

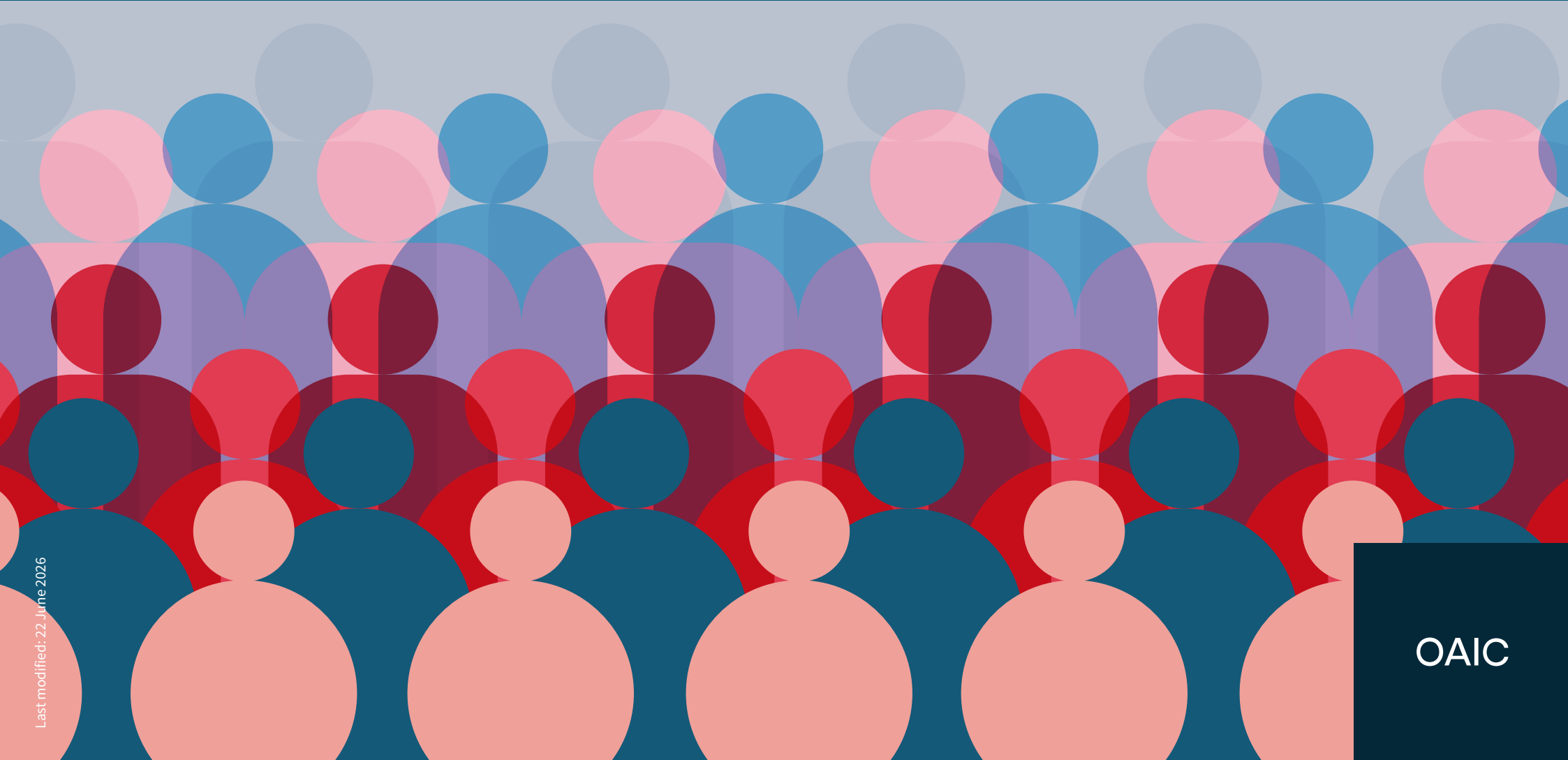


Australian Government

Office of the Australian
Information Commissioner

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

The Australian community's engagement with the OAIC



Contact

Enquiries regarding the licence and any use of this strategy are welcome.

