

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Information Publication Scheme Agency Plan

Introduction

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman has prepared this Information Publication Scheme (IPS) agency plan in accordance with section 8(1) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act). The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman exists to safeguard the community in its dealings with government agencies, and to ensure that administrative action taken by Australian Government agencies is fair and accountable. The Ombudsman has three major statutory roles:

- *Complaint investigation*: investigating and reviewing the administrative actions of Australian Government officials and agencies, upon receipt of complaints from members of the public, groups and organisations
- *Own motion investigation*: investigating, on the initiative or ‘own motion’ of the Ombudsman, the administrative actions of Australian Government agencies—often arising from insights gained from handling individual complaints
- *Compliance auditing*: inspecting the records of agencies such as the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Crime Intelligence Commission, to ensure compliance with legislative requirements applying to selected law enforcement and regulatory agencies

Purpose

This plan explains how the Office administers the IPS.

Objectives

The Ombudsman’s objectives in relation to this plan are to:

- a) Effectively manage the IPS information holdings
- b) Proactively identify and publish information required to be published under s 8(2) of the FOI Act
- c) Proactively identify and publish optional information under s 8(4) of the FOI Act
- d) Regularly review the information published on the Office’s IPS Entry to ensure that it is accurate, up to date and complete
- e) Ensure that the information published under the IPS is easily discoverable, understandable, machine-readable, re-usable and transformable
- f) Ensure satisfactory conformance with the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (Version 2)* (WCAG 2.0)
- g) Measure the success of the Office’s IPS contribution

Administering the Office's IPS Entry

- a) The Office's IPS Entry is administered within the existing resources of the Office
- b) With assistance from the Office's Senior Leadership Group (SLG), the Chief Operating Officer is responsible for leading the Office's work on IPS compliance
- c) Consistent with the objectives of the FOI Act, the SLG meets regularly to identify operational and additional information which may be relevant to members of the public for publication under the IPS
- d) The Office has established an internal IPS Information Register to assist in:
 - i. Identifying documents for publication
 - ii. Recording decisions made in relation to publication
 - iii. Systematically reviewing information published under the IPS to ensure it is accurate, up to date and complete
- e) With guidance from the Office's Information Governance and Management Committee, the Legal Team administers processes to regularly review the IPS Information Register and information published under the IPS Entry to ensure both are accurate, up to date and complete
- f) The Office is fully compliant with the WCAG 2.0, and publishes all documents in PDF/A format for improved accessibility of information
- g) Should the Office receive requests for information in other formats, the Office may apply charges consistent with the fees for processing requests made under the FOI Act, in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Charges) Regulations 1982
- h) At present, the Office is developing a strategy for increasing open access to public sector information held by the Office

IPS Information Architecture

- a) The Office publishes IPS information to the general public on the Commonwealth Ombudsman website
- b) The Office's IPS Entry has a dedicated page on the Commonwealth Ombudsman website
- c) The information is published under headings consistent with the relevant sections of the FOI Act and the recommendations of the Information Commissioner
- d) The IPS Entry is notified on the Commonwealth Ombudsman homepage with the IPS Icon (recommended by the Information Commissioner) to provide a direct link to relevant information
- e) The Commonwealth Ombudsman website includes a general search function to assist in locating the IPS Entry and documents published under the IPS
- f) At present, given the low number of documents published under the IPS, the Office does not provide a customised search function for the IPS Entry, or an alert service for changes or additions to the IPS Entry
- g) As the Office's IPS Entry expands in size, the Office will reconsider providing a customised search function and/or alert service
- h) The Office's IPS Entry is fully conformant to WCAG 2.0

Information required to be published under the IPS

- a) The Office has identified and published, and keeps up to date, the following information:
 - i. This agency plan (s 8(2)(a) of the FOI Act)
 - ii. Details of the structure of the organisation (s 8(2)(b))
 - iii. Functions and decision-making powers (s 8(2)(c))
 - iv. Statutory appointments (s 8(2)(d))
 - v. Annual reports and other reports provided to Parliament as required by legislation (s 8(2)(e))
 - vi. Information routinely provided to Parliament in response to requests and orders (s 8(2)(h))
 - vii. Contact details for access to information or documents under the FOI Act (s 8(2)(i))
 - viii. Operational information (s 8(2)(j)), including:
 - i. The Office's Work Practice Manual, which guides decision-making in relation to complaints made by members of the public
 - ii. A range of other materials which guide how the Office deals with specific types of complaints and questions of jurisdiction
- b) At present, the Office does not hold the following types of information required to be published under the IPS:
 - i. Arrangements to comment on policy proposals (s 8(2)(f))
 - ii. Documents to which the Office routinely gives FOI access (s 8(2)(g))

Other information published under the IPS

- a) Consistent with the objectives of the FOI Act, the Office identifies and publishes additional information which may be relevant to members of the public in accordance with s 8(4)
- b) The SLG meets regularly to discuss, amongst other things, the publication of such information

IPS Compliance and Review

- a) This agency plan is reviewed on a six-monthly basis
- b) The Office's Legal Team reviews the IPS Entry on a regular basis
- c) The SLG is responsible for monitoring the ongoing success of the IPS
- d) Staff training and awareness is central to the Office's IPS compliance strategy. The Legal Team is responsible for raising awareness of the Office's IPS obligations on an ongoing basis

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