



OmbudsmanSA

## Communiqué of the Association of Information Access Commissioners of Australia and New Zealand (AIAC) meeting

2 June 2023, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

The Association of Information Access Commissioners of Australia (**AIAC**) met in Sydney, NSW on 2 June 2023 for its first meeting of the year, hosted by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

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

Members affirmed the important role of the right to access government information in promoting integrity and accountability by government.

Members observed that the structures and systems of government are changing rapidly. Citizens are impacted by these changes and their rights must be preserved in this environment.

Government increasingly collects and applies data to make critical policy and service delivery decisions. In a functioning democracy, citizens are included in government decision making and their right to access information enables them to participate and hold governments to account.

Governing in a democracy demands public trust. Trust is built on transparency and government leaders are compelled in our democratic system to champion a culture of accountability and transparency.

Members of the AIAC also observe that record keeping is a fundamental part of good governance and accountability. Leaders of government are responsible for promoting public sector values and behaviours including fearlessly upholding the public's right to access information. Agencies should start with the assumption that public servants are obliged by their position to provide robust and frank advice at all times and that obligation will not be diminished by transparency of government activities. In this setting, transparency of the work of public servants should be the accepted operating environment and fears about a lessening of frank and candid advice correspondingly diminished.

Members are active in upholding the right to access information and are committed to the independent oversight of this right by identifying new and emerging risks to accessing government information and advising on that right through administrative actions and proposals for reform.

Collectively members identified contemporary challenges to information access and heightened risks. These include:

- Public reporting of government assets and allocations of grants.
- Legislative limitations as government harnesses new technologies.
- The use of consultants and professional services provided by government.

Members discussed solutions to these risks including:

- Greater public reporting by government.
- Reviewing legislation to determine if it remains fit for purpose.
- Engaging with other independent integrity agencies to better understand risks to transparency and accountability.

Finally, members observed that collectively we have new challenges that requires a concerted and complementary approach by integrity agencies and government.

This communiqué is endorsed by:

<b>Commonwealth</b>	<b>Angelene Falk</b> Australian Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner  <b>Toni Pirani</b> Acting Freedom of Information Commissioner
<b>Australian Capital Territory</b>	<b>Iain Anderson</b> ACT Ombudsman
<b>New South Wales</b>	<b>Elizabeth Tydd</b> Information Commissioner
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>Bridget Hewson</b> Deputy Ombudsman
<b>Northern Territory</b>	<b>Peter Shoyer</b> Information Commissioner and Ombudsman
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>Stephanie Winson</b> Right to Information Commissioner
<b>South Australia</b>	<b>Wayne Lines</b> Ombudsman
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>Sven Bluemmel</b> Information Commissioner
<b>Western Australia</b>	<b>Catherine Fletcher</b> Information Commissioner
<b>Tasmania</b>	<b>Richard Connock</b> Ombudsman