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Introduction

This report provides a snapshot of the OAIC's direct community contact through its case management activity. Those activities include applications, complaints and enquiries regarding access to information and privacy.

The Report provides:

- data on incoming matters and finalisation rates
- information about how cases are being managed, and options for managing this increasing demand.

Privacy and information rights are strengthened when people have clear ways to raise complaints and seek review of decisions.

The community is increasingly turning to the OAIC, and we are responding.

Key messages

1

Technology has made the privacy and information rights landscape increasingly complex. As a result, more Australians are submitting enquiries, applications and complaints to the OAIC. The volume and nature of this growth is set out in Part 1 of this report.

2

Increases of this scale reflect growing community awareness of privacy and information rights. 96% of Australians consider the right to access government-held information important or very important¹, and 87% of Australians are more concerned about privacy than 5 years ago².

3

Over the past 2 years the OAIC implemented a targeted program of case management improvements to respond to this increase and ensure confidence that the regulatory system can deliver resolution and remedy. The strategies that delivered these improvements are set out in Part 2.

4

These strategies have produced positive results for the community. Finalisation rates and outcomes are set out in Part 3.

5

Demand for the OAIC's services continue to grow at a level that requires action beyond case management alone. Part 4 sets out the system-wide response that will assist.



96%

of Australians consider the right to access government-held information important or very important.



98%

of Australians say that organisations should be responsible for the protecting personal information that they collect, use and share.

¹Information Access - Community Study Report - Aug 2025 https://www.oaic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0036/256887/Information-Access_CommunitySurvey_Federal-Report.PDF

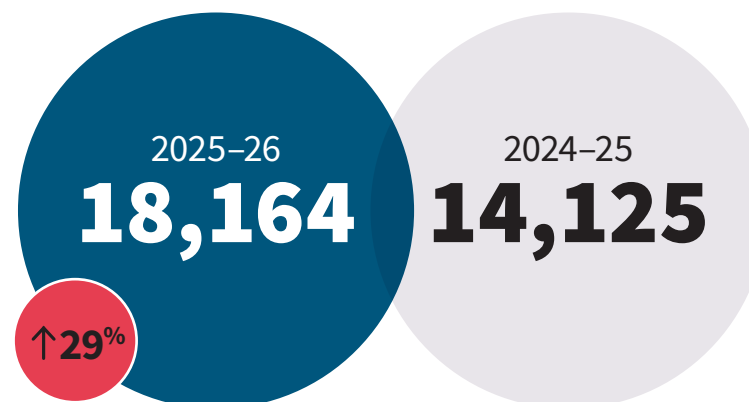
²Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey - June 2026 - https://www.oaic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/264362/ACAPS-2026-Report.PDF

Part 1

The community's engagement with the OAIC

Incoming matters

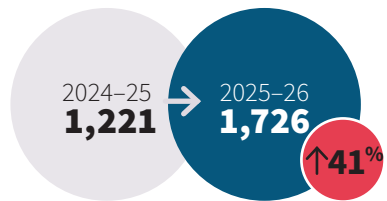
The OAIC has seen significant increases in incoming matters across case types over the past year.



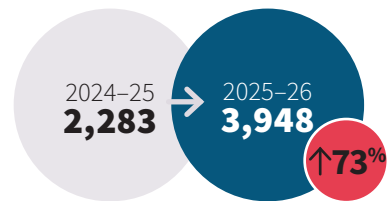
We received 18,164 matters in the financial year to date (FYTD) to 31 March 2026, compared to 14,125 received in the same period in 2024-25.

