



Office of the Information Commissioner  
Queensland

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## Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET - *Right to Information Act 2009*

### Accessing information held by government

#### What is right to information?

The *Right to Information Act 2009* (Qld) (**RTI Act**) requires government agencies and Ministers to make information available to the public unless there is a good reason not to. Government information should, where possible, be given through informal means like an agency's website, publication scheme, or through administrative release.

A formal application for government-held information under the RTI Act should only be made as a last resort.

#### Which agencies can I access information from?

- Queensland government departments (eg Queensland Transport and Main Roads)
- Health agencies
- Ministers
- Local government (eg your local Council)
- Government owned corporations (with some limitations) (eg Energex)
- Public authorities
- Public universities (eg University of Queensland)

#### Where do I start?

It is important to think about the sort of information you are looking for. If you can be specific about what information you are looking for it will:

- make it easier for you (or others assisting you) to search for the information on relevant websites, or to ask an agency to provide the information or help you to find out where to locate the information
- reduce the time taken, and fees you are required to pay, for an agency to consider and decide whether to release the documents, if you need to make a formal application using the legislative process

The next step is to go to the relevant agency's website and see if the information is already available.



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### **Where on the website should I look?**

Government agencies are required to have a publication scheme, which may be published on their website and detail what documents are already publicly available including financial information, services, decisions, policies and priorities. This information is also generally found in a section of the website often called 'About Us'. There may also be copies of documents that have already been released under formal right to information (RTI) applications on the disclosure log.

If you can't find the website's publication scheme, disclosure log or RTI webpage you could enter relevant words into the website's search function regarding the:

- type of information you are looking for; or
- terms 'right to information' or 'publication scheme' to find parts of the website that explain how to obtain information from the agency

### **What if I can't find what I'm looking for?**

You can contact the agency's customer service area, enquiries service or RTI unit by phone or email. Try to provide as much detail as you can about the information you are seeking. This will help agency staff to provide you with the best possible response.

You can also ask if you can access the information through one of the agency's administrative access schemes. If it is available through an administrative access scheme, you will be advised of this and told how to go about accessing the information. Access through one of these schemes should be quicker and less onerous than making a formal access application. If an agency has an administrative access scheme in place for the information you want, it is entitled to refuse you access under the formal access application process.

### **What if I don't have access to the internet?**

You can phone the relevant government agency or the Queensland Government's general enquiries line 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and ask to be directed to an appropriate representative to see if the information you are looking for is already publicly available. Contact your closest public library to see if you can access the internet from there. One of the library staff will assist you.

### **What if I can't access the information informally?**

If you cannot access the information informally, you can submit a formal application. If you are only seeking documents that contain your personal information, there will be no application fee. If you would like any documents that do not contain your personal information, then you will need to apply under the RTI Act.



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Your application should be made to the relevant agency by completing and submitting the approved form. You can download the form, or alternatively apply online, at the Right To Information website ([www.rti.qld.gov.au](http://www.rti.qld.gov.au)) . If you do not have internet access you can obtain a copy of the form from the RTI Unit of the relevant government agency, or from the Office of the Information Commissioner's Enquiries Service (contact details below).

### **Will there be a cost?**

If you want access to documents that do not contain your personal information, you must pay the RTI application fee and there may be additional charges for processing the application (including conducting searches for documents) and photocopying.

There is no application fee or processing charges if you only apply for documents that contain your personal information, but there may be access charges. If additional charges are likely the agency will notify you with a charges estimate notice before the application is processed.

You can apply for a waiver of the processing and access charges (but not the application fee) if you hold a valid concession card. For further information see Applying for financial hardship as an individual located on our website.

### **How long will it take to process my application?**

An application is generally processed within about 5 weeks or 25 business days, but this can be extended in some circumstances.

### **Need more information?**

Customer services, enquires or RTI staff within the agency from which you would like to obtain information may be able to assist you.

**This information sheet is introductory only, and deals with issues in a general way. It is not legal advice. Additional factors may be relevant in specific circumstances. For detailed guidance, legal advice should be sought.**

If you have any comments or suggestions on the content of this document, please submit them to [enquiries@oic.qld.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@oic.qld.gov.au).

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