



ICIC Resolution

Title of the resolution	<i>Proactive publication of information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic</i>
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Co-sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Office of the Information Commissioner, Western Australia, Australia</i> • <i>Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, Victoria, Australia</i> • <i>Information and Privacy Commission, New South Wales, Australia</i> • <i>Office of the Information Commissioner, Queensland, Australia</i> • <i>Office of the Ombudsman, New Zealand</i> • <i>Information Commissioner of Canada</i> • <i>Information Commissioner's Office, United Kingdom</i>
Anchor with the Charter	<i>The resolution links to the following themes of the 2021 conference:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Transparency and trust in pandemic times</i> - <i>Privacy and transparency in health issues</i> - <i>Transparency by design and document management as means of good governance</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Access to Information and public services delivery</i> <p><i>The resolution is in the spirit of the ICIC Johannesburg Charter, supporting the vision, mission and goals of the ICIC.</i></p> <p><i>The resolution supports the ICIC’s Vision to promote access to information laws and improve transparency and accountability.</i></p> <p><i>The resolution is consistent with the ICIC’s Mission to ‘share knowledge and best practices, to build capacity, to help identify what is needed for global progress and to act as a collective voice in international fora with a view to improving people’s right to public information and their ability to hold to account bodies that provide public functions’.</i></p> <p><i>The resolution also links to the Goals of the ICIC which are to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Protect and promote access to public information;</i> <i>8. Act as a collective voice in the international community to raise awareness of issues that impact upon access to public information;</i> <i>9. Promote the development and adoption of international standards in access to public information in all regions across the world, including the establishment of independent oversight bodies.</i> <p><i>(https://www.informationcommissioners.org/goals-and-objectives)</i></p>
<p>Body of the Resolution (including rationale)</p>	<p>PREAMBLE:</p> <p>RECALLING that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Vision of the International Conference of Information Commissioners is to improve

transparency and accountability to the benefit of everyone

- the Mission of the International Conference of Information Commissioners is to act as a collective voice in international fora with a view to improving people's right to public information and their ability to hold to account bodies that provide public functions
- a key Goal of the International Conference of Information Commissioners is to protect and promote access to public information, and raise awareness in the international community of issues that impact upon access to public information.

RECOGNISING that the proactive publication or release of information provides public access to information held by government or public institutions without the need for formal access requests;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the public's right to access to information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic is of critical importance for providing confidence in, and transparency around, decision making at all levels of public authorities during the crisis;

APPRECIATING that the proactive release of information increases participation, scrutiny, discussion, learning, comment and review of government decisions;

CONFIRMING the benefits of public engagement in government decision making at all times, but in particular, in times where the participation of all citizens is critical to the success of public health initiatives;

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EMPHASIZES the importance of access to information in the context of the ongoing global pandemic;

RECOGNISES that public authorities make significant decisions that affect public health, civil liberties and economic participation;

PROMOTES the proactive disclosure of information held by government or public institutions, wherever this is appropriate; and

ENCOURAGES the proactive release of information through existing state-based mechanisms such as information publication schemes and promotes the implementation of such schemes.

The 12th Annual Closed Session of the International Conference of Information Commissioners calls on all members to:

- promote, or continue to promote, proactive publication of information held by government or public institutions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, wherever appropriate;
- continue to share knowledge and best practice in relation to the proactive publication of information as affirmed in the '[ICIC -Access to information in the context of global pandemic COVID-19](#)' statement issued on 14 April 2020;

The 12th Annual Closed Session of the International Conference of Information Commissioners therefore resolves to issue the joint statement ([Appendix A to this Resolution](#)) highlighting the importance of proactive disclosure of health and pandemic management information held by government or public institutions during a global pandemic, wherever this is appropriate.

Appendix A – Joint Statement

PROACTIVE PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION RELATING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC STATEMENT

24 June 2021

The impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to bring unprecedented challenges for our society, both nationally and globally. Governments around the world continue to face significant challenges in responding to the pandemic to protect public health, civil liberties and individual prosperity.

As the global pandemic continues, the importance of transparency and the right to access information remains.

Recognising the role that access to information has in building trust in our global community during times of crisis and beyond, Information Commissioners around the world highlight the importance of the proactive disclosure of information held by government or public institutions.

The 12th Annual International Conference of Information Commissioners therefore urge governments responding to the ongoing global pandemic to pay due regard to the following principles, which reflect common information access principles and practice around the proactive publication of information held by government or public institutions:

- *Proactive disclosure of information held by government or public institutions increases citizen participation in government processes and promotes better informed decision making through increased scrutiny, discussion, comment and review of government decisions.*
- *Public engagement in government decision making is important at all times, but in particular, during a global pandemic.*
- *The public's right of access to information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic is of critical importance to the effectiveness of the public health response, in circumstances where authorities make significant decisions that affect public health, civil liberties and economic participation.*
- *Information held by government or public institutions is to be managed for a public purpose and is a national resource.*
- *To the greatest extent possible, information held by government or public institutions should be published promptly and proactively, without the need for formal access requests.*

Mechanisms, such as information publication schemes and administrative release, encourage the proactive release of information. Members will continue to promote, support, develop and implement such mechanisms to the greatest extent possible.