This represents an **overall rise of 29%** in our case work across the following areas:

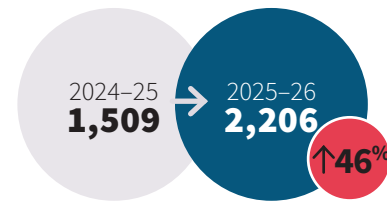
FOI enquiries received



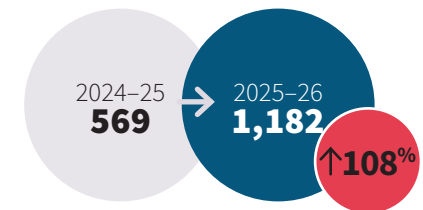
Privacy complaints received



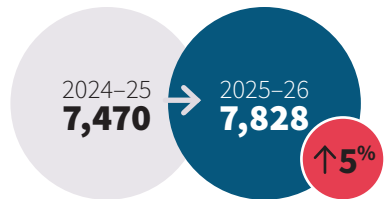
Information Commissioner (IC) reviews received



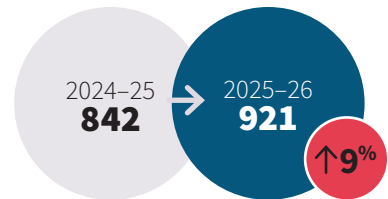
FOI extension of time requests received



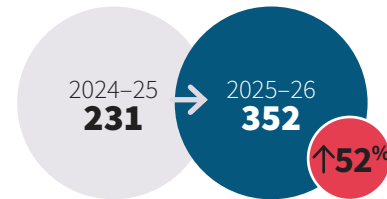
Privacy and other enquiries received



Notifiable Data Breaches (NDBs) received



FOI complaints received



Part 2

Our strategies

The strategies we implemented enhanced all aspects of our work ranging from community guidance to enforcement action. In adopting this holistic approach, we are delivering systemic improvements that protect and preserve privacy and information access rights.

As part of the case management improvement program, the OAIC has implemented a range of strategies to reduce and manage the increase in incoming matters.

These strategies fall into 3 categories:

1. **Building** understanding of rights and processes across the community and setting clearer expectations for regulated entities.
2. **Redesigning** case management to sharpen efficiency and deliver impactful outcomes.
3. **Investing** in the skills and processes underpinning good and timely decision-making.

1



Building understanding of rights and processes across the community and setting clearer expectations for regulated entities

- Updating our guidelines to clearly articulate the current law and our expectations.
- Delivering a program of agency and community engagement, including FOI regulatory webinars and roundtables, awareness events like Privacy Awareness Week and releasing a privacy complaints checklist to help entities handle complaints effectively and resolve disputes at the earliest opportunity.
- Publishing a privacy complaints blog that sets out a shift toward an enforcement-focused approach and clearer thresholds for investigating individual complaints.
- Promoting faster and more effective access to government information, and enhanced transparency, through proactive release of information, via the Information Publication Scheme (IPS) and administrative access schemes.
- Launching a disclosure log hub hosted on the OAIC website, to provide easy access to the public, of disclosure logs of over 240 agencies.
- Supporting External Dispute Resolution schemes to manage privacy complaints involving broader industry specific issues.

2



Redesigning case management to sharpen efficiency and deliver impactful outcomes

- Establishing a single point of assessment, early resolution and investigation.
- Shifting to a proactive, enforcement focused regulatory posture, pursuing systemic harms and harmful practices and directing resources to serious and valid matters likely to result in meaningful change.
- Streamlining decision-making and templates, particularly for FOI extension of time matters to deliver same day outcomes.
- Conducting the OAIC's first-ever compliance sweep, reviewing selected businesses' privacy policies to ensure they meet strict rules, engage with complaints effectively and better serve community needs.
- Managing similar classes of cases collectively and establishing a dedicated team for vexatious applicant declarations.

3



Investing in the skills and processes underpinning good and timely decision-making

- Training in investigation techniques and vicarious trauma, building investigator capability and improving the quality of decision-making.
- Streamlining the application processes to reduce delays.
- Integrating the representative complaints function into front line case management, enabling earlier identification and more efficient handling of significant complaints.
- Updating processes, templates and correspondence to provide clarity to the community.
- Revising assessment frameworks for FOI vexatious applicant declarations, enabling agencies and applicants to continue to resolve matters promptly.

