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Information Publication Scheme overview for Senior Executive Staff

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Tags: Information Publication Scheme

The Information Publication Scheme (IPS) requires agencies to publish a broad range of information and authorises publication of other information. Agencies and staff are protected against civil and criminal liability if they publish documents in good faith.

This overview has been prepared for the Senior Executive Service within Australian Government agencies.

What is the Information Publication Scheme?

The IPS is established under Part II of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) and applies to Australian Government agencies subject to the FOI Act. It requires agencies to publish a range of information on their website, including:

- a plan detailing how you will administer the IPS
- information about your agency's structure, functions and decision-making powers
- statutory appointments
- annual reports
- consultation arrangements
- contact details of your agency's FOI officer/s
- information routinely released through FOI requests
- information routinely provided to Parliament.

Does the IPS *limit* what can be published?

No. The IPS *authorises* publication of other information held by your agency (s 8(4) of the FOI Act).

There are significant advantages in publishing a broad range of information held by your agency:

- it provides transparency about your agency's processes and policies
- it reduces the workload on FOI officers.

Agencies and staff are protected against civil and criminal liability if they publish documents in good faith, believing publication is either required or permitted under the IPS. However, if a document is subject to a secrecy provision, the protections in the FOI Act may not apply.

The IPS does *not* require publication of information that is exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act or information that is prohibited from being released under other

laws.

What can you do to promote the IPS as a Senior Executive?

As a Senior Executive, you play a critical role in setting the standard for your agency's compliance with its IPS requirements. You also shape your agency's culture in relation to openness, transparency and accountability.

In this leadership role, you are responsible for ensuring your agency has appropriate governance mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with IPS obligations.

Senior Executives can improve IPS practices by:

- informing staff of their responsibilities under the IPS
- publishing a broad range of documents on your website at the time of their creation
- making the IPS a priority when developing your corporate plans
- analysing the FOI requests received by your agency to assist in identifying information of interest to members of the public, and proactively publishing those documents
- considering compliance with the IPS as a performance indicator for agency employees.