

Information Access

Policy Statement

The Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources (DRDPPIFR) supports open and accountable government by fostering an environment in which information is available to the public in accordance with the *Northern Territory Information Act*. The department strives to make information available to any interested party, where such information does not interfere with the essential public interest, individual privacy or the effective operation of the department.

Legislative Framework

The Northern Territory Information Act
Northern Territory Government Records and Archives Management Standards
Public Sector Management Code of Conduct

Related Policies

The Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources' Privacy Policy.

1. Methods of Access

- 1.1 Information regarding the department's operations is available by the following means:
 - (a) Agency Website – www.nt.gov.au/d/
 - (b) Agency Annual Report – available from the department's offices, the website, or the NT Library Service
 - (c) In writing under the freedom of information (FOI) process. Applications may be lodged using the forms available from the department's website or from the NT Information Commissioner's website www.infocomm.nt.gov.au/
- 1.2 If the requested information is available through another established procedure, the department will redirect the request out of the FOI process and into the established procedure.
- 1.3 If the requested information is published at regular intervals, the department will negotiate with the applicant to provide the information in a form with the closest date match to the date of request.

2. Timeframes

- 2.1 The agency will endeavour to satisfy all requests for information in a timely manner that complies with the timeframes expressed in the *Information Act*
- 2.2 Processing timeframes for all applications lodged under the Act commence at such time as the application is declared valid under section 18 and, if the application relates to government information, the application fee has been paid.
- 2.3 Where a request involves information that relates to a third party, or to matters concerning Aboriginal tradition or sacred sites, the department will advise the applicant of the additional time as allowed by the Act in order to consult those third parties regarding the possible release of that information. No decision will be taken on releasing that information until that consultation occurs.

3. Transfer or Referral of Requests for Access to information

- 3.1 Requests for information held by the department that originates from, or is more closely related to the functions of another agency, will be referred to that agency. Any application fees will be transferred with application.
- 3.2 Where the department identifies that it holds information in relation to a request, but is aware that another agency also holds related information, the department will process the application in relation to the information it holds and will advise the applicant that more information may be available from the other agency. In such matters, the department will charge all relevant fees in relation to the application as are due under the Act unless a request to waive or reduce fees has been granted.
- 3.3 Where the department accepts a request and later realises it holds no information in relation to the request, but is able to identify another agency that holds such information, the department will transfer the application to that agency (section 29 or section 37). The department undertakes to transfer any fees collected in relation to the application to the second agency along with the application.
- 3.4 Where the department contracts out the provision of a service, the department undertakes to process and decide all requests for access to information related to that service, and will include appropriate standards of record keeping in the service level agreement or contract with the service provider.

4. Fees

- 4.1 The department undertakes to keep accurate account of costs incurred in relation to processing requests for information or supervising applicants viewing personal information (section 18 or section 21(2)(a)(ii)).
- 4.2 The department will charge for access to information where the application is made and processed under Division 2 of the Act. Charges will be in accordance with section 156 of the Act and the schedules established by the Regulations. Fees will be charged for processing, copying, supervising access and hiring equipment on a cost recovery basis.
- 4.3 The department may require that, where fees are likely to total more than \$100, a deposit of at least 25 percent of the estimated cost be paid before the department begins retrieving the information. The department may require that the balance of fees be paid or, in special circumstances, a definite payment schedule be agreed, before the information is provided.
- 4.4 The department will consider applications for special consideration in relation to any fees or charges incurred by an applicant where the applicant applies for such consideration in accordance with section 156 of the Act.
- 4.5 The department does not use fees for access to information to discourage applicants from applying. The department will endeavour to indicate to applicants where fees payable may be significant amounts and where appropriate negotiate with applicants to amend the application to more closely specify the required information.
- 4.6 Where an applicant defaults on an agreed payment schedule or refuses payment for services provided, the department will proceed to recover the costs as per its debt recovery procedures. This may include the transfer of information about the applicant such as necessary to recover the debt.

5. Proof of identity

- 5.1 The standards for proof of identity required by the Act are specified in the following sections.
- 5.2 Any one of the following primary sources is an acceptable form of identification:
- (a) Current Australian Passport.
 - (b) Current Northern Territory Driver's licence.
 - (c) Current document of identity issued by the Passport Office.
 - (d) Current Defence Force or Police Service ID card.
- 5.3 If the above forms of identification are not available, at least two other forms must be presented. The following are acceptable secondary sources:
- (a) An NT proof of age card from Motor Vehicle Registry.
 - (b) A current overseas passport with current entry permit.
 - (c) Naturalisation/citizenship/immigration papers issued by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.
 - (d) A current consular identity card with photograph issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs.
 - (e) A current student identity card with photograph.
 - (f) A current driver's licence with photograph from another State or Territory.
 - (g) A document listed as a primary source of identity which has expired within the last two years.
 - (h) A taxation assessment notice from the past financial year.
 - (i) A current Medicare card.
 - (j) A current entitlement card issued by the Commonwealth Government.
 - (k) A current telephone, electricity/water account or rates account with evidence of payment.
- 5.4 If a person is living on a remote community, the application form may be endorsed by a local member of the NT Police Service, or the Local Government Clerk, or Senior Health Officer. The person making the endorsement must be able to verify that the applicant is the person named in the application form. A similar form of endorsement may be used where the applicant does not have access to these forms of identification.
- 5.5 Access to personal information may be declined where the department is not able to be fully satisfied about the identity of the applicant. This is because the Act requires the department to protect the privacy of the personal information that it holds.


Chief Executive

29 Nov 2008
Date