

Information Commissioners and Ombudsman urge public sector leaders to invest in data governance and proactive disclosure practices

The Association of Information Access Commissioners (AIAC), comprising Information Commissioners and Ombudsmen from around Australia and New Zealand, held their bi-annual meeting in Adelaide on 1 November 2024.

Discussion built on the theme explored in the March 2024 meeting regarding the challenges that new technologies present to government transparency and accountability.

Members remind agencies that good data governance is more important than ever as governments increasingly rely on emerging technologies to capture and store information and to assist administrative decision-making.

Data governance is also important in an environment where trust in government is declining, and disinformation represents a real threat to democracies around the world.

The role of government chief executives in this context is crucial: as stewards of the information their agencies hold, public sector leaders should ensure the management of government information in a way that reflects that it is a public resource that represents an important source of truth in a post-truth world. Members urge chief executives to elevate the information stewardship aspect of their role, and to invest in good data governance and proactive disclosure policies and practices.

AIAC members as regulators are committed to working alongside agencies to build this capacity, to preserve the immense value of government information and elevate trust in our democratic systems and institutions. These responsibilities are increasingly challenging in a digital world and regulator resourcing must be commensurate to meet our statutory obligations and the legitimate expectations of our communities.

The AIAC intends to explore opportunities to develop training for the public sector that promotes good disclosure practices and data governance as well as the inherent value of government transparency.

This communiqué is endorsed by:

New Zealand	Bridget Hewson Deputy Ombudsman
Commonwealth	Elizabeth Tydd Australian Information Commissioner Toni Pirani Freedom of Information Commissioner
Australian Capital Territory	David Fintan Senior Assistant Ombudsman, ACT Ombudsman
New South Wales	Rachel McCallum Information Commissioner
Queensland	Joanne Kummrow Information Commissioner Stephanie Winson
Victoria	Sean Morrison Information Commissioner Penny Eastman Public Access Deputy Commissioner
South Australia	Emily Strickland Ombudsman
Tasmania	Richard Connock Ombudsman
Western Australia	Catherine Fletcher Information Commissioner
Northern Territory	Brenda Monaghan Deputy Information Commissioner