

Media release

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Information Commissioner releases NSW Community Attitudes Survey results for Right to Know Week NSW 2021

The NSW Information Commissioner and Open Data Advocate, Elizabeth Tydd, has released the results of research on NSW Community Attitudes to accessing government information for Right to Know Week NSW 2021.

Citizens were surveyed to gauge the value that they place on the right to access information and assess their experience in exercising that fundamental right. The key findings include:

- 90% of respondents felt that their right to access government information was important, consistent with 88% in 2020 and 89% in 2019.
- 73% of respondents were aware that they had the right to access information from at least one of the agencies under NSW information access laws, an increase from 59% in 2020.
- Respondents were most aware that they could access information held by local government (56% in 2021 compared with 47% in 2020) and state government agencies (55% in 2021 compared with 50% in 2020).
- Citizens are exercising their right to access information with four out of ten respondents reporting that they contacted at least one agency to obtain information in the last three years.
- Importantly, the results this year demonstrated that 56% of respondents who exercised their right to access government information were from the CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) community.
- Almost three quarters (74%) of respondents were successful in accessing information from at least one agency, consistent with 74% in 2020 and 77% in 2019:
 - 85% gained full access from universities
 - 80% gained full access from state-owned corporations
 - 77% gained full access from local councils
 - 68% gained full access from state government.
- Significantly, respondents continued to place great importance on the public interest factors agencies should consider when releasing government information.
- However, the research indicates that agencies could do more to assist applicants with 56% of respondents stating that agencies were helpful in providing advice and assistance; although only 16% thought agencies were not helpful.

Respondents answered two questions in the survey regarding government's increased use of data, algorithms and other forms of artificial intelligence to inform decisions.



It was found that:

- 80% of respondents agreed that government agencies should be required to publicly report on the AI systems used to inform agency decisions that impact individuals, a slight increase from 78% in 2020.
- 82% of respondents agreed that agencies should publicly report on the information they maintain, consistent with 81% in 2020.

On the community attitudes results, the Information Commissioner notes, “These results reinforce the data we have collected over the 10 years regarding the operation of the GIPA Act and applicants’ experiences accessing government information.”

Of note over the decade of reporting:

- There has been a 128% growth in applications from members of the public – this is unparalleled by any other applicant type. In 2010 there were 6,000 applications from members of the public and in 2020 there were 13,690. This growth is supported by the community attitudes results, which report that 90% of NSW citizens value their right to access information.
- There was a staggering 230% increase in applications seeking personal information between 2010 (3,000) and 2020 (10,000). The release rate for members of the public is around 70%, consistent with the 74% of survey respondents who said they were successful in accessing information from an agency.
- Private sector business applications effected the highest rates of information release at 75%, with business consistently outperforming private citizens in successful applications.

“There has never been a more important time to consider the right of citizens to access government information and to reflect our prevailing environment in which real-time data and data informed decision-making is both required and expected of governments,” said Commissioner Tydd.

The NSW results have been released as part of the second cross-jurisdictional study sponsored by the NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia Information Commissioners and the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The comparative data was also released this week.

The NSW Information Commissioner also conducted the survey separately in 2020.

[The NSW 2021 results can be downloaded here.](#)

ENDS

Other information:

[The NSW results for 2021 and previous years can be downloaded here.](#)



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About the Information and Privacy Commission:

The Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC) is an independent statutory authority that administers New South Wales' legislation dealing with privacy and access to government information. The IPC supports the Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner in fulfilling their legislative responsibilities and functions and to ensure individuals and agencies can access consistent information, guidance and coordinated training about information access and privacy matters.

About the NSW Information Commissioner

The NSW Information Commissioner's statutory role includes promoting public awareness and understanding of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act); providing information, advice, assistance and training to agencies and the public; dealing with complaints about agencies; investigating agencies' systems, policies and practices; and reporting on compliance with the GIPA Act.

The *Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009* (GIIC Act) establishes the procedures for appointing the Information Commissioner and sets out the Commissioner's powers and functions. It outlines the method for people to complain about the conduct of agencies when undertaking their duties under the GIPA Act, and the way in which the Information Commissioner may deal with the complaint. The GIIC Act also enables the Information Commissioner to investigate and report on how agencies carry out their functions under the GIPA Act.

For further information about the IPC visit our website at www.ipc.nsw.gov.au