decision making. At the end of March 2026, OVIC had 554 open complaints, an increase of 66% from the same period last year.

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The increase in complaints reflects the challenges agencies are currently facing. Agencies are reporting increases in volume and complexity of requests, and a significant increase in requests drafted with AI tools.

OVIC also recorded a significant increase in reviews for the period between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026. OVIC:

- received 584 reviews (which is an 20% increase for same period last year)
- finalised 515 reviews (a 32% increase).

At the end of March 2026, OVIC had 359 open reviews, representing a 34% increase in reviews on hand compared to end of March 2025.

(c). Short form Notice of Decisions (NOD)

OVIC recently received positive feedback on OVIC's short form NOD. Members expressed similar sentiments. OVIC welcomes further feedback on the short form decision, whether from agencies, applicants or members.

(d). NOD publication

In response to a member's question, OVIC confirmed it was working to publishing more recent review decisions in de-identified form, including some short form decisions, on the OVIC website and AustLII as part of its ongoing NOD publication initiative.

5. [Group discussion / Agency updates](#)

Several members provided updates in relation to their agencies' FOI workloads, resourcing, and ministerial and staff changes. Members also advised of significant increases in the volume of requests being received, as well as increases in the complexity of requests such as AI-generated complaints/requests and sovereign citizen/election/political related matters.

Strategies for dealing with / reducing the backlog of pending backlogs and trying to decrease processing timeframes discussed. Some successes achieved through limiting the number of times an agency contacts the applicant to clarify their AI-generated complaints and responses before closing the request or requesting a call with the applicant to quickly understand their core issue or matter.

Some agencies are looking into a new case management system to handle their FOI cases.

6. [Other Business](#)

No other business was raised.

Meeting closed at 2:59pm.

Next meetings scheduled: August 2026 and November 2026 (TBC)