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RTI Uplift Project – Outline and History

Project Name	Right to Information (RTI) Uplift Project
Project Description	<p>The RTI Uplift Project aims to support uplift in RTI capability and practice across the Tasmanian State Service (TSS) by introducing consistent training, building skilled practitioners, and reducing key person dependencies.</p> <p>It was established as an interim action in response to experiences shared by victim-survivors and journalists during the Commission of Inquiry (COI) of struggling to access information from government due to inconsistent processes and decision-making.</p>
Project Objectives	<p>The RTI Uplift Project will result in improved and consistent processes for the handling of right to information requests across the TSS through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the establishment of new, standardised RTI procedures.• stakeholders feeling considered and ready to engage in the RTI process.• an uplift to the capability of the Tasmanian State Service to deliver timely and transparent responses to requests for information under RTI legislation.• the identification of more opportunities for the regular and proactive release of information to reduce the community's need to access RTI processes.
Project Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole of government policy and procedures on RTI Processes• Whole of government RTI training package• Improved routine disclosure suite across the Tasmanian State Service• Advice to applicants on how to effectively seek information from Government• Training resources for officers involved in actioning RTI requests
Project History Summary	<p>The Right to Information Uplift Project was created as an interim response to the COI to address experiences shared by journalists and victim-survivors of struggling to access information due to inconsistent processes and decision making between different TSS agencies.</p> <p>During the initiation phase of the project, it was quickly discovered that while process improvements could be made to increase consistency in how right to information applications are handled across the TSS, the issues impacting accessing personal information required legislative reform to overcome.</p> <p>As the Department of Premier and Cabinet is not responsible for administering the <i>Right to Information Act 2009</i> or the <i>Personal</i></p>

Information Protection Act 2004 and it was considered highly likely that legislative reform would be a specific recommendation of the COI, it was determined that legislative reform was beyond the scope of this project. The project was instead focused on improving internal processes and identifying opportunities for reform.

Important milestones were completed in 2023 to discover and define the issues with RTI. A Project Plan and Stakeholder Communication and Change Management Plan were drafted. RTI delegates and applicants were engaged through surveys exploring their experience using the RTI process in the TSS. Using the learnings of the surveys, a Discussion Paper which comprehensively analyses areas for improvement in the TSS's RTI practice was developed in consultation with agencies.

Throughout the first phase of the project, agencies made the following improvements to their RTI processes:

- recruiting additional staff
- streamlining