



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Information Statement 2026



Table of contents

Introduction	4
The Organisation	4
Organisational Structure	4
Office of the Director General	4
Child Protection and Family Support.....	5
Disability	5
Commissioning and Contracting	5
Strategy, Regulation and Legal.....	6
Aboriginal Outcomes.....	6
Business Services	7
People and Culture	7
Legislation administered	8
Ministers	8
Public participation in the formulation of policy and performance	8
Documents held by Communities	9
Client files	9
Child history folders	9
Administrative files.....	9
Medical and psychological information	9
Personnel files	10
Early Childhood Education and Care.....	10
Adoption files	10
Native Welfare files.....	10
Former State wards and child migrants	10
Computer systems.....	11
Retention and disposal of records	11
Freedom of Information (FOI)	11
Access for a child or person with disability.....	12
Children	12
Adults	12
Applications on behalf of other persons	13
Enquiries and application lodgement for Communities documents.....	13
Fees and charges for access applications under the <i>FOI Act 1992</i>	13
Application fee	13

Processing charges 14

Deposits 14

Access arrangements..... 14

Notice of decision..... 14

Internal review..... 14

Amendment of personal information 15

Introduction

This Information Statement is provided in accordance with the requirements of sections 96 and 97 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)*.

The purpose of the Information Statement is to ensure that information concerning the structure and functions of the Department of Communities (Communities) and types of documents held by Communities are available to the public. Comprehensive information regarding the operations of Communities may be found [here](#).

The Organisation

Communities provides person-centred, place-based support to the most vulnerable members of our Western Australian community. We work towards this goal through a range of functions and service delivery responsibilities, all of which are more impactful and effective when we work in partnership with families, communities, community sector services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

People - focus on the needs and aspirations of the individuals, children and families we serve. We support people to be the best they can be, to live a meaningful life, with opportunity.

Place – relates to a collective sense of self and how and where people connect to the world around them.

Home – More than a building; home is different for everyone; it should be safe and functional and provide both physical and emotional security.

Communities brings together a number of services:

- [Child Protection](#)
- [Homelessness](#)
- [Disability Services](#)
- [Community Services](#)
- [Early Childhood](#)
- [Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence](#)
- [Aged Care and Seniors](#)
- [Volunteering](#)
- [Women](#)
- [Youth](#)

Organisational Structure

Office of the Director General

The central contact to Communities' Ministerial offices and provides strategic and operational support to the Director General and a range of projects and initiatives across

Communities. This includes projecting a clear and compelling vision of Communities' activities, strengthening organisational capability, planning and performance, and all media and communications for the Department.

Child Protection and Family Support

The Child Protection and Family Support division protects and cares for Western Australia's children and young people, particularly those in the care of the CEO.

In line with legislated responsibilities under the Children and Community Services Act 2004, Child Protection and Family Support delivers services that promote the safety and wellbeing of children, families, and individuals. We provide person-centred, culturally safe support that recognises each person's background and strengths.

Through genuine partnership with families, communities and service providers, we aim to strengthen wellbeing and promote positive, long-term outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Disability

The Disability division is responsible for the delivery of targeted disability services, development of policy and reform, and engagement with the community and service sector to enable people with disability, and those who share their lives, to be engaged and feel empowered to live as they choose in a community where everyone belongs. This includes empowering the voice of people with disability and shaping the systems and investments of government to build a better Western Australian disability system that puts the rights of people with disability at the centre.

The Division's significant service delivery stream includes oversight of supported community living, intensive service support services and the disability justice program. It also provides Community Inclusion Connection services to support individuals and families to access cohesive/seamless services that meet their individual needs, through collaborative working across community, so they can lead their best lives.

Commissioning and Contracting

The Commissioning and Contracting division oversees Communities' commissioning, procurement, and relational contract management activities across both Community Services and Goods and Services contract agreements (including Grants). The Division works in partnership with the community services sector to deliver on Communities' 10 service delivery portfolios.

Aligned with the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy, the Division focuses on building strong relationships and working in partnership to purchase and oversee the delivery of vital, sustainable and culturally responsive services, that achieve improved outcomes for individuals, families and communities, while ensuring accountability and value-for-money.

