



## Attorney-General

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### **Freedom of Information - A key to open and accountable government**

As part of its commitment to restore and revitalise democracy in Victoria, the Bracks Labor Government has introduced a number of changes to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

By improving access to government information and by making FOI more affordable, the changes to the FOI Act foster a new culture of open and accountable government.

Guidelines have been developed to assist departments and agencies implement these changes.

These guidelines require departments and agencies to make decisions under the FOI Act consistent with three key principles vital to a healthy democracy. They are that:

- Well informed people are more likely to become involved in both policy making and government;
- A government open to public scrutiny is more accountable; and
- People have a general right to know what information government holds about them.

FOI laws should now be interpreted by departments and agencies in a manner that reflects a willingness to disclose information. Where a document is exempt under the FOI Act to protect the privacy of individuals or allow government to function properly, applicants should be promptly and courteously informed of their appeal rights.

The guidelines also recognise the fact that an accountable system of government does not rely on FOI alone. Government has a responsibility to regularly inform members of the community about its policies and activities. Information should be readily available through the many and varied means available to departments and agencies, and not only when formal FOI applications are made.

**ROB HULLS MP**  
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