



Privacy policy

1. Purpose

This Privacy Policy outlines how the Department of Communities (Communities) collects, uses, discloses, and protects personal (including sensitive personal) information.

‘Personal Information’ means any information that relates to an identified individual or one who can be reasonably identified.

‘Sensitive personal information’ is a subset of personal information and is information or an opinion about an individual’s racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or practices, political opinions or associations, religious beliefs or affiliations, philosophical beliefs, membership of professional or trade associations or trade unions, or criminal record.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- Department of Communities (including the Disability Services Commission).
- All personal information (including sensitive personal information) Communities collects, stores, uses and discloses about:
 - people using its services (including clients and people registering for services); and
 - people who work, or apply to work, for Communities (including staff, secondees, volunteers, work experience staff/students, contractors, sub-contractors, vendors, and service providers).
- The management of personal information with respect to information sharing between Communities and:
 - other government entities, whether Commonwealth, State, or Local.
 - contracted service providers.
 - non-government entities.

This Policy excludes:

- Information administered by Communities’ Education and Care Regulatory Unit (ECRU), under the [National Quality Framework](#). As this is bound by Commonwealth law, ECRU has developed a separate privacy policy at [ECRU Privacy Policy](#).

3. Policy statement

Communities respects an individual's right to privacy and is committed to managing personal information responsibly, transparently, and in accordance with all legal obligations relating to the collection, use, protection, and disclosure of information.

4. Collection and management of personal information

4.1. Collection

Communities will only collect personal information where it is necessary for delivering one or more of its functions or activities, including those set out in Communities' Administered Legislation (see section 7.1) and arising out of the portfolios (collectively '**Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities**') to which Communities has been committed to assist its Ministers from time to time, which currently includes:

- **Child Protection** – to protect and care for Western Australian children and young people who are in need, and support families and individuals who are at risk or in crisis.
- **Community Services** – to provide and/or fund a range of community services to support Western Australians through various programs, initiatives, and strategies.
- **Disability Services** – to work to advance opportunities, community participation and quality of life for people with disability.
- **Early Childhood Education** – focus on improving early childhood education and care outcomes for children and families.
- **Homelessness** – to provide a dedicated focus on the stewardship, coordination, strategic planning, and practices with the aim of achieving better outcomes for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
- **Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence** – to work to our vision of a Western Australia where all people live free from family and domestic violence (FDV) by coordinating strategy and policy direction in the prevention of FDV.
- **Seniors** – to implement initiatives and strategies that support older people in ageing safely, happily, with dignity and respect.
- **Volunteering** – to partner with the community services sector to develop volunteer opportunities and encourage and assist people to become involved in volunteering.
- **Women** – to partner with Government, business, industry, and community sector organisations to deliver initiatives and programs that contribute to achieving gender equality in Western Australia.

- **Youth** – to work in partnership with young people, the youth sector, community groups and across all levels of government to support the development of programs and initiatives that meet the diverse needs of young people.

The types of personal information Communities collects can include, but is not limited to, information about:

- contact details (e.g., name, phone number, email, address and postal address).
- personal circumstances (e.g., age, gender, family circumstances, case notes and reports, including spouse, carer, and dependents).
- financial information (e.g., payment details, bank account details, and credit history).
- identity information (e.g., date of birth, signatures, citizenship, and visa status).
- employment information (e.g., employment status and work history, education status, referee comments, and salary).
- government identifiers (e.g., tax file number).

Communities may also collect sensitive personal information from time to time, to deliver on Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities, that relates to an individual, including:

- racial and/or ethnic origin.
- sexual orientation or practices.
- religious or philosophical beliefs or affiliations.
- health information (including medical history and any disabilities or injuries).
- political opinions or memberships of political or professional trade associations.
- criminal record or reportable conduct findings.

Communities recognises that these types of personal information are particularly sensitive and require additional safeguards. Accordingly, Communities will collect the least amount of personal information necessary to deliver Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities.

We will only collect sensitive personal information where it is necessary for one or more of Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities (including in relation to our child protection, regulatory or enforcement functions or the prevention of family and domestic violence) and collection is either required or authorised by or under law or the individual consents to the collection of the information.

Communities will collect personal information about an individual directly where it is reasonable and practicable to do so considering Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities. However, we will also collect personal information about an individual from a person other than the individual where Communities is authorised or enabled by law, including under Communities Administered Legislation, to do so.

4.2. Use and disclosure

Communities will only use or disclose an individual's personal information for the purpose it was collected or for a purpose required or permitted by law.

The personal and sensitive personal information collected from individuals may be used:

- to provide individuals with the service that they requested or to meet the purpose for which the information was submitted.
- to carry out our functions or activities set out in Legislation, including the protection and placement of children.
- to identify with whom we are communicating (if necessary).
- to create de-identified data that informs service delivery or enables understanding of systemic issues.
- for other purposes explained at the time of collection or otherwise as set out in this Privacy Policy.

