

Joint media statement

Right to Know essential to democracy in a digital world

Information Access Commissioners and Ombudsmen from across Australia and New Zealand are urging government agencies to do more to make information available for the benefit of citizens.

They're making the call in the build up to International Right to Know Day on 28 September 2019.

International Right to Know Day recognises citizens' right to access information and reinforces the importance of transparency in building trust in government.

On #RTK2019, government agencies across Australia and New Zealand are encouraged to take a proactive approach towards releasing information. They need to make the most of opportunities offered by the digital age to increase the flow of information to the community, while protecting sensitive information as required.

This year, the Commissioners and Ombudsmen emphasise that the community's right to know underpins expectations for greater government openness and accountability. Public access to information encourages scrutiny and participation in democratic processes, supports better decision-making and strengthens citizen engagement with the public sector.

This is increasingly important as government services are delivered using digital services and technology – in this environment the right to know can ensure that we leave no one behind.

The Commissioners and Ombudsmen with oversight over freedom of information laws remain committed to promoting and upholding the fundamental human right of citizens to access government information.

This joint statement is being released and co-signed by:

Angelene Falk, Australian Information Commissioner

Peter Boshier, Chief Ombudsman, New Zealand

Elizabeth Tydd, Information Commissioner, New South Wales

Sven Bluemmel, Information Commissioner, Victoria

Rachael Rangihaeata, Information Commissioner, Queensland

Catherine Fletcher, Information Commissioner, Western Australia

Wayne Lines, Ombudsman, South Australia

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Background:

Information Access Commissioners and Ombudsmen from around Australia gathered in Brisbane in the lead up to RTK Day for the annual [Solomon Lecture](#), this year delivered by eminent barrister and chair, The Accountability Round Table of Australia, Fiona McLeod, Senior Counsel.

The idea of Right to Know Day originated from a meeting of information access advocates in Bulgaria in 2002. Today, it is a global event. In 2015, the UNESCO General Assembly declared September 28 to be “International Day for the Universal Access to Information.”

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/accesstoinformationday>