

Access to Information Policy



Acknowledgement of Country

Glen Innes Severn Council (Council) acknowledges and pays respect to the Ngarabul people as the traditional custodians of this land, their elders past, present and emerging and to Torres Strait Islander people and all First Nations people.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline Council's commitment to improving accountability and transparency by ensuring that members of the public can access information in accordance with the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act).

Applicability

All persons working for or engaged by Council in either a paid or unpaid capacity must comply with this policy. For the purposes of this policy, this includes:

- all Council employees,
- contractors engaged who perform work for, or on behalf of Council,
- work experience students and volunteers,
- members and office bearers of Community Committees of Council,
- consultants who undertake public official functions; and
- Councillors.

Objects of the GIPA Act

Council is committed to taking active steps to meet the core objects of the GIPA Act, to maintain and advance a system of responsible and representative democratic Government that is open, accountable, fair and effective, by making government information available to the public by:

- authorising and encouraging the proactive public release of government information,
- giving members of the public an enforceable right to access government information, and
- providing access to government information is restricted only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Policy Statement

Council is committed to creating an open and accessible information culture to meet its requirements under the GIPA Act. Council does this by:

- ensuring that staff are aware of information access responsibilities by conducting targeted campaigns, training and providing intranet resources,
- the Management Executive Team (Manex) promoting awareness of information access responsibilities and fostering an open access culture within Council,
- continuously improving access to Council policies, plans, and other information via its website,
- annually updating Council's Agency Information Guide and ensuring that Council make *open access information* available on its website,
- where appropriate, making government information open by default and providing access to information informally on request,
- publishing on Council's website clear guidance for how members of the public can request access to information, and
- having a Right to Information Officer to coordinate compliance with Council's legislative obligations and deal with requests for information.

Roles and Responsibilities

Management Executive Team

Manex set the tone from the top by promoting awareness of information access responsibilities and fostering an open access culture within Council,

All Staff

All staff should notify the Right to Information Officer¹ of any request to access Government Information and not release any information without receiving authorisation from the Right to Information Officer.

Right to Information Officer

Responsibilities of the Right to Information Officer include:

- communicating this Policy to all new employees as part of their induction and informing staff of revised versions,
- assessing access applications prior to release,
- providing guidance to staff on the informal release of information,
- submitting the GIPA Annual Report and revised Agency Information Guide to the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) annually, and
- carrying out reviews of this policy, the Agency Information Guide, open access information and other documents required under the GIPA Act.

¹ The Manager Governance is currently the Right to Information Officer.

Legislation And Supporting Documents

Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Industry Standards include:

- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009,*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2009,*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* - Council is required to comply with the Information Protection Principles relating to the management of personal information held by Council. This policy must therefore be read in conjunction with Council's Privacy Management Plan.
- *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002,*
- *State Records Act 1998,*
- *Local Government Act 1993,*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979,* and
- *Companion Animals Act 1998.*

Relevant Council Policies and Procedures include:

- Agency Information Guide, and
- Privacy Management Plan.

Variation And Review

The Access to Information Policy will be reviewed every term of Council (four years), or earlier if deemed necessary, to ensure that it meets the requirements of legislation and the needs of Council. The term of the Policy does not expire on the review date, but will continue in force until superseded, rescinded or varied either by legislation or a new resolution of Council.

Appendix A

Document Control/Authorisation

Responsible Officer		Manager Governance Risk and Corporate Planning (MGRCP)			
Reviewed By		Management Executive Team (Manex)			
Review Due Date		May 2028			
Version Number		5			
Versions	Date	Resolution Number	Description of Amendments	Author / Editor	Approved / Adopted By
5	23/05/2024	9.05/24	Amendments are substantial, with the revised policy modelled off the NSW Government, Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade Access to Information Policy. The Roles and Responsibilities section has been expanded.	MGRCP	Council
4	24/06/2021	11.06/21	Amendments are minimal with most changes associated with formatting adjustments to fit Council's new Policy Template.	MGRCP	Council
3	28/06/2018	12.06/18		DCCS	Council
2	23/09/2010	14.09/10		DCCS	Council
1	26/06/2008	4.06/08		DCCS	Council



 General Manager

.....7/6/24.....
 Date