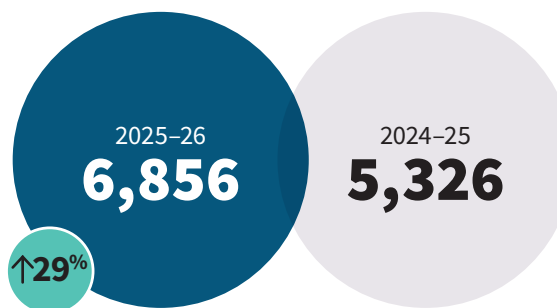
Part 3 Results

Finalisation rates

Against the significant increases in community contacts, the steps the OAIC has taken to improve efficiency and effectiveness in case management has increased efficiency and provided the community with improved outcomes.

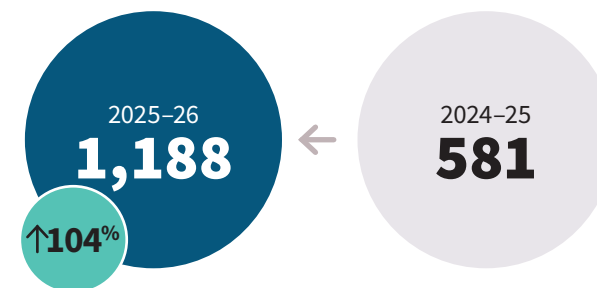
Matters finalised

The OAIC finalised 6,856 matters in the financial year to date (FYTD) to 31 March 2026, compared to 5,326 finalised in the same period in 2024-25.

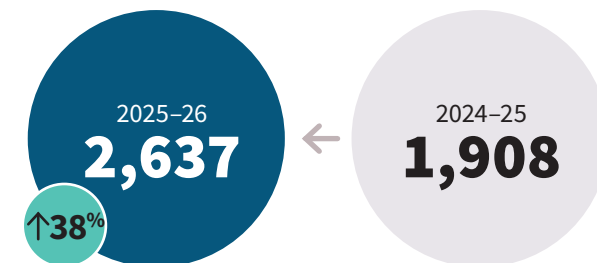


This represents an overall rise of **29%** across the following areas:

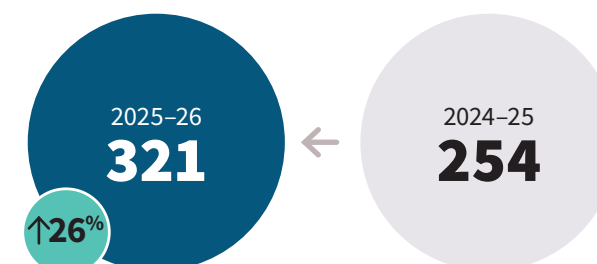
FOI extension of time requests finalised



Privacy complaints finalised



FOI complaints finalised



IC reviews finalised



NDBs finalised



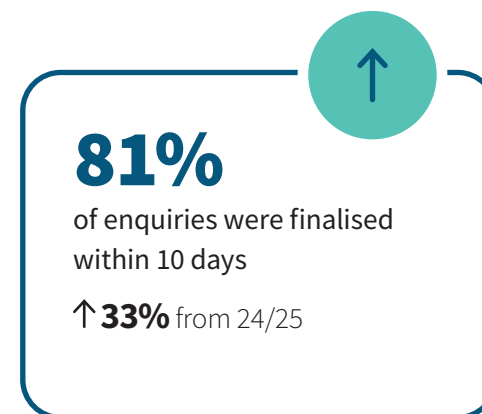
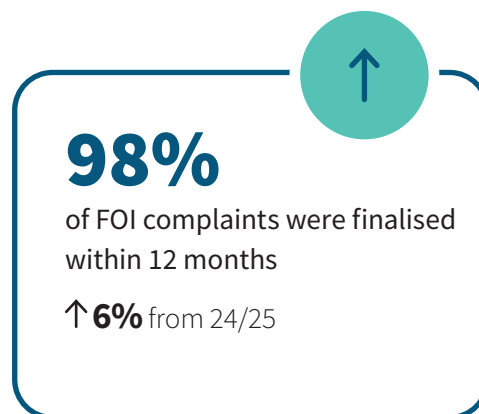
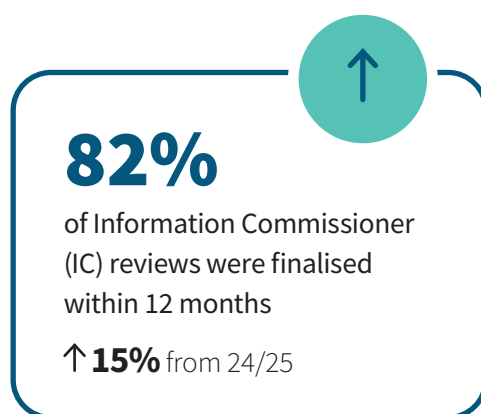
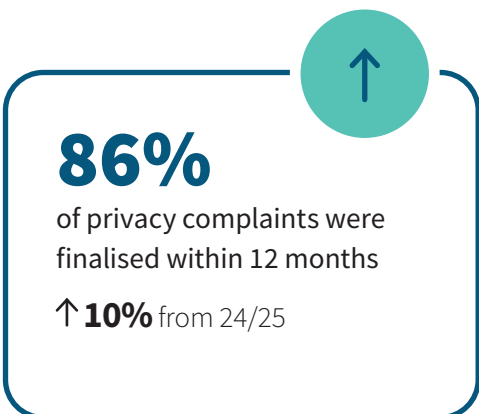
Finalisation timeframes

