



[Home](#) | [About](#) | [Contact](#) | [My Account](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Search](#)

[Better Government](#) | [Better Information](#) | [Better Services](#) | [Better Business](#) | [Better Infrastructure](#) | [Better Practice](#) | [Resource Centre](#)

- [Finding Government Information](#)
- [Online Information Service Obligations](#)
- [Government Publishing Information](#)
- [Publication Guidelines](#)

[Better Information](#) > [Online Information Service Obligations](#)

Online Information Service Obligations (OISOs)

Project

Note: These are currently subject to review.

Introduction:

In April 2000 the Commonwealth Government released the [Government Online Strategy](#). The Online Information Service Obligations, (OISOs), form a part of this strategy.

OISOs ensure that information on Commonwealth agencies and agency services are available online. This is subject to considerations such as [privacy](#), legal considerations, national security and the business interests of third parties. Agencies should avoid posting information that is already available on the Internet and should link to existing information where available.

The Australian Government Information Management Office, has responsibility for OISOs and their ongoing development. As OISOs develop, this web page will continually be updated with useful examples of how agencies are complying with this component of the [Government Online Strategy](#).

Compliance with OISOs guarantees the public access to a minimum level of information across all Commonwealth Government agencies. For instance:

- All agency information included in OISOs should have quality [AGLS metadata](#) attached and be included in a compliant [Harvest Control List \(HCL\)](#). Compliance with these standards will enhance the access and discoverability for users of government information.
- Agencies need to be aware of the existing frameworks, advice and guidelines when preparing these documents to go online. Examples of these include:
 - [The Protective Security Manual \(PSM\)](#) issued by the Attorney General's Department;
 - [The Australian Communication-Electronic Security Instruction 33 \(ACSI 33\)](#);
 - [Better Practice Guide Internet Delivery Decisions-A Government Program Manager's Guide](#) (ANAO) (HTML) or download as [Adobe PDF](#);
 - [Guidelines for Commonwealth information published in electronic formats](#); and
 - [The Privacy Commissioner's Privacy Principles](#).

- Where Agencies have responsibility for multiple web sites it is not expected that all the web sites would provide access to the entire range of information falling under the OISOs. Agencies are to ensure OISO information is available at the most appropriate location after analysing their matrix_web' and stakeholders' information needs and the intent of the site, and are to provide links to subordinate or main sites as appropriate.

The OISOs are:

- 1 Directory information covering contact details and services;
- 2 Annual reports, agency strategic plans and other public accountability-type publications;
- 3 Reports submitted to Parliament;
- 4 Press or Media releases;
- 5 Official speeches and other public information released by Ministers, holders of statutory offices or senior agency officers;
- 6 Information that will enable the public and organisations understand their entitlements for government assistance;
- 7 Information that will enable the public and organisations to understand their own obligations and responsibilities to government;
- 8 Legislation that the agency administers;
- 9 Information about agency powers affecting the public;
- 10 Agency manuals or other publications used in decision-making that affects the public;
- 11 Forms for public use; and
- 12 All new non-commercial agency publications released in printed or other formats.

Information falling within the above categories is to be routinely placed online from 1 June 2000. Agencies are to determine the appropriateness of placing pre-June 2000 information online.

1 Directory information covering contact details and services

Government agencies need to consider how their matrix_web find information about the agency's structure, suitable contact points within the organisation and services that the agency provides.

Providing a directory with basic descriptive information about the agency's structure, contact details and relevant services is the basic essential.

NB: Each agency needs to determine-within its own business case-the appropriate level of contact information. Consideration should also be given to such issues as privacy, duty of care and liability. Agencies may wish to consider the appropriateness of placing individual officers' names online as opposed to position contact details.

Examples:

- The National Library of Australia (NLA) has an Organisation and Staff page which includes

information on the structure of the library and provides a link to useful contact numbers. A link on the home page and as a 'footer' on each page thereafter is provided to the services offered by the NLA.

- Geoscience Australia provides a link to high-level key contacts for the organisation on their home page. This page then links to a high-level organisation structure chart.

2 Annual reports, agency strategic plans and other public accountability-type publications

These documents include:

- annual reports;
- agency strategic plans (where appropriate include down to Divisional level);
- Portfolio Budget Statements; and
- other accountability-type publications that would enable the public to better understand the agency and the services it offers.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provides the Requirements for Departmental Annual Reports guidelines for producing annual reports.

Examples:

- The Department of Finance and Administration won the Institute of Public Administration of Australia online annual report award for Commonwealth Departments and Agencies for 1999-2000. This online annual report may be viewed at <http://www.finance.gov.au/pubs/AnnualReport99-00/index1.htm>.
- The Department of the Environment and Heritage provides their Portfolio Budget Statements 2001-2002 in HTML, PDF and Word formats.
- The Australian Federal Police provides their corporate strategic plan which outlines the agency's future directions.

3 Reports submitted to Parliament

There is no formal list of documents that should be submitted to Parliament. However, once tabled they become a part of the public record. Agencies are required to publish these online. The Guidelines for Presentation of Government Documents, Ministerial Statements, and Government Responses to Parliament provides appropriate advice to agencies.

Example:

The Australian Public Service Commission provides the State of the Service Report report.

4 Press or Media releases

Provision of press or media releases is an important means of getting Government messages delivered. They need to be up-to-date and loaded onto the agency's site-in a specifically designated area-as soon as they are released.

They include:

- media/press releases
- ministerial announcements
- departmental/agency announcements
- new Government initiatives
- public notices

- warnings and advice

Examples:

- The [Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs](#) provides a link from their home page to an archive of [Ministerial & Departmental Media Releases](#) from 1996 to date.
- The [Bureau of Meteorology](#) provides links to state and territory warnings, forecasts and observations from its home page plus a [national warnings summary](#).

