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Media release

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Report shows continued consistency in release of information by government agencies

A new report released today provides a more informed analysis of how access to information pathways operate under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (known as the GIPA Act).

[View the Report on the operation of the Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009: 2013 – 2014.](#)

The Report collected data across five government sectors – NSW Government agencies, State-owned corporations and Ministers, Universities and local Councils – and provides a statistical analysis on how the law is being implemented and complied with in these sectors.

Consistent with the intent of the GIPA Act the 2013 – 2014 Report provides a general examination of all four information release pathways – mandatory release, authorised release, informal release and access applications.

NSW Information Commissioner Elizabeth Tydd said this is the first year in which the Information and Privacy Commission (IPC) has been able to better understand how the four information release pathways operate, both individually and collectively, and whether they are achieving the Act's objective of early and proactive release of information.

"Encouragingly, several consistent trends were identified in the 2013 – 2014 Report that can be attributed to improved decision-making across all sectors covered by the GIPA Act," Ms Tydd said.

Key findings include:

- high levels of compliance with mandatory proactive release in the Council sector (89%) and Government sector (84%);
- agency internal reviews (access applications) continue to be the preferred channel (75%);
- information release rates have been maintained (74%), refusal rates remain constant (8%) and decisions varied by the internal review process increased to 72% in 2013 – 2014;
- however, there are reduced levels of agency timeliness in deciding access applications (80%) and application rates continue to fluctuate decreasing by 27% since 2010; and
- compliance of authorised proactive release is lower compared to past years (64%).

While the 2013 – 2014 Report provides some positive results, Ms Tydd acknowledged that there is still work to be done to promote access to information and achieve the objects of the Act.

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“To address these areas, my key focus for 2015 will include an enhancement of the GIPA case management tool provided by the Information and Privacy Commission (IPC) to enable agencies to better manage applications; guidance regarding proactive release; increased training including e-learning modules for citizens and agency staff; an information management scholarship; and promotion of a holistic approach to information management to deliver greater efficiencies in streamlining service delivery, improve timeliness and promote compliance.

“Training will also focus on improved decision-making at the initial stage to make information available at the earliest point and thereby promote proactive release of information,” said Ms Tydd.

“The Act’s promotion of the presumption in favour of disclosure across all four information release pathways provides the most powerful demonstration of open and accountable government.

“The way forward continues to be one of guidance, and harnessing the full potential of the Act’s pathways requires a prudent understanding of the legislation, its intent and operation,” said Ms Tydd.

ABOUT THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER:

The Information Commissioner is appointed by the NSW Parliament and has an important statutory role including 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 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 www.ipc.nsw.gov.au

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