

## Media statement: Information Commissioners and Ombudsman release survey results on community attitudes

1 October 2025

Information Commissioners and an Ombudsman from across Australia today released the findings of their fourth cross-jurisdictional study of community attitudes on access to government information.

The 2025 cross-jurisdictional Information Access Study measures the public's awareness of the right to access government information, and their experiences and outcomes in exercising that right.

Commissioners from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, and the ACT Ombudsman sponsored the research for a fourth time, having conducted the inaugural study in 2019.

The research provides a broad insight into the public's views and experiences of the right to access government-held information and provides comparisons across jurisdictions. Key findings include:

- The majority of respondents (91–96%) across all jurisdictions perceive the right to access government-held information as important, with over half (53–59%) rating it as very important.
- Across all jurisdictions, around 90% agree that access to government information improves transparency and accountability, including around 60% agreeing strongly.
- While agreement on the importance of the right to access government-held information is high across all jurisdictions, familiarity with the relevant legislation varies significantly. The highest levels of understanding are in the ACT, while NSW and QLD need the most improvement.
- In line with familiarity with the relevant legislation in each jurisdiction, the highest levels of knowledge about organisations included are in the ACT, followed by VIC.
- Confidence in government allowing access to information about how decisions are made is significantly higher among ACT residents (61%) compared to those in other jurisdictions (42–52%).

- Accountability, transparency and access to personal information are key considerations that people across all jurisdictions believe governments should take into account when deciding whether to release information.
- The majority (over 75%) across all jurisdictions agree that the government must publicly report on any technology used to inform decision-making, with the highest agreement for the Australian Government.
- The majority (86–90%) in each jurisdiction agree that the government and its agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain.
- Personal information, reports and data, and administrative documents are among the most accessed documents in all jurisdictions.
- The majority (over 80%) received all or at least partial access across all jurisdictions, with the ACT being the most likely to provide full access,
- Email is the primary channel of communication, while telephone and in-person enquiries remain significant.
- Across all jurisdictions, over 80% reported receiving advice and assistance from government agencies, with those contacting ACT government organisations by far the most likely to report any advice and assistance received.
- In line with the advice and support received, those contacting ACT government organisations are the most likely to rate them as very helpful (82%) compared with other jurisdictions (59–70%)
- Over the next two years, requests for *personal information* are the most likely to be requested across all jurisdictions, followed by spending and budgeting documents and reports and data.
- Online portals and emails are the most preferred ways of requesting information in future.

The right to access government information is independently overseen by state, territory and federal Information Commissioners and Ombudsmen. Participating Commissioners and the ACT Ombudsman released the following statement:

The right to access government-held information remains a cornerstone of open, accountable and participatory democracy. As the regulators of information access around Australia, we reaffirm our commitment to promoting transparency and empowering the public through access to information – especially in the digital age.

This year's cross-jurisdictional survey highlights the enduring value Australians place on their right to access government information, with over 90% of respondents recognising its importance. The findings also underscore the public's strong belief that access enhances transparency and accountability – particularly in areas such as decision-making and the use of technology in government.

The results also reveal disparities in awareness and confidence across jurisdictions. While ACT residents report the highest levels of understanding and confidence of their information access rights, other jurisdictions show

room for improvement. This reinforces the need for continued education, support and proactive disclosure practices.

As we mark International Access to Information Day 2025, the theme 'Ensuring access to environmental information in the digital age' aligns strongly with the findings of this year's survey.

Nearly 90% of respondents agree that government agencies should publicly report on the information they retain. This can include environmental data and information about the condition of ecosystems, the planning and regulation of infrastructure and development, air and water quality, climate data, biodiversity, and urban planning.

While 10–20% had sought environmental information over the past three years, 22–43% said that they were likely to attempt to access this information within the next two years.

We call on the various public sectors across Australia to adopt an *Open by Design* approach to embed transparency into digital systems and processes from the outset. This includes making environmental data and decision-making information readily accessible through user-friendly digital platforms.

As stewards of the public's right to know, we remain committed to advancing a modern, effective framework for information access – one that not only meets the expectations and ongoing transformation of Australia's digital landscape but also supports informed public participation in shaping Australia's environmental future.

**Co-signed by:**

- Elizabeth Tydd, Australian Information Commissioner, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
- Alice Linacre PSM, Freedom of Information Commissioner, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
- Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher AM, Information Commissioner, New South Wales
- Sean Morrison, Information Commissioner, Victoria
- Joanne Kummrow, Information Commissioner, Queensland
- Stephanie Winson, Right to Information Commissioner, Queensland
- Annelies Moens, Information Commissioner, Western Australia
- Iain Anderson, ACT Ombudsman, Australian Capital Territory

**ENDS**

**MORE INFORMATION:**

The Office of the Information Commissioner (WA) by email to [info@oic.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@oic.wa.gov.au) or phone (08) 6551-7888.

## **Background information on the Information Access Study**

FiftyFive5 was commissioned by participating information commissioners and the ombudsmen to investigate individuals' awareness and experience of the right to access information held by government agencies in NSW, the ACT, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia as well as federally. The report compares results between jurisdictions. The first cross-jurisdictional study was conducted in 2019.

In 2025, the survey was undertaken by FiftyFive5 for the first time having previously been completed by Woolcott Research. The survey was updated to provide greater connection between questions for improved comparison and a transition to online surveys to decrease cost and increase sample sizes.