

Association of Information Access Commissioners of Australia and New Zealand (AIAC)

November 2023 Meeting Communique

16 November 2023

The Association of Information Access Commissioners (**AIAC**) met in Perth on 3 November 2023 for its second bi-annual meeting, hosted by the Office of the Information Commissioner, Western Australia.

The AIAC is comprised of independent information commissioners and ombudsmen of Australia and New Zealand who have oversight responsibilities for access to government information laws under their respective state and national jurisdictions.

Common themes and issues that emerged from the AIAC's discussions were:

- The right to information is integral to the universal human right of freedom of expression and also essential to the exercise of many other well recognised universal human rights.
- The right to government-held information is essential to building public trust that government operates with integrity, accountability and transparency.
- Society operates most effectively when government is open with the information it holds so that citizens can better understand public policy and decision making, and thereby more effectively hold government to account.
- An informed citizenry can also better weigh up competing opinions and sources of information.

AIAC members call upon all governments to appropriately respect and resource the right to information.

Collectively members also recognise many contemporary challenges and risks to information access that can jeopardise trust in government and undermine our democratic freedoms and way of life. In the digital information age, robust information governance and reliable government information are now more important than ever.

Challenges include providing appropriate transparency and reviewability for automated decision-making or decisions that involve the use of other modern technology. There are also heightened risks of misinformation and disinformation, particularly where access to government information is inadequate.

Finally, members observe that the right to access government-held information encompasses governments being pro-active with the release of non-sensitive information as well as responding in a timely way, with integrity and openness, to requests for access to more sensitive information.

This communique is endorsed by:

New Zealand	Peter Boshier Chief Ombudsman, Emma Leach Senior Assistant Ombudsman
Commonwealth	Angelene Falk Information and Privacy Commissioner
Australian Capital Territory	Iain Anderson ACT Ombudsman
New South Wales	Elizabeth Tydd CEO and Information Commissioner Sonia Minutillo Director, Investigation and Reporting (Acting Privacy Commissioner)
Queensland	Stephanie Winson Acting Information Commissioner Anna Rickard Acting Right to Information Commissioner
Victoria	Joanne Kummrow Public Access Deputy Commissioner
South Australia	Wayne Lines Ombudsman
Tasmania	Richard Connock Ombudsman
Western Australia	Catherine Fletcher Information Commissioner
Northern Territory	Brenda Monaghan Deputy Ombudsman/Deputy Information Commissioner