The Division supports Communities' Agency Commissioning Plan, through managing contracts and relationships with our service providers; progressing and completing various procurement and grant processes, contract extensions and variations; conducting service reviews; and providing accurate and timely information to support Communities respective Ministers.

Strategy, Regulation and Legal

The Strategy, Regulation and Legal division works to support and safeguard individuals, children, families and communities by strengthening community safety and inclusion.

We do this by shaping strategy and policy, regulating human services, delivering client-focused legal services and partnering with stakeholders across government, community sector, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, private industry and community leaders.

Four directorates focus on safety and inclusion: they are the Office of Homelessness; Office for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Strategy; and Inclusion. Together they aim to deliver better social, economic and cultural outcomes. We do this by:

- Leading Government reform priorities including election commitments;
- developing and implementing high level, long term strategies across multiple portfolios in partnership with internal and external stakeholders to guide service delivery and investment decisions;
- stewarding service delivery systems including through strategic commissioning and service design;
- supporting front line services through workforce development, operational policy and support for sector coordination;
- supporting legislative change through targeted policy development.

Regulation and Quality (R&Q) exists to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards. Protecting interests and people within the areas of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, Regulation and Quality works to assess applications, encourage, monitor, and investigate compliance and build capability through community engagement.

Legal and Business Services (LBS) works to provide high quality, timely, and client-focused services including legal, screening and claims services, legislative and legal advice to the Department to assist it to deliver on its legal and portfolio responsibilities.

Aboriginal Outcomes

Aboriginal Outcomes division leads and supports system-wide priority reform programs aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities, by embedding culturally safe and responsive practices across Communities through the implementation of best practice frameworks and partnerships. Leading the development and monitoring of key targets and reforms, particularly those established under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

Aboriginal Outcomes division is responsible for:

- Strategic collaboration, partnerships and implementation of National and State Agreements by leading the monitoring and coordination of Communities responsibilities under the National Agreement and leading Communities Aboriginal Strategic Advisory Group.
- Strategic Aboriginal cultural capability of Communities by leading cultural reform aimed at strengthening the cultural competence of its workforce and the cultural responsiveness of its system, policies, and practices to enable whole-of-life outcomes for Aboriginal people, children, families, and communities across the state.
- Aboriginal economic development, Aboriginal community engagement and partnerships that strengthens and supports economic growth and opportunities for Aboriginal people, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), businesses and communities ensuring services are place based, locally led and culturally safe.
- Empowering Aboriginal Leadership and Aboriginal workforce development to develop Communities to be an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.
- Providing strategic evidenced based leadership including the development of external and internal partnerships.
- Leading culturally responsive ways of working with Aboriginal people and supporting other divisions to strengthen external stakeholders' partnerships through a commitment to the strategic direction of Aboriginal self-determination for the delivery of culturally responsive services at intersections of disability, family safety, healing, and other portfolios that affect the lives of Aboriginal stakeholders.

The Aboriginal Outcomes division continues to dedicate time to maintaining its connection and reputation with the Aboriginal Community.

Business Services

The Business Services division delivers a comprehensive suite of corporate support functions that enable the agency to operate effectively and responsibly. Bringing together expertise in finance, ICT, facilities management, data and analytics, professional standards, and emergency support, the division provides the essential systems, governance, and operational backbone that underpin service delivery. Through responsive, reliable, and strategic support, Business Services ensures the agency remains accountable, resilient, and equipped to meet current and emerging demands.

People and Culture

The People and Culture division administers Communities' staffing and human resources across the State and is responsible for service delivery to employees, managers and executives; building and growing a talented workforce; and creating a culture that retains and engages people to deliver the Department's purpose.

The Division brings together key workforce functions, including Strategic Workforce Capability, Human Resource Business Partnering, Work Health and Safety, Learning and

Development, Workplace Relations, Project Governance and Reporting, Insights and Analytics, HR Systems and Business Improvement, and the Employee Services Centre.

Legislation administered

Communities administers the following Acts on behalf of the Ministers:

- *Adoption Act 1994*
- *Children and Community Services Act 2004*
- *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004*
- *Carers Recognition Act 2004*
- *Child Care Services Act 2007*
- *Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012*
- *Disability Services Act 1993*
- *Declared Places (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act 2015*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Worker Screening) Act 2020*
- *Volunteers and Food and Other Donors (Protections from Liability) Act 2002.*

Communities also has varying responsibilities under Acts administered by other authorities.