5 Official speeches and other public information released by Ministers, holders of statutory offices or senior agency officers

All appropriate official speeches and public information released by Ministers, holders of statutory offices or senior agency officers should be routinely placed online in an easily accessible location.

Examples:

- [Australian Competition & Consumer Commission](#) provides a link from its home page direct to [speeches given by the Chairman and Commissioners](#) from 1995 to date.
- The [Department of Health and Ageing](#) provides a page with [Ministerial and Departmental speeches](#).

6 Information that will enable the public and organisations understand their entitlements for government assistance

Information and documentation such as explanatory notes and policies need to be easily understood by the general public plus easily located on an agency's web site, detailing such things as:

- public grants and assistance;
- benefits and entitlements;
- service charters;
- application, enrolment and/or compliance type forms; and
- links to other information, e.g. legal and legislative rulings specifically associated with an entitlement, benefit or policy, privacy statements etc.

Examples:

- The [Department of Transport and Regional Services- Australian Government Regional Information Service \(AGRIS\)](#) is one example. Countrylink Australia is the Federal Government's information access service for people living in regional Australia. The program provides people living outside of the capital cities with information about Federal Government programs, agencies and services.
- [Centrelink's-payment rates and services for individuals](#).
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission \(ATSIC\) 'Programs'](#) which includes details of grant procedures, the service charter, complaints and review processes.
- [Australian Communications Authority](#) provides [About the ACA, the Law and You](#) and [Service Charter](#)
- The [Health Insurance Commission's Charter of Care](#) won the platinum award for excellence across all categories of service charter awards at the Business Excellence Australia [Customer Service Awards](#) in December 1999 and 2000.

7 Information that will enable the public and organisations understand their own obligations and responsibilities to Government

Depending on the role of the agency, the public may or may not have obligations or responsibilities

towards its portfolio.

Examples:

- The Australian Electoral Commission's site provides the Australian people with an independent electoral service which meets their needs and encourages them to understand and participate in the electoral process.
- The Australian Taxation Office's online service provides a *Tax Payers' Charter* which outlines individuals rights under the law and the standards the public can expect when dealing with the Australian Taxation Office. It also sets out individuals' obligations as taxpayers.

8 Legislation that the agency administers

Agencies are responsible for ensuring that legislative information is accessible through their web site/s. This includes bills, Acts, explanatory memoranda, treaties, subordinate information, legislative status information, relevant Gazette notices, Hansard references and other related material.

Agencies are encouraged to link to existing information such as legislative information available at SCALEplus rather than posting in multiple locations.

Examples:

- The Australian Communications Authority (ACA) provides a link to Hansard material concerning the ACA.
- The Department of Transport and Regional Services provides a link to legislation administered by the Minister on SCALEplus at <http://www.dotrs.gov.au/dept/legislation/index.htm> where the legislation relevant to the Department is listed.

9 Information about agency powers affecting the public

Example:

- The Australian Customs Service offers *Importing goods into Australia*.
- The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation provides the *Attorney-General's Guidelines in relation to the performance by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation of its functions relating to politically motivated violence*

10 Agency manuals or other publications used in decision-making that affects the public

Where appropriate, agencies are to make available documents used in decision-making that affects the public.

Example:

- The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is responsible for a wide range of programs and services for families and communities with research and evaluation being important components of the Department's work. The FaCS Research and Evaluation Framework lists many research and evaluation projects undertaken or commissioned by FaCS.

11 Forms for public use

Agencies with an external focus often have forms to which the public requires access. These forms may be provided online in Adobe Acrobat® Portable Document Format (PDF) so they can be printed out, or alternatively they can be provided in a manner that will allow them to be filled out and

submitted online.

Examples:

- The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs provides a central list of forms. This list offers links to the latest versions of the Department's information and application forms, and to migration and temporary entry booklets. The booklets offer comprehensive information, and include all relevant forms.
- The Australian Communications Authority (ACA) offers a comprehensive list of forms on their site at http://internet.aca.gov.au/ACAINTER.131180:STANDARD::pc=PC_1560. The ACA have provided a number of their forms with additional functionality. The image of an encircled 'I' beside a form denotes an Adobe Acrobat® Portable Document Format (PDF) Interactive Form. These forms can be downloaded, filled out on-screen and then printed.

There is a limited range of circumstances where it may be inappropriate for a form to be completed online or provided as a download. If it is not possible to provide online access then information on alternative ways of obtaining and completing the form must be provided.

Agencies are also encouraged to regularly review their forms and application processes, so that online completion can be introduced as soon as it is feasible and appropriate to do so.

12 All appropriate new non-commercial agency publications released in printed or other formats

Publications that have a short life span or have a narrow target audience are not included here.

Agencies are encouraged to notify the National Library of Australia of any publications-both commercial and non-commercial-they produce that are available to the public only in online format, or where the online version is substantially different to a print version of the same publication. Notification can be made either by using an online form or by sending an email listing the title, publisher and URL of the publication to the National Library's Electronic Unit at elecunit@nla.gov.au. For further information phone (02) 6262 1140.

Agencies are expected to weigh the cost/benefit of providing access to publications within their own business case within the spirit of the Government Online Strategy.

Examples:

- The Australian Communications Authority provides a link on their home page to an index of the agency's brochures. This list includes such brochures as About the agency, industry and consumer publications and a number of fact sheets.

Feedback:

Feedback and comments on the Online Information Service Obligations (OISOs) are very welcome.

The Australian Government Information Management Office, has policy responsibility for OISOs and their ongoing development.

Interested parties are invited to provide feedback and comment on the existing obligations with a view to their future development and enhancement.

General Information

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