Fact Sheet

November 2026

Your right to access government information in NSW

Who is this information for?

If you are a member of the public and want to find out about accessing government information in NSW.

Why is this information important?

This Fact Sheet helps you to understand your rights to access information in NSW and how to apply for it.

Relevant legislation

This Fact Sheet provides a simple summary of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act).

Your right to government information

In NSW, you have a right to access most government information under the GIPA Act.

NSW government agencies are already expected to release a lot of information publicly, called 'open access information'.

You can also ask for other government information and the GIPA Act sets out how you can do this. This Fact Sheet explains this for you.

There is some information that agencies can decline to give you access to and the GIPA Act spells out the reasons they can say no, where there is an 'overriding public interest'.

Who can I ask for information?

You can ask for information from:

- NSW government departments
- NSW local councils
- NSW State-owned corporations
- Universities
- NSW Ministers and their staff.

See IPC Fact Sheet – What is an agency?

What information can I ask for?

'Government information' can include records and data about how the agency works. It can also be information *about you* that is held by a government agency – your 'personal information'. See: IPC Fact Sheet – How to access your personal information from government agencies.

How can I access government information?

You need to identify the government agency that you think has the information you want. First check the agency's website to see if the information you want is publicly available. See: IPC Fact Sheet – Open access information.

If you can't find what you want there, contact the agency's customer service staff. If they can't provide you with the information, you can ask to speak to their Right to Information Officer.

The agency might be able to give you the information informally – called 'informal release'. See: Fact Sheet - Frequently asked questions for individuals: Informal release of information

The next step is to make a formal application to access the information you seek.

How do I apply to access government information?

Templated access application forms are often available to download from the agency's website. However, filling out the template access application form isn't mandatory.

You are required to meet the formal requirements for an access application by doing the following things:

- put your application in writing and send or lodge it with the agency you think holds the information
- say it is an access application made under the GIPA Act
- include your name and a postal or email address

- say clearly what information you want so the agency can identify it
- include the application with a fee payment of $30.

You should also say if you have ever asked another agency for substantially the same information and who that was.

Do I have to pay anything?

The standard cost for a formal application is $30 and your application is not valid until you pay it.

Agencies can also waive, reduce or refund any fee or charge that may be imposed under the GIPA Act.

You may be asked for 'processing charges' (at a rate of $30 per hour).

If the information is about you, you don't have to pay for the first 20 hours of processing time.

See: IPC Fact sheet – GIPA Act fees and charges.

How long will it take to get an answer?

The agency first assesses whether your application is valid. The agency must notify you of their decision about validity within 5 working days after receiving it.

The agency may discuss with you changing or reducing the scope of your request to assist them in finding the information you want. In the process of changing or reducing the scope of your request, the time the agency has to make a decision on the application pauses and resumes once the scope is finalised.

Your application will usually be finalised within 20 working days and you will be given a notice of decision.

You and the agency may agree to extend this time.

The agency may need more time if:

- they need to talk to another person, or find information stored in archive – an extra 10 working days
- they need to consult *and* retrieve records from archives – an extra 15 working days

See: Fact Sheet – Third party consultation and Fact Sheet – calculation of time under the GIPA Act.

If it takes longer than this and you have not agreed to an extension of time, the agency is deemed to have refused your application and must refund your application fee.

What if I don't hear from the agency at all?

If you don't receive an acknowledgment of the validity of your application, contact the agency's customer service staff or ask to speak to their Right to Information Officer.

What if I don't get the information I want?

Although there is an expectation that government information will be released, there are some reasons that an agency can say no to your request, in whole or in part. If your application is declined the agency needs to explain why.

If you are unhappy with the agency's decision, then you can ask for a review. Review options include by the agency you applied to for information, an 'internal review', or external review by the Information Commissioner and/or by NCAT. See IPC Fact Sheet – your review rights under the GIPA Act.

Other useful resources

Other resources that may be useful on this topic include:

- IPC Fact Sheet – What is an agency?
- IPC Fact Sheet – How to access your personal information from government agencies
- IPC Fact Sheet – Open access information
- IPC Fact sheet – GIPA Act fees and charges
- Fact Sheet – Calculation of time under the GIPA Act
- IPC Fact Sheet – Frequently Asked Questions: informal release of information
- IPC Fact Sheet – Third party consultation
- IPC Fact Sheet – your review rights under the GIPA Act

How can I get information from a government agency?

Check if the information is already publicly available.
Check the agency's website or contact their Customer Service team and/or Right to Information Officer.

NO ↓

Ask if the agency will release the information to you informally.
Contact the agency's Customer Service team and/or Right to Information Officer.

NO ↓

Complete a formal application under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act).
(See steps below).

Making a formal application:

The agency may have a specific form for you to fill in on their website.

NO →

If not:

- Put your request in writing and lodge it with the agency you think holds the information
- Say it is an access application made under the GIPA Act
- Include payment of the $30 application fee (see below)
- Include your name and a postal or email address
- Explain in clear terms the information you are applying for, so the agency can identify the information.

YES ↓

YES ↓

There is an application fee of $30.
(The application is deemed invalid if this fee is not paid. In limited circumstances an agency may waive or reduce this fee.)

YES ↓

Your application should be processed within 20 working days.
(Extended by 10-15 working days if the agency needs to consult with others or get archived material). There may be a processing fee – you will be told if there is. You will be informed in writing of the agency's decision.

For more information

Contact the Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC):

Freecall: 1800 472 679
Email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.ipc.nsw.gov.au

NOTE: The information in this fact sheet is to be used as a guide only. Legal advice should be sought in relation to individual circumstances.