



Your say: accessing personal and health information under NSW privacy laws

Fact sheet
May 2014

In February 2014, the Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC) commenced a state-wide community survey to find out what the NSW public had to say about privacy, with the focus on accessing personal and health information. Here's what you said.

Right to access personal and health information

More than 50% of people do not know they have a right to access information about themselves. More people are aware of their rights to access health information (up to 47%) but far less are aware of their rights when it comes to accessing personal information held by a public sector agency or local council (as few as 35%).

Particularly, young people under the age of 24 seem to be less aware of their rights – although 59% of respondents have considered accessing information from NSW education providers.

However the state's older age groups (55+) are much more aware of their rights in general, particularly in relation to accessing their health information (about 50%).

Understanding how to access personal and health information

Only 44% of respondents said they would know how to find information about accessing their personal information from a NSW public sector agency. Unsurprisingly, the majority of under 24s would "Google it", although across all age groups Google/internet was a popular way to look for information (approximately one third of respondents).

Success in accessing personal and health information

On a positive note, a majority of respondents who had attempted to access information had been successful, or at least partially successful. "Yes" and "partial" success responses ranged from 76% to 95% depending on agency type. However the lowest rate of complete success was with NSW government departments.

Protecting personal information overseas

With the rise of technology seeing more information stored in the "cloud" or overseas by organisations, the majority of respondents (58%) indicated they would expect the same or similar privacy protections that their personal information receives within NSW if their information went outside the state.

For more information

Contact the Information and Privacy Commission NSW:

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Interesting facts

- More than 50% of people in NSW don't know they can access information about themselves held by NSW public sector agencies; and of those who know, only 44% know how to do it
- Up to 53% aren't aware of their rights to access health information
- 65% don't know about their rights to access personal information held by a government department, local council or university
- Young people under the age of 24 are less aware of their rights to access information held about them, although 59% of respondents have considered accessing information from NSW education providers
- Meanwhile about 50% of older age groups (55+) are more aware of how to access their personal and health information than other age groups.