



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

INFORMATION PUBLICATION SCHEME

DSS's agency plan

April 2011

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Introduction

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is an agency subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) and is required to comply with the Information Publication Scheme (IPS) requirements. This agency plan describes how DSS proposes to do this, as required by s 8(1) of the FOI Act.

DSS has a key role in the delivery of the Australian Government’s social policy agenda. DSS seeks to assist people in seven core areas:

1. Families
2. Housing
3. Community Capability and the Vulnerable
4. Seniors
5. Disability and Carers
6. Ageing and Aged Care

The agency plan describes how DSS proposes to implement and administer the IPS in respect of its own information holdings, by addressing the following:

- establishing and administering DSS’s contribution
- information architecture
- information required to be published
- other information to be published (optional information)
- accessibility to information published
- compliance review
- better practice initiatives including promoting community engagement.

DSS will continue to build and foster a culture within the agency, in which appropriate proactive disclosure of its information holdings is embraced, leading to successful implementation and administration of the IPS. This is in recognition that public sector information is a national resource managed for public purposes.

Purpose

The purpose of this agency plan is to:

- assist DSS in planning and developing its contribution to the IPS
- show what information the agency proposes to publish (referred to as the IPS information holdings), how and to whom the information will be published and how DSS will otherwise comply with the IPS requirements (s 8(1)).

Note: in this plan, information to be published by DSS under the IPS is referred to as DSS’s IPS information holdings, or as DSS IPS documents when referring to individual documents.

Objectives

DSS's objectives are to outline appropriate mechanisms and procedures to:

- manage DSS's IPS information holdings
- proactively identify and publish all information required to be published (s 8(2)), including this plan
- proactively identify and publish any optional information to be published (s 8(4))
- review and ensure on a regular basis that information published under the IPS is accurate, up to date and complete (s 8B)
- ensure, as far as practicable, that information published under the IPS is easily discoverable, understandable, machine-readable, re-useable and transformable
- measure the success of DSS's IPS contribution
- adopt, as far as practicable, best practice initiatives in implementing and administering DSS's contribution to the IPS.

Establishing and administering DSS's IPS

The Branch Manager, Public Law Branch is designated within DSS as the officer responsible for leading DSS's compliance with the IPS.

(a) Establishing DSS's IPS contribution by 1 May 2011

The Branch Manager, Public Law Branch has been supported by the IPS Working Group to establish DSS's contribution to the IPS by 1 May 2011.

The IPS Working Group comprises:

- the Branch Manager, Public Law Branch
- the FOI Coordinator, Public Law Branch
- the Branch Manager, Communications & Media Branch
- the Branch Manager, Information Services Branch
- additional key staff from within the above three Branches.

The IPS Working Group will set up other ad hoc working groups as required.

The IPS Working Group has coordinated the collection and publication of information required to be published under s 8(2) of the FOI Act. In doing so, the IPS Working Group has:

- coordinated a process to audit the documents currently published on DSS's website (www.DSS.gov.au) and identify which of those documents will form part of the IPS from 1 May 2011

- created a list of DSS IPS documents (including those not already published on DSS's website)
- compiled a list of links to DSS IPS documents for publication on DSS's website
- identified hard copy DSS IPS documents that are not published on DSS's website
- identified any DSS IPS documents that are not accurate, up to date or complete
- nominated a staff member responsible for ensuring a particular DSS IPS document which was not accurate, up to date or complete, is revised by 1 May 2011 or as soon as practicable after this date.

(b) Administering information published under the IPS from 1 May 2011

DSS has an existing comprehensive information management framework which will apply to DSS's IPS information holdings. This framework comprises records management plans and policies.

From 1 May 2011, DSS's ongoing compliance with the IPS will be coordinated by Public Law Branch and assisted by the Communications & Media Branch.

Each Branch of DSS will be responsible as required, for day to day tasks associated with complying with the IPS – for example, ensuring up to date operational information is made available to publish.

As part of managing the ongoing administration of DSS's IPS information holdings, the Communications & Media Branch has guidelines for web publishing that will apply to the publication of DSS's IPS information holdings.

The Communications & Media Branch will ensure, as far as practicable, that the IPS web page:

- makes DSS IPS documents as easily discoverable, understandable and machine-readable as possible
- invites members of the public to contact the FOI contact officer via DSS's website with comments on DSS's IPS information holdings, particularly where documents are found not to be discoverable, understandable or machine-readable.

For each DSS IPS document that is not available in an accessible format on DSS's website, a contact point will be listed and a person may request access to the document through the contact point.

DSS may charge a person for accessing any DSS IPS document which is impracticable to publish online:

- at the lowest reasonable cost

- to reimburse specific reproduction costs or other specific incidental costs (s 8D(4)).

These charges will be consistent with charges in the *Freedom of information (Charges) Regulations 1982* (which generally apply to access requests under Part III of the FOI Act). DSS's charges are outlined at Annexure A.

DSS will identify on its website any DSS IPS documents that are impracticable to publish online. The website will state that a person seeking access to any of these documents may contact the relevant DSS officer to arrange access.

IPS information architecture

DSS will publish its IPS information holdings on its website in accordance with the timetable at Annexure B.

