



# Key FOI principles for agencies

Agencies are to give effect to the FOI Act in a way that:

- assists the public to obtain access to documents;
- allows access to documents to be obtained promptly and at the lowest reasonable cost; and
- assists the public to ensure that personal information contained in documents is accurate, complete, up-to-date and not misleading.

[\(Section 4\)](#)

It is important to act in a way which furthers the objects of the FOI Act. FOI officers should always bear the following concepts in mind:

- Can the request be dealt with outside the FOI process? If so, this may lead to a better outcome for all parties.
- Engage in early and meaningful dialogue with the applicant to clarify the scope of the application. This may help identify the documents the applicant really wants and stop the agency having to undertake unnecessary work.
- An agency may release an exempt document if there is no harm in doing so. [Section 23\(1\)](#) states only that an agency may refuse access to exempt information.
- The notice of decision is an important part of the FOI process and is crucial in ensuring that an applicant is afforded justice (sections [13\(1\)\(b\)](#) and [30](#)).

If you have any general enquiries about the FOI process, please see our website or contact our office.

**Note:** This Information Sheet is intended as a general guide only and should not be viewed as legal advice. The Information Commissioner considers each complaint on its merits and according to the relevant circumstances.

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