Communities will also use and disclose personal information for a range of administrative, management, and operational purposes.

Communities may also be required to release personal information under other law, such as for a criminal proceeding.

4.3. Five Safes Framework

Communities will apply the Five Safes Framework to make informed decisions about the sharing of personal information. The Five Safes framework is global best practice for the effective use and responsible sharing of information, which is confidential or sensitive, considering:

- **Safe People:** share information with users who have the knowledge, skills, and incentives (including signed agreements) to store and use the information appropriately and keep the information safe.
- **Safe Settings:** ensure that information will only be accessed and used within an appropriately safe and secure environment, including limiting the opportunity for unauthorised use.
- **Safe Projects:** share information for appropriate projects (legal, moral, and ethical), under appropriate authority and when there are clear public benefits.
- **Safe Outputs:** define clear conditions of access and use to ensure that when results from information sharing projects are released, the identity of the people or businesses that provided the information remains private and confidential.
- **Safe Data:** understand how sensitive datasets are before deciding on whether and how to share the datasets.

These dimensions should be balanced to achieve the overall aim of 'safe use'.

4.4. Disclosures outside Australia

Generally, Communities will not send personal information or sensitive personal information outside of Australia. However, where it is deemed necessary to do so, Communities may transfer relevant information to corresponding authorities under section 23 of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) and/or as required or authorised by or under other laws or treaties such as the Hague Convention in respect of Intercountry Adoption or the Hague Convention in respect of Child Protection.

Communities will generally only send personal or sensitive personal information where required or authorised by or under law or with the individual's consent. In some cases, this consent may be implied (i.e., inferred from an action rather than expressly or explicitly provided).

4.5. Website and social media

Communities may ask for personal information (e.g. name, contact details) to provide a particular service via its website (www.communities.wa.gov.au). Any personal information provided to Communities will be managed in accordance with this Privacy Policy.

The Communities website sits within the Western Australian Government website (WA.gov.au). Website visit data will be collected when visiting the WA.gov.au website. For further details on the information collected and its use, refer to the [Privacy Statement | Western Australian Government](#) website.

Communities also maintains official social media and networking channels, such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn, to share relevant information with the public and answer general queries. These social networking services will also handle personal information for their own purposes. These services have their own privacy policies and individuals should be encouraged to read any terms and conditions (including any privacy statements or policies) that apply to any third-party service, especially the terms and conditions relating to the handling of personal information, before use.

4.6. Anonymity

Communities will typically require the individual's name, contact information, and relevant enquiry details to assist an individual. There may be circumstances, such as general enquiries and some reporting instances, where an individual may remain anonymous or use an alias or assumed name. There are many circumstances where, for various reasons, including legislative requirements, anonymity is not possible.

4.7. De-identified information

Communities may hold information that has had the personally identifying information removed for a specific purpose. Re-identification of personal information will only occur where the information is required or authorised by law or for specific purposes to provide services under Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities.

4.8. Access and correction

Communities will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information it holds is accurate, complete, and up to date. Individuals are encouraged to notify Communities of any changes to their personal information to assist in maintaining data accuracy.

Individuals, or their legally appointed guardian, have the right to request access to their personal information held by Communities and to seek correction of any inaccuracies. Requests for access or correction should be made to the Communities Privacy Officer by emailing – privacy@communities.wa.gov.au.

In some cases, access may be refused as permitted under law, in which case Communities will provide the reasons for the refusal.

4.9. Storage and security

Communities adopts robust security measures to protect personal information from misuse, interference and loss, as well as unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

Security measures include:

- physical controls, such as secure office premises and locked storage.
- electronic controls, including passphrase protection, encryption, and firewalls.
- access controls, to restrict information to authorised personnel only.
- staff training in information security and privacy obligations.
- regular audits and monitoring of information systems.

The above are in line with the WA Government policies for [Cyber Security](#) and [Information Classification](#).

Personal information will only be retained for as long as necessary to fulfil the purposes for which it was collected, or as otherwise required or authorised by law. Communities will destroy or permanently de-identify personal information (including sensitive personal information) which we no longer need, in line with the *State Records Act 2000* (WA), unless the information is required by law, court or tribunal order, or is contained in a Commonwealth record.

4.10. Unique identifiers

A unique identifier is an identifier (usually a number) that is used for the purpose of identifying an individual. Communities will not assign a unique identifier unless it is necessary to perform any of its functions or activities efficiently.

Communities will not request a unique identifier created by another organisation unless required by law, nor will Communities use or disclose a unique identifier created by another organisation unless there is a lawful basis for doing so.

4.11. Automated decision-making

Communities may employ automation in certain processes, such as automated criminal history checks. However, for decisions relating to the access or eligibility for services, human oversight will remain a key part of the decision-making process.

When requested, Communities will provide an individual with information about how the decision was made.

4.12. Privacy breach

Communities will take appropriate steps to mitigate the risks of a privacy breach occurring.

