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Media release

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Report finds positive transparency and accountability outcomes across government authorities

A new report released last week shines a spotlight on how government authorities are dealing with information requests – finding that most are taking a flexible and timely approach with this task.

The Information and Privacy Commission NSW (IPC) released a [Report on the operation of the Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#) (known as the GIPA Act).

The report provides a statistical analysis about how the law is being implemented by NSW Government authorities, universities and councils, following its commencement in mid-2010.

NSW Information Commissioner Elizabeth Tydd said the report found promising outcomes for information access in NSW, although there were policy and other areas which still needed attention.

“Three years of data indicates that, in the main, agencies are adopting the law’s flexible and timely approach to decision making on formal access,” Ms Tydd said.

“Approximately 75 per cent of all applications are being granted in part or in full and there are also positive statistics in regards to timeliness and internal review success.

“This is even more encouraging as the results were collected during a period where the public sector has met further big challenges with restructuring since the last State election.

“In saying this, I acknowledge the need to remain vigilant to ensure the law will continue to be properly implemented and in the report I outline areas we will focus on to achieve this outcome.”

The report collected data across five government sectors – NSW Government agencies, State-owned corporations and Ministers, universities and local councils.

The report found that between 2010 – 2013:

- 50,318 applications were lodged across the five sectors
- 82% of those applications were lodged with government agencies, State-owned corporations or Ministers
- 61% of the applications lodged with government are attributed to three agencies: Police (36%) Roads and Maritime Services (15%) and WorkCover (10%)
- 87% of applications were finalised within the statutory timeframe, 3% exceeded the 35 days
- During the reporting period (2010 – 2013), the number of invalid applications decreased from 13% to 7% and the number of invalid applications subsequently becoming valid increased from 13% to 26%
- 75% of decisions resulted in information being release in full and in part
- 69% of internal reviews varied the initial decision
- Just 3% of council and 9% government decisions were deemed refused.

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The GIPA Act requires government authorities to take a more proactive approach to releasing information, unless it is clearly not in the public interest to do so.

“In developing the report we’ve been able establish a way forward for further positive outcomes and advancing a system of open, accountable, fair and effective decision making,” Ms Tydd said.

“The next phase includes improving the reporting framework, enhancing competencies through training and collaboration, along with further encouragement of proactive release.

“We will also be seeking out cases of best practice for future reports and we look forward to meaningfully engaging all our stakeholders to further advance the objectives of the GIPA Act.”

The GIPA Act has an important role answering the community’s expectations of a fair and democratic society and instills community confidence in Government decision making. A recent sample survey of the NSW community found that 84% of respondents believe it’s important to have the right to access government information.

Access the [Report on the operation of the Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#) from the IPC’s website.

ABOUT THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER:

The Information Commissioner’s statutory role includes promoting public awareness and understanding of the 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.

Ms Tydd is available for interviews to discuss right to information, the outcomes of the report and the way forward. Please contact Kate Jobling on (02) 8071 7018 or after hours 0435 961 691 or email ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au to make your request.

For more information on the IPC and to view the report, please visit the [IPC website](http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au)

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