DSS's IPS information holdings that are available on its website will include documents of the following categories/types:

- Agency plan (ss 8(2)(a))
- Who we are (ss 8(2)(b) and 8(2)(d))
- What we do (ss 8(2)(c) and 8(2)(j))
- Our reports and responses to Parliament (ss 8(2)(e) and 8(2)(h))
- Routinely requested information and disclosure log (ss 8(2)(g) and 11C)
- Consultation arrangements (s 8(2)(f))
- Other information (s 8(4))
- Contact us (s 8(2)(i)).

To ensure that DSS's IPS information holdings (and individual DSS IPS documents) are easily discoverable, understandable and machine-readable, DSS will:

- publish an IPS icon on the homepage of its website, which will link to the IPS section of the website
- design and publish an IPS entry point on its website
- wherever possible, provide online content in a format that can be searched, copied and transformed
- provide an alert service to notify subscribers of new publications under the IPS or other developments in relation to DSS's contribution to the IPS
- establish links to this agency plan at www.directory.gov.au
- respond to community feedback about whether the IPS information holdings (and individual IPS documents) are easily discoverable, understandable and machine-readable.

DSS will make its IPS documents available on the IPS section of the website.

DSS will, so far as possible, make its IPS information holdings available for reuse on open licensing terms.

Information required to be published under the IPS

DSS will publish documents required to be published under the IPS (s 8(2)) in the IPS section of the website at www.dss.gov.au, or provide a link from the IPS section to the associated document.

DSS will publish these documents in accordance with the timeframe set out in Annexure B. In addition to the agency plan, DSS will publish these documents or links to these documents under the following headings:

Who we are

- This will include an organisation chart and information about statutory appointments where applicable.
- For statutory appointees, DSS will publish the name of the person appointed, the length or term of appointment, the position to which the person is appointed (and particulars of the position) and the provision of the Act under which the person is appointed.

What we do

- This will outline the functions, areas of responsibility and decision making powers of DSS.
- DSS will also publish rules, guidelines, practices and precedents relating to these functions and powers and responsibilities. This will include the full text of DSS 's recent annual reports since 2000-2010 tabled in Parliament.

Routinely requested information

- This will include information in documents to which DSS routinely gives access in response to FOI requests.
- DSS will clearly identify these documents in its disclosure log, published under s 11C of the FOI Act – which requires agencies to publish information contained in documents to which the agency has provided access under the FOI Act.

Consultation

- This will include information about how and to whom a comment may be submitted by members of the public, where DSS undertakes public consultation on a specific policy proposal.

Contact us

- This will include the name, telephone number and an email address for a contact officer, who can be contacted about access to DSS 's information or documents under the FOI Act. Contact details for access to specific IPS documents listed on our website are to be provided.

Optional information to be published under the IPS

DSS will publish on the IPS section of its website other information that it holds (in addition to the information published under s 8(2)), taking into account the objects of the FOI Act (s 8(4)).

DSS will publish these documents in accordance with the timeframe set out in Attachment B.

Optional information will be published as it becomes available.

Accessibility under the IPS

(a) Approach to accessibility by commencement of the IPS

DSS will ensure that, as far as practicable, all online information it is required to publish under the IPS (s 8(2)) conforms with the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (WCAG) on commencement of the IPS (1 May 2011).

DSS's dedicated IPS section of its website will state that where a document is not yet available in an accessible format, it will be made available in an accessible format on request, by contacting the relevant contact officer (whose contact details will be provided). This may be subject to a small number of exceptions identified in Annexure B.

(b) Approach to accessibility after commencement of the IPS

From commencement of the IPS, DSS will publish any new DSS IPS documents as soon as practicable, once they are available for publication.

DSS will ensure wherever practicable that all information newly published on the DSS website conforms with WCAG.

IPS compliance review

DSS will review and revise this agency plan at least annually, which will coincide with DSS's annual planning process.

DSS will review the operation of its IPS from time to time and at least every five years, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Information Commissioner about IPS compliance review (better practice guidance material to assist agencies to

comply with the IPS – to be published in the Information Commissioner’s regulatory capacity).

Annexure A

Access charges for documents not available on the website

| Format | Charges |
|--|--|
| Photocopy | 10 cents per page |
| Copy (other than photocopy) | \$4.40 per page |
| Copy of the document in the form of a computer tape or a computer disk | An amount not exceeding the actual costs incurred by DSS in producing the copy |
| Copy of the document to be sent to the applicant by post or delivered to the applicant | An amount not exceeding the cost of postage or delivery |

Annexure B

Indicative timetable – website publishing

| No. | Document category | Format | Indicative dates |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 1. | Agency publication plan required to be published under s8(2)(a) | Accessible HTML | 1 May 2011 |
| 2. | DSS information including DSS operational information required to be published under s8(2)(b) to (j) | Accessible formats where practicable. Where not possible to publish in accessible formats, provide contact details of how the document may be obtained. | 1 May 2011 |
| 3. | Optional information published under s 8(4) | RTF, PDF and HTML and Daisy | 1 September 2011 and as it becomes available |

The majority of documents listed on the IPS section of DSS's website will be converted into HTML to meet accessibility compliance. A small number of exceptions may apply to:

- PDFs made of images of scanned documents
- Documents that are out of date, but that are provided for historical reference (these will be supplied in the formats in which they are currently available)
- Charts, tables and forms (these can be supplied in accessible formats on request).

Where practicable, documents covered by these exceptions will be published in alternative formats.