In the event of an actual or suspected privacy breach (i.e., unauthorised access to, or unauthorised disclosure of, personal information held by Communities), Communities will take the necessary steps to contain the breach and remediate it in line with its breach management procedures. Any unauthorised disclosure or misuse of personal information will be managed under the [Communities' Code of Conduct](#). Where a breach involves personal information and is reasonably likely to result in serious harm, Communities will notify affected individuals and relevant authorities, as a matter of best practice and in accordance with law.

5. Complaints

Individuals with concerns about the management of their personal information can make a complaint in accordance with [Communities' Complaints Management Policy](#).

Complaints can be lodged at:

Phone: 1800 333 325 (1800FEEDBK) and select the relevant option.

Online: [Communities Complaints and Feedback](#) and select the relevant option.

In writing: Department of Communities, Locked Bag 5000, Fremantle WA 6959.

In person: Staff will assist with lodging a complaint.

All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly. If the complaint is not resolved to an individual's satisfaction, they may contact the [Office of the Information Commissioner Western Australia](#).

6. Privacy Officer

If you have any questions about this privacy policy or how we handle personal information or wish to make an access or correction request email our Privacy Officer at:

privacy@communities.wa.gov.au.

7. Related documents

7.1. Communities' Administered Legislation

- [Adoption Act 1994 \(WA\)](#)
- [Carers Recognition Act 2004 \(WA\)](#)
- [Child Care Services Act 2007 \(WA\)](#)
- [Children and Community Services Act 2004 \(WA\)](#)
- [Declared Places \(Mental Impairment\) Act 2015 \(WA\)](#)
- [Disability Services Act 1993 \(WA\)](#)
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Worker Screening\) Act 2020 \(WA\)](#)
- [Volunteers and Food and Other Donors \(Protection from Liability\) Act 2002 \(WA\)](#)
- [Working with Children \(Screening\) Act 2004 \(WA\)](#)

7.2. Communities' Portfolio Responsibilities

- [Administration of departments, authorities, statutes and votes](#)

7.3. Other Commonwealth and State legislation

- [Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024 \(WA\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Copyright Act 1968 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Cybercrime 2001 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Spam Act 2003 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Telecommunications Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003 \(WA\)](#)
- [Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 \(WA\)](#)
- [Electronic Transaction Act 2011 \(WA\)](#)
- [Evidence Act 1906 \(WA\)](#)
- [Financial Management Act 2006 \(WA\)](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 1992 \(WA\)](#)
- [Limitation Act 1935 and Limitation Act 2005 \(WA\)](#)
- [Public Sector Management Act 1994 \(WA\)](#)
- [Restraining Orders Act 1997 \(WA\)](#)
- [State Records Act 2000 \(WA\)](#)
- [Surveillance Devices Act 1998 \(WA\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2020 \(WA\)](#)

7.4. Communities policies

Privacy policies sitting under this over-arching policy:

- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\) Worker Screening Privacy Policy](#)
- [Working with Children Screening Privacy Policy](#)

Other Communities policies:

- [Communities' Complaints Management Policy](#)
- [Communities' Code of Conduct](#)
- [Communities' Employment and Engagement Screening Policy](#)

7.5. State Government policies

- [Western Australian Information Classification Policy](#)
- [Western Australian Government Cyber Security Policy](#)

8. Document control

Publication date	October 2025
Review date	October 2027
Owner	Chief Information Officer
Custodian	Director Corporate Information

9. Amendments

Version	Date	Author	Description
0.1	05/2025	Principal Policy Officer (PRIS)	Initial draft
0.2	08/2025	Director Corporate Information	
0.3	08/2025	Snr. Business Analyst	Updated and issued for peer and legal review.
0.4	08/2025	Snr. Business Analyst	Updated following legal review and issued for Custodian review.
0.5	08/2025	Director Corporate Information	Issued to CISGF, IGCCN, DCPWG, and AWG for review.

Version	Date	Author	Description
0.6	09/2025	Director Corporate Information	Incorporated feedback and issued to Legal for final review.
0.7	09/2025	Director Corporate Information	Issued to ARB for review and endorsement.
0.8	09/2025	Director Corporate Information	Included the Five Safes Framework and Issued for CLT Consultation
0.9	09/2025	Director Corporate Information	Updated following CLT Consultation inc reference to Code of Conduct.
1.0	10/2025	Communities Leadership Team (CLT)	Approved.
1.1	03/2026	Snr. Business Analyst	ECRU Privacy Policy link update

10. Endorsements & Approvals

Name	Position	Presented	Endorsed Date
Information Services Architecture Review Board	-	12 September 2025 (Out of session)	22 September 2025
Delegations and Corporate Policy Working Group	-	28 August 2025	05 September 2025
Graeme Jones	Deputy Director General, Business Services	22 September 2025	22 September 2025
Approval – Communities Leadership Team (CLT)	Approved	08 October 2025	08 October 2025