Ministers

Communities' functions and services fall within the portfolios of a number of Western Australian State Government Ministers. These are:

- Minister for Education; Early Childhood; Preventative Health; Wheatbelt
- Minister for Child Protection; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport; Peel
- Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne
- Minister for the Environment; Community Services; Homelessness
- Minister for Creative Industries; Heritage; Industrial Relations; Aged Care and Seniors; Women

Public participation in the formulation of policy and performance

Through continuing processes of review and restructure, Communities has in place an infrastructure which permits services to be "tailored" to meet the needs of individuals or groups – appreciating that the needs of one may differ markedly from another. This infrastructure is capable of developing and growing in parallel with the growth of the State, economically, socially and environmentally. Communities encourages individuals or groups to write to the Department on matters of agency policy and performance.

Documents held by Communities

Communities holds an extensive range of documents relating to all the services it provides. Communities maintains hard copy and virtual (electronic) files containing information on clients and administrative matters, as well as computerised recording systems.

Communities also produces a range of publications, some of which are only available online, and utilises a number of internal manuals in the performance of its functions.

Communities is usually able to supply, free of charge, sections from most manuals, handbooks and guidelines. We reserve the right to charge for large documents or manuals.

Client files

Comprehensive information files are held for all of Communities clients. Client files are retained indefinitely. Due to the nature of our work, some information held about Communities' clients is extremely sensitive. This may include issues such as abuse and criminality disclosure. Such information is highly confidential, and access may be restricted. In addition, some of Communities client records are considered 'Restricted Access State Archives'. The *WA State Records Act 2000* (SRA) provides that "any right a person may have to be given access to a restricted access archive is to be determined under the FOI Act".

Child history folders

Since 2004, Communities has created a child history folder for children in care. This folder includes original documents such as birth certificates, photographs, education and school reports, some medical records and care plans. This folder is given to the young person when they leave care. Communities retains a copy of the contents. Persons who have not received their child history folder or have lost their folder should contact their local District office.

Administrative files

These files contain Communities' corporate history and all things to do with the management and running of the organisation.

Medical and psychological information

This information is contained within the client files. The information is held in confidence and strict guidelines are maintained in relation to its internal access.

Similarly, there are guidelines for information subject to an access application under the *Freedom of Information Act* (the Act) that contains information of a medical or psychiatric nature. Section 28 of the Act says that if the opinion of the Principal Officer of the agency is that the disclosure of the information may have a substantial adverse effect on the physical or mental health of a client, then the information requested may be released to a

suitably qualified person. The applicant must nominate a suitably qualified person (in writing).

In accordance with the Act, the Principal Officer may withhold access until a person who, in their opinion, is suitably qualified is nominated. For the purpose of Section 28, a suitably qualified person means a person registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Western Australia) in the medical profession.

Personnel files

Communities keeps files on individual staff members. These files contain information relating to the officer's appointment and progress, details of leave and salary increments, training and certificates (if these have been made available). Communities has a policy of allowing staff a right of access to their own individual file.

Staff wishing to access their own personnel file should contact Human Resources in the first instance. In some circumstances, separate files may be created for matters concerning workers compensation and industrial relations issues.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Communities regulates services covered by the *Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012*. Education and care services include centre-based services, such as long day care, outside school hours care and family day care services.

Records from or relating to these services must be requested under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* instead of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)*.

To make a formal access request please use the relevant application form on WA Government [website](#) or email foi@communities.wa.gov.au.

Adoption files

The Adoption Service maintains records on adoption services provided to families and individuals. There are specific legal requirements in relation to the release of information from adoption files and other records that Communities holds, when an adoption has taken place. Enquiries relating to adoption matters should be referred to that service in the first instance.

Native Welfare files

The Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport is the custodian of Native Welfare files. The Aboriginal History Research Service assists Aboriginal people with links to Western Australia to locate records relating to themselves and their ancestors. If you have enquiries regarding accessing these records, phone the service on 1800 161 301 or email ahrs@cits.wa.gov.au.

