

Australian Capital Territory

Freedom of Information (Accessibility of Government Information) Statement 2026 (No 1)

Notifiable instrument NI2026–149

made under the

Freedom of Information Act 2016, s 95 (Annual Statements by Chief Minister)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Freedom of Information (Accessibility of Government Information) Statement 2026 (No 1)*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

3 Approval

I issue the following statement on accessibility of government information.

Andrew Barr
Chief Minister

24 March 2026

Chief Minister's statement on accessibility of government information

Eight years ago, the ACT Government passed the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (the Act). This enabling law safeguards the public's right to access information and sets expectations for an open, transparent and accountable government.

The ACT Government continues its work in making it easier for people to access the information it holds. Through the Open Access Information scheme, agencies are working to ensure Canberra community members can find and use the information that matters to them. When Canberrans have access to government information, they are better informed, more involved in decisions that affect them, and more aware of the ACT government services available to them.

With the support and guidance of the Ombudsman's Office and through professional conversations and shared experiences at ACT government-wide networks, agencies can refine and improve their strategies for providing approaches to proactive disclosure of government information that are clear and consistent. Finding, promoting and connecting the Canberra community to government-created information is critical to the success of the Scheme.

This statement sets the Government's:

- aims for increasing proactive disclosure of government information and reducing the need for members of the public to make access applications;
- expectations of agencies for the provision of government information; and
- response to address information access issues identified by the Ombudsman in the previous 12 months.

The Ombudsman's most recent annual report on the operation of the Act under section 67, as well as the views of agency Information Officers appointed under the Act, has been considered in formulating this statement.

Increasing proactive disclosure

Website publications

The Open Access Information Portal was established to support the ACT Government's commitment to transparency. The Portal provides agencies with a central platform to publish information and link to content hosted on their own websites, thereby demonstrating compliance with open access requirements. Under the Open Access Information Scheme, agencies regularly disclose materials such as policy documents, budget papers, reports and recommendations prepared by boards, councils, committees, and panels, as well as ministerial diaries and Cabinet decision summaries.

A new OneGov website, act.gov.au was launched in early 2024 and is now the home to content from six Directorates. Content has been rewritten, restructured and simplified to make it easier for the community to understand and access government information and services, improving open and transparent access. The number of websites for users to navigate to identify relevant information has also been reduced.

In December 2024, a new '[Open government information](#)' section was established on act.gov.au to continue to improve access and transparency by bringing content that specifically responds to open government principles into a single location. Between 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025 the open government section of the website has been viewed on average 429 times per day.

Open Data

As at 21 November 2025, 943 assets are available on the ACT Government Open Data Portal - www.data.act.gov.au – up from 460 reported last year.

The top 10 assets accessed (downloaded or viewed) in the November 2024-October 2025 period are as follows:

Asset	Number of times Accessed
Smart Parking Lots	71,384
Traffic speed camera locations	24,001
Canberra Memorial Parks	14,870
Air Quality Monitoring Live Data (Table)	13,267
Particulate Matter data from ACT Air Quality Monitoring Stations	11,911
List of Professionals	7,272
ACT Road Crash Data	4,990
ACT Crime Statistics	4,941
Mobile Distraction - Fixed and Transportable camera locations	4,484
ACT Speed Zones	3,647

Geospatial Data

A further 175 datasets (1 dataset more than last year) and 112 applications and maps are available on the [ACT Geospatial Data Catalogue](#) which is accessible through actmapi.act.gov.au.

Health Service Dashboards

To improve community visibility of the performance of the ACT Health System, a series of dashboards was developed by the Digital Health Group in Digital Canberra, in collaboration with ACT Health, and launched publicly in early 2025:

<https://www.act.gov.au/directorates-and-agencies/act-health/data-statistics-and-surveys/act-health-service-data-dashboard>

Over the last 12 months, the main landing page for the dashboard had 4,500 views, with a total of 11,000 views including all dashboards.

National Data Partnerships

Under the [Intergovernmental Agreement on Data Sharing](#), the ACT has been participating in the set-up of a number of national data assets, including the National Disability Data Asset, the Child Wellbeing Data Asset, the Crime and Justice Data Asset and the Life Course Data Initiative. Provision of data into national assets opens-up safe, secure and ethically oversighted access to ACT datasets for researchers and policy makers across Australia. This includes policy makers and researchers in

the ACT Government, who will be able to access datasets through partnering with Digital Canberra, under the ACT's Accredited Data User status with the Office of the National Data Commissioner.

To improve transparency of the ACT's participation in national data sharing and integration projects, a comprehensive collection notice was agreed with ACT data custodians in 2025, and published externally at: [Data sharing with national data integration projects - ACT Government](#).

Digital Information and Recordkeeping – Building a Connected Information Ecosystem

The ACT Public Service is advancing its digital information and recordkeeping capability to deliver more efficient, reliable, and cost-effective management of and access to government information across all business areas. These improvements strengthen our ability to capture, store, and retrieve information seamlessly supporting compliance, information access, and operational efficiency.

The electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) platforms used, Objective and Content Manager, managed by Digital Canberra, are being enhanced to support flexible access to and use of digital records. These integrations and innovations support our technology investment strategic direction and will:

- unify digital information across government ecosystems for easier access and collaboration;
- reduce duplication and manual handling by enabling automated workflows;
- support informed strategies for managing digital information across platforms; and
- drive cost savings through streamlined processes and reduced storage and licence overhead.

Workflow enhancements and automation will facilitate efficiencies in assessment and disposal of digital records, ensuring information that is no longer required to be kept under legislation is disposed of appropriately, mitigating risk and reducing storage costs. These improvements will ensure that the digital records we keep support the ACT Government in being responsive to information access queries across all environments, including responding to FOI requests.

Cyber incident management and data breaches

The ACT Government remains committed to transparency and protection of the public interest in management of cyber incidents and data breaches which can cause impacts to our community. Updates to the Whole of Government Cyber Incident Response and Cyber Security Policy reinforce this commitment, with reporting to the ACT information Commissioner for data breaches, and assessment of risk of harm to ensure appropriate response actions are taken.

In the 2025 calendar year there have been nationally significant incidents to third party services used by our community. The Digital Canberra ACT Cyber Security Centre works with the National Office of Cyber Security and other jurisdictions to ensure appropriate co-ordinated responses and consideration of impacts to the community, for example, where ACT issued credentials require reissuance when discovered to be part of a breach.

ACT Memory

The ACT Memory database has facilitated community access to information about historical ACT Government records since 2022, including Cabinet documents released to applicants under the Executive Documents access arrangements. By the end of the 2024-25 financial year, the public could search information on 116,200 historical government records, with 4,700 added during the year. A total of 2,169 digital copies of Executive Documents, comprising Cabinet decisions, submissions, and release determinations, were available to view in ACT Memory by 30 June 2025, a 50% increase on the total available at the end of 2023-24. ArchivesACT continues to expand other

types of content on ACT Memory by adding new series (collection descriptions) and item-level metadata. Growing the number of records in the database creates more opportunities for the public to find and request them. Increasingly, users can also self-serve by viewing digitised records that have either been scanned for other researchers or proactively digitised by ArchivesACT. Through project funding, the Territory Records Office continues to recover records from obsolete magnetic media carriers and has begun the process of making them available for access through ACT Memory. Material recovered so far includes ACT House of Assembly Committee recordings, oral histories, flora and fauna surveys (including bird song recordings) and tourism ephemera.

FOI Statutory Review

From April to August 2025 the Justice and Community Safety Directorate undertook a statutory review of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*. An independent consultant, Proximity Advisory Services was contracted to undertake the review. The review involved targeted consultation with FOI officers, teams and executives across the Government, the Ombudsman, the Territory Records Office and some justice and media stakeholders in the ACT community.

The review considered whether the FOI Act is achieving its objectives, the nature of requests made under the Act, fee charging, the role of the Ombudsman and the effectiveness of the Open Access Information Scheme, as well as other opportunities to improve the scheme. A Report of the review was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 23 September 2025 and is now publicly available.

The Report is generally positive and notes that the ACT FOI system is working well overall. The Report identifies many elements of the current system that reflect an ideal FOI scheme. The Reviewers found that access decisions are made in a timely manner at low cost to the public, the ACT has a strong pro-disclosure culture, and the FOI Act is largely fit for purpose, with minimal reform required. The review also found that the Open Access Information Scheme is an important and effective complement to FOI processes for the proactive release of Government information to the public.

There were areas for improvement identified by the Review. The Report made 21 recommendations on the themes of: improving leadership and culture, improving resourcing and skills, improving open access and proactive disclosure, and legislative change to refine the scheme. A key finding was that the scheme would benefit from improved governance and coordination, to ensure consistency, information sharing and better identification of Open Access activities across operational areas. Other findings related to improving the accessibility, utility and communication of FOI training materials and guidance.

The Government welcomes the Review and is carefully considering these recommendations, including the retirement of the Open Access Information Portal, as its functions have largely been superseded by the OneGov website.

Agencies will seek to implement changes over time as part of a commitment to continuous improvement in our FOI system.

Expectations

The ACT Government expects its agencies to comply with the Act by:

- ensuring records are created and maintained so the community can understand why and how decisions are made;

- regularly reviewing materials published under the Scheme to ensure they remain, as far as practicable, accurate, up-to-date and complete;
- continuing to proactively publish all appropriate government information through a variety of means, including through ACT Memory, Open Data Portal, and other ACT Government websites;
- continuing to build public interest test assessments into policy development workflows, so that new policies are routinely assessed and released for publication, where appropriate; and
- sustaining and improving compliance with the Act, including by addressing the issues identified by the Ombudsman (discussed further below).

