

Statement

17 April 2020

Transparency and access to information in the context of a global pandemic

The Australian Information Access Commissioners join with their international counterparts in their clear call for transparency and the right to access information as governments, businesses and citizens deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following [statement](#) has been released by International Conference of Information Commissioners:

The impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) brings unprecedented challenges for our society, both nationally and globally.

Public authorities must make significant decisions that affect public health, civil liberties and people's prosperity.

The public's right to access information about such decisions is vital.

As a global community, we recognise that resources may be diverted away from usual information rights work. Public organisations will rightly focus their resources on protecting public health, and we recognise our role in taking a pragmatic approach, for example around how quickly public bodies respond to requests.

But the importance of the right to access information remains.

Public bodies must also recognise the value of clear and transparent communication, and of good record-keeping, in what will be a much analysed period of history.

As an international network, the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) supports a flexible approach that takes into account the compelling public interest in the current health emergency, while safeguarding the values of the right to access information. We ask governments to support this vision.

We add our support and gratitude to those who are dedicated to tackling the current pandemic.

Members of the ICIC Governance Working Group

<https://informationcommissioners.org/meet-the-executive-committee>

Co-signed by:

Elizabeth Tydd, Information Commissioner, New South Wales
Rachael Rangihaeata, Information Commissioner, Queensland
Angelene Falk, Australian Information Commissioner
Michael Manthorpe, Ombudsman, ACT
Sven Bluemmel, Information Commissioner, Victoria
Catherine Fletcher, Information Commissioner, Western Australia
Richard Connock, Ombudsman, Tasmania
Peter Shoyer, Information Commissioner, Northern Territory
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About the Information and Privacy Commission:

The Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC) is an independent statutory authority that administers New South Wales' legislation dealing with privacy and access to government information. The IPC supports the Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner in fulfilling their legislative responsibilities and functions and to ensure individuals and agencies can access consistent information, guidance and coordinated training about information access and privacy matters.

About the NSW Information Commissioner

The NSW Information Commissioner's statutory role includes promoting public awareness and understanding of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act); providing information, advice, assistance and training to agencies and the public; dealing with complaints about agencies; investigating agencies' systems, policies and practices; and reporting on compliance with the GIPA Act.

For further information about the IPC visit our website at www.ipc.nsw.gov.au