Former State wards and child migrants

Communities' records include historical family and personal information about former State wards and British and Maltese child migrants. The available information for former State wards and child migrants can be limited to entries in volumes of birth records or registers of prior State wards. However, in the majority of cases, the records have been preserved on electronic imaged files, or more recently, physical and virtual files.

Files can be limited in the amount of information they hold. This is because the information which was recorded depended on the extent of contact with the person or the family. Sometimes records are incomplete, have pages missing or the writing has deteriorated and is unreadable, and some files have been destroyed. Communities has made every effort to preserve the remaining records.

Computer systems

Communities maintains a large number of corporate computer systems and applications. Communities uses Objective as its Electronic Document and Records Management System. This system manages client and administrative files and documents through their continuum. The system enables Communities to create, capture, register, and maintain records and documents to their ultimate disposal.

Communities also maintains client information systems that are used to record and manage child protection and disability services activities.

For further information on computer systems and applications, please phone the Freedom of Information Unit on 6414 3344 or email foi@communities.wa.gov.au.

Retention and disposal of records

Records are retained and disposed of in accordance with Communities Retention and Disposal schedules approved by the State Records Office. Communities has determined that some client file records will not be disposed of.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The Western Australian *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (the Act) gives every person the right to apply for access to documents held by State Public Sector agencies. The Act also provides an individual the right to apply for amendment of personal information about the person if the information is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date or misleading.

It is the aim of Communities to make documents available promptly for the lowest possible cost, and where possible, documents will be provided outside of the FOI process. Where information is not routinely available, the Act provides the right to apply for access to documents held by Communities.

Access to records for children and young persons still in the care of Communities, or those previously in the care of Communities and under 25 years of age, should contact their caseworker or the leaving care officer in the local district office to obtain information held by themselves.

Persons previously in the care of Communities and over 25 years of age, including child migrants wishing to obtain documents or persons seeking non-personal information, are encouraged to contact the FOI Unit in the first instance to discuss their request.

In some cases, available information for former State wards and child migrants can be limited to entries in volumes of birth records or registers of prior State wards. However, in the majority of cases, the records have been preserved.

Historical files can be limited in the amount and type of information they hold. This is because the information which was recorded depended on the extent of contact with the person or the family. Sometimes records are incomplete, have pages missing or the writing has deteriorated and is unreadable, and some files have been destroyed.

Communities has made every effort to preserve the remaining records.

Access for a child or person with disability

Section 98 of the Act, provides an access application or application for amendment may be made:

- a) on behalf of a child by the child's guardian or the person who has custody or care and control of the child.
- b) on behalf of an intellectually handicapped person by the person's closest relative or guardian.

There is specific legislative guidance in dealing with applications made on behalf of a child or person with intellectual disability. However, these sections do not generally apply to other persons who do not have intellectual disability, as the Act only specifies a person with intellectual disability.

This section does not exclude the right of a child or constrain the right of a person with intellectual disability to make an application. It facilitates a process where a person acting for the child or person with disability may make applications for them where appropriate. Before releasing documents under these provisions, the decision maker must be satisfied the person who has made the request is the person who is entitled to act for the child or the person with intellectual disability.

Sections 23 (4) and (5) of the Act provide specific legislative guidance regarding access to the personal information of a child who has not turned 16, or a person with intellectual disability, ensuring that an agency acts in their best interests.

Children

The wishes of children, aged between 12 and 18 years, will be considered when deciding if access to their documents is reasonable and/or in their best interest.

Adults

The wishes of adults with disability should be respected although some of Communities clients may not be able to express informed wishes about release because of the degree

of their disability. Access to other persons, on behalf of an adult client, will only be given if the client's informed consent cannot be obtained or if the request is made by a guardian or their nearest relative.

Applications on behalf of other persons

Applications are able to be made on behalf of other persons generally. Such applications will require authorisation in writing from the other person.

Applications for access to documents

Under Section 12 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* access applications have to:

- be in writing (this can be by letter, email or by using the form which is available on the WA government website).
- give enough information so that the documents requested can be identified.
- give an Australian address to which notices can be sent.
- be lodged at the agency (any office) with any application fee payable.

