

Information Commissioner releases Community Attitudes Survey results for Right to Know Week NSW 2022

Today, the NSW Information Commissioner and Open Data Advocate, Elizabeth Tydd, published the results of the Information and Privacy Commission's (IPC) latest survey of NSW community attitudes towards information access, agency assistance and data sharing.

The survey has been undertaken biannually since 2014 and the results provide a broad and indicative sense of citizens' attitudes to accessing government information, attempts to obtain information by any means across five government sectors (including formal access applications), and provides data regarding citizens' experiences of obtaining information and interacting with government agencies.

Overall, the majority of respondents (89%) agreed that having the right to access government information was important. This is the highest level since 2016.

Information Commissioner, Elizabeth Tydd, said, "This year's results showed a relatively consistent number of respondents attempting, and considering making an attempt, to gain government information, with 38% in 2020 and 2022.

"However, from the cohort of respondents making an attempt, success in obtaining information is at its lowest since 2014, with 71% of respondents achieving success compared with 74% in 2020 and 76% in 2018."

Commissioner Tydd said, "The results of the survey are particularly concerning in the context of digital government in which agencies are increasingly holding more information digitally because of online service delivery and greater data capture.

"In these circumstances, it is essential that agencies make citizens aware of what information they hold, how to access this information and make their agency's open access information freely available. Under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act), agencies are obligated to maintain an up-to-date Agency Information Guide (AIG) and include information and guidance on their website about applying for their information."

Unsurprisingly, the decline in success is accompanied by a reported decline in agency assistance across a number of key areas including:

- advising the respondent to seek the information from another agency or entity, a 6% decrease from 2020
- explaining the process of making a formal application, a 13% decrease from 2020
- telling the respondent about the IPC and their rights of review, a 5% decrease from 2020
- following up with the applicant in writing, a 5% decrease from 2020.



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The results of the survey reinforce the need for agencies to consider the continued shift toward digital government, highlighted by the 2022 Right to Know Week theme: *Artificial Intelligence, e-Governance & Access to Information: Next steps in NSW digital government.*

Future focus

Commissioner Tydd said, “As governments continue to provide digital solutions to citizens including the use of Artificial Intelligence in decision-making, there is a requirement to preserve and promote the public interest, accountability, transparency and citizens’ right to information. Agencies must ensure the right to information, including by way of assistance, continues to be enlivened in an increasingly digital government.

“As NSW has embraced a digital transformation into e-Government, that transformation must be accompanied by e-Governance to ensure government remains accountable and transparent.

“Digital government also presents challenges within the context of the GIPA Act. A more expansive approach to legislation to accommodate e-Government would better preserve the right to access information and ensure that NSW remains at the forefront of recognised leaders in information access.

“Government has a duty to use new technologies to enable citizens to access information and participate in government decision-making. E-Governance is the digital realisation of an open, accountable, participative democracy,” she said.

The full results from the Community Attitude Survey 2022 can be accessed via the [IPC website](#).

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For further information, please contact:

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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.



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The *Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009* (GIIC Act) establishes the procedures for appointing the Information Commissioner and sets out the Commissioner's powers and functions. It outlines the method for people to complain about the conduct of agencies when undertaking their duties under the GIPA Act, and the way in which the Information Commissioner may deal with the complaint. The GIIC Act also enables the Information Commissioner to investigate and report on how agencies carry out their functions under the GIPA Act.

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