The average time to finalise an IC review fell from 13.5 months in 2024-25 to 7.2 months in 2025-26, a reduction of more than six months.

13.5 → 7.2 months

The average time to close a privacy complaint also fell from 7.6 months in 2024-25 to 5.5 months in 2025-26, a reduction of more than two months.

7.6 → 5.5 months



Part 4

Further options

When entities meet their privacy obligations, the community can trust their personal information is being handled responsibly, allowing businesses to operate more productively and efficiency.

While consistent progress continues to be made to improve case finalisation rates, the number of IC reviews, FOI extension of time applications and individual privacy complaints received continues to increase consistently and at rates exceeding previous years.

The data indicates that internal measures, while effective to date, need to be accompanied by the action of entities external to the OAIC to deliver systemic shifts in practice and performance.

The OAIC's function as an independent regulator and decision maker is most effective when it operates as the final avenue rather than the first.

The OAIC will continue to work with agencies and regulated entities to strengthen complaint handling processes, promote understanding of privacy and FOI obligations and equip the public with information on how to exercise their rights.

This builds public trust, promotes accountability across institutions and supports productivity gains across the public and private sectors.

When individuals can exercise their privacy and information rights efficiently, trust is built across the public and private sector, leading to greater productivity gains and a stronger economy.

A system-wide response



Entities handling personal information responsibly and resolving complaints

Responsible information handling reduces privacy complaints reaching the OAIC. Entities that also resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity reduce pressure on formal channels. ACAPS 2026 found that around one third of Australians believe that entities do not handle privacy complaints fairly and effectively, and individuals who have nowhere else to turn come to the OAIC instead.

Under Australian Privacy Principle (APP) 1.2, entities are required to take proactive steps to establish and maintain internal practices, procedures and systems that ensure compliance with the APPs. The obligation is a constant one.

The OAIC will continue to encourage and require uplift in APP entities provision of effective and accessible complaints processes, and fair and reasonable information handling practices.



Agencies managing FOI requests effectively

The 2025 Information Access Community Study found that 56% of Australians anticipate wanting to access information held by government over the next 2 years.

Reducing the need for FOI requests by agencies proactively publishing information is one of the simplest ways to improve the FOI experience. By releasing more information proactively, the FOI system will become more efficient and effective for the community and for government.

Where agencies handle requests well and resolve issues early, fewer matters escalate to the OAIC. The OAIC will continue to work with agencies to strengthen proactive release, FOI practice and internal resolution.



Equipping the community

The 2025 Information Access Community Study found that public support for the right to access government-held information is at its highest recorded level, with 96% of respondents considering it important and 58% describing it as very important.

Applications from the community seeking a decision on information access by the government agency represent 80% of our requests for review.

We are actively engaging with agencies to promote effective case management and to ease access in 2 priority areas: personal information and proactive release of information.

We are promoting a single point of contact via a public facing **icon** so that its immediately recognisable to the Australian community.



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