Enquiries and application lodgement for Communities documents

By email or post:

Freedom of Information

Department of Communities

Locked Bag 5000

FREMANTLE WA 6959

Email: foi@communities.wa.gov.au

Telephone (08) 6414 3344

Fees and charges for access applications under the *FOI Act 1992*

Application fee

There is no fee for applicants seeking their personal information. Personal information is defined in the Act as being information or opinion **about an individual**.

Applications involving non-personal information require payment of an application fee of \$30. A fee payable for non-personal information **cannot** be waived, irrespective whether Communities provides access to the requested documents, or not, and regardless of whether the applicant is impoverished. Applications for non-personal information are invalid unless accompanied by payment for the application fee.

The nature of documents held by Communities is such that many documents invariably contain a mix of information about the applicant and other individuals, and other non-personal information. Applicants should consider the need to pay the application fee if they choose not to limit the scope of the application to personal information about themselves.

Processing charges

A range of discretionary charges is set under the FOI Act Regulations. If a charge is levied, for financially disadvantaged applicants or those issued with prescribed pensioner concession cards, the charge payable is reduced by 25 per cent.

The following charges may apply:

- Time dealing with non-personal information applications (per hour, or pro rata): **\$30**.
- Photocopying – per page: **20 cents**.
- Transcribing from tape, film or computer (per hour, or pro rata): **\$30**.
- Charge for access time supervised by staff (per hour, or pro rata): **\$30**.
- Duplicating a tape, film or computer information: **Actual cost**.
- Delivery, packaging and postage: **Actual cost**.

Where the FOI processing fees are likely to exceed \$25, FOI staff will provide applicants with an 'Estimate of Costs'. This process provides an opportunity to reduce the charges by re-considering the number of documents required to satisfy the application.

Deposits

- A deposit may be required for part of the estimated charges: 25 per cent.
- Further advance deposits may be required to meet the charges for dealing with the application.
- Payment of the fees and charges can be made by cash, money order, cheque or EFT. We do not recommend sending cash in the post. Cash payments should be made at your local district office. For further details on payment, please contact the FOI Unit.

Access arrangements

Access to documents may be granted by way of inspection, a copy of a document (or part thereof), a copy of an audio or video tape, a computer disk, a transcript of a recorded, shorthand or encoded document from which words can be reproduced.

Notice of decision

As soon as possible, but in any case, within 45 days, applicants will be provided with a notice of decision, which will include details such as:

- the date on which the decision was made.
- the name and the designation of the officer who made the decision.
- if the document is an exempt document the reasons for classifying the matter exempt.
- the fact that access is given to an edited document.
- information on the right to review and the procedures to be followed to exercise those rights.

Internal review

Applicants who are dissatisfied with a Freedom of Information response are entitled to ask Communities for an internal review of the initial decision. Applications for internal review must be made in writing within 30 days of receiving the notice of decision. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the review within 15 days.

If an applicant disagrees with the internal review decision, they may then apply to the Information Commissioner for an external review. Details of the rights to review are provided in notices of decision.

Amendment of personal information

The Act also provides a right to amend personal information about the applicant in Communities documents if the information is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date or misleading. The onus is on the applicant to satisfy Communities that information requires amendment.

Applications to amend personal information about the applicant must:

- be in writing.
- give enough details to enable the document that contains the information to be identified.
- give details of matters in relation to which the person believes the information is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date or misleading.
- give the person's reasons for holding that belief.
- give details of the amendment that the person wishes to have made*.
- give an address in Australia to which notices under this Act can be sent.
- give any other information or details required under the regulations.
- be lodged at a Communities office.

*The application must state whether the amendment is to be made by altering information, striking out or deleting information, inserting information, inserting a note in relation to the record, or in two or more of those ways.

As soon as possible, but in any case, within 30 days, applicants will be provided with a notice of decision, which will inform:

- the reasons for the decision
- the right of appeal or review
- the right to request that a notation be added to the document, disputing the accuracy of the information.

Communities is not allowed to obliterate or remove information or destroy a document unless the Information Commissioner has certified in writing that it is impracticable to retain the information or that, in his or her opinion, the prejudice or disadvantage to the FOI applicant of the continued existence of the information outweighs the public interest in maintaining a complete record of information.