Insights identified by the Ombudsman

In keeping with section 67 of the Act, the Ombudsman’s annual report on the operation of the Act 2024-25 was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 21 October 2025. Drawing on seven years of data and input from nine ACT Government Directorates, the Ombudsman determined that agencies continue to proactively make Open Access decisions and improve the quality of agency decision-making. Opportunities to improve are ongoing and the ACT Government acknowledges both the accomplishments, and areas for growth identified in the Ombudsman’s report, and will keep working to improve how agencies help people access government-held information.

Open access information decisions

During the reporting period, there was a decrease in the reported decisions to publish when compared to 2023–24. Critical to note is that the Ombudsman’s report acknowledges that agencies are demonstrating proactive release of Open Access Information and that the information published through the Open Access Information Scheme does not reflect all information made publicly available by agencies. The Office’s ongoing position not to impose additional reporting requirements for information published through other channels is supported by the ACT Government.

This year’s data indicates that the capability of agencies in making open access decisions continues to mature and their approach to Open Access information is functioning appropriately.

Informal requests for information

Agencies are not required to report on requests received through informal processes and their associated outcomes. Data provided to the Ombudsman on informal access is optional. This year’s report provides a practical example of an agency’s efforts to inform the public on how access to information can be achieved outside the formal FOI process. This has resulted in that agency achieving its highest number of access applications resolved informally for 2024-25.

Along with the ACT Ombudsman’s Office, the ACT Government encourages agencies to release information informally wherever possible and to be explicit about the channels the public can interact with to get this information. Any insights the Office can provide in future reports is welcomed to help agencies increase informal release of information.

Similarly, the Ombudsman has acknowledged that requests to amend personal information are done through informal channels, and no formal applications to amend to personal information were reported by agencies.

Access applications

The Ombudsman's report notes a 2% increase in FOI access applications received by agencies and Ministers from the previous year, and there has been a steady increase in access applications across the nine directorates for the last five years. These changes have been uneven, with some agencies experiencing significant increase while others remained consistent to previous years, or received fewer applications. Almost two thirds of the applications resulted in a decision to provide some form of access, and 96% of the access decisions were finalised within the statutory timeframe – this is slightly lower than 2023-24, but equal to or above those of other jurisdictions in Australia. The report notes this as indicative of a stable pro-disclosure culture in the ACT. It is also noted that cost is consistently not an obstacle to access – no agency charged fees for processing access applications.

It is positive that agencies generally continue to process an application and make a formal decision in deemed refusal cases. However, in the interest of consistency and accuracy, the ACT Government notes the Ombudsman's encouragement to agencies to give notice as soon as possible after a deemed refusal of an application occurs, and, where practical, within the financial year. Agencies are encouraged to use the Office's published guidelines and assume this as best practice, not only demonstrating compliance under the Act but also ensuring accurate representation of the statistics in the annual report on the operation of the Act.

Ombudsman reviews

The number of Ombudsman reviewed applications increased by 21% this year, with an increase in the number of reviews relating to workplace grievances and complex review applications, including multiple applications by single applicants. While the Ombudsman's observations on agency decisions made indicate that applicants understand and are satisfied with the outcome, early and open communication by agencies is still emphasised as a mechanism to further assist applicants to understand decisions. The ACT Government encourages agencies to look for opportunities to engage early with applicants and providing well explained access decisions with clear reference to the Act.

The Ombudsman's work continues to benefit agencies in meeting the Act's objectives. This includes year-on-year monitoring of open access compliance in the ACT, work with agencies to build on existing practices, hosting information sharing events amongst agencies and providing guidance material. The Office's commitment over the next year to continue this work and to further extend the focus on bettering consistent and timely decision-making capability is important in meeting the open information expectations and rights of Canberrans. The Ombudsman's participation in the independent review of the FOI Scheme in 2025 is also acknowledged as critical to gaining insights on the operation of the Open Access Scheme in meeting these expectations. The ACT Government thanks the Ombudsman for providing details to help inform the recommendations and will act on recommendations in the coming year to improve pro-disclosure operations and open information outcomes for the ACT Community.

Views of Information Officers and FOI Coordinators

In the preparation of this statement ACT Government Information Officers, decision makers appointed under the FOI Act, as well as agency FOI coordinators who process applications and make recommendations, have been consulted.

FOI team representatives from across the ACT Public Service continue to meet weekly to discuss matters of common interest and provide updates on cases that affect multiple agencies. In the past

year there has been a considerable increase in the number of MLA requests and a continued trend of increased complexity of applications made under the Act.

This year a single smart form for all ACT Government Freedom of Information requests will be launched, replacing individual directorate-based online entry points. This makes it easier to find, access and understand ACT Government information and services, without the need to understand or navigate the structure of government.

The review of the FOI Act was also tabled in September 2025, with Information Officers and Coordinators anticipating the recommendations.

Statutory authorities expressed appreciation for the invaluable assistance provided by experienced FOI officers from Directorates that supports timely and informed action to meet obligations under the Act, and ultimately to the applicants.