



Joint Media Statement

Information Access Commissioners and Ombudsman release survey results on community attitudes

30 September 2019

Information Access Commissioners and Ombudsman today released the findings of their first cross jurisdictional study of community attitudes to access to government information.

Commissioners from NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, the Commonwealth of Australia and the Ombudsman from ACT sponsored the research, as part of Australia's Open Government National Action Plan 2018–2020.

The Information Access Study 2019 measures citizens' awareness of the right to access government information, and their experiences and outcomes in exercising that right.

The research provides a broad insight into citizens' views and experiences of the right to access information. Key findings include:

- The importance of the right to access information is consistently recognised by respondents across state and national jurisdictions (85 – 93%)
- The majority of respondents across the jurisdictions were aware that they had the right to access information from government departments/agencies (77-85%).
- Around 4 in 10 respondents had contacted at least one government agency in the past three years to obtain government information.
- In general, citizens were able to obtain information successfully (60 – 91%*).

By enhancing understanding of community attitudes and experiences, the study's results will help inform activities to promote and support the right to access government information.

The results will also enable governments to examine the performance of their respective access to information laws from a citizen perspective.

[View the research findings](#)

The right to access government information is independently overseen by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Information Commissioners and Ombudsmen. Participating jurisdictions released the following statement:

“The right to access information is a fundamental tenet of an open and democratic government. The study reflects the importance the community uniformly places on their right to access information.

The valuable insights provided in this inaugural cross jurisdictional survey involving four Australian states, the ACT and the Commonwealth of Australia will assist in building a better understanding of information access frameworks. It reinforces commitments under the Open Government National Action Plans to better measure and understand the value citizens place on the right to access government information, and their experiences and outcomes.

These results will assist Information Access Commissioners and ACT Ombudsman to encourage governments to promote access to government-held information to build public trust and continue to advance an effective and contemporary model of open government that is participatory, fair, accountable and transparent.”

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

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** The results recognise that the legislation varies in each jurisdiction with one jurisdiction (ACT) only recently introducing legislation to provide the right to information.*

Background information on the Information Access Study

The NSW Information Commissioner, Elizabeth Tydd represents state and territory Information Access Commissioners as a member of the Australian Open Government Forum. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner is also a member of the Forum. This initiative was included under the Open Government

National Action Plan. Woolcott Research was commissioned by participating jurisdictions to investigate the public's awareness and experience of the right to access information held by government agencies in NSW, ACT, VIC, QLD, WA and the Commonwealth of Australia. The report compares results between jurisdictions.