

Privacy 101 for government

Privacy is central to the work of the Australian public service. That's why we have put together 10 tips for government departments and agencies to apply to keep personal information safe.



Know your obligations

Ensure you understand your agency's obligations under the Privacy Act and Australian Government Agencies Privacy Code, and keep up to date with developments in privacy and changing legal obligations.



Assess privacy risks

Assess privacy risks early. You must undertake a privacy impact assessment for all high-risk projects, and make sure you record them on your published privacy impact assessment register.



Simplify your privacy policy

Make sure your privacy policy is written in plain language and includes a summary. Make it specific and relevant to what your agency does. And importantly, remember to include information about how individuals can contact you about privacy matters.



Update your privacy plan

Government agencies are required to have an up-to-date privacy management plan – and you must measure and document performance against the plan at least annually. Use our resources to assess your privacy practices and set goals and targets.



Build in privacy by design

It's more effective and efficient to manage privacy risks proactively. Design legislation, programs and services to minimise or manage privacy risks. Ensure you build good privacy practices into internal systems and processes.



Train your staff

Clearly outline how staff are expected to handle personal information in their everyday duties. Make it real, and relevant. Integrate privacy into your induction and regular staff training programs – including for short-term staff, service providers and contractors.



Assign privacy roles

Assign a member of your senior executive as your Privacy Champion to drive a strong privacy culture and have overall responsibility for privacy. Make sure staff know who your privacy champion and officers are and understand their responsibilities.



Secure personal information

Ensure secure systems are in place to protect personal information from misuse, loss and unauthorised access and disclosure, and only collect personal information that is reasonably necessary. Where record keeping obligations prevent de-identification or destruction of personal information no longer required, adopt other measures to limit privacy risks.



Prepare for data breaches

Have a clear and practical data breach response plan at hand so staff know what to do if there is a data breach. It should outline your entity's strategy for containing, assessing and managing the incident from start to finish. Regularly review and test it to make sure it is up to date.

Did you know?



Australian Government agencies have additional responsibilities under the Australian Government Agencies Privacy Code. The code requires agencies to take a best practice approach to privacy governance to help build a consistent, high standard of personal information management across all Australian Government agencies.



Review your practices

Good privacy management means being proactive, and anticipating future challenges. By continually improving your privacy processes, you will ensure you are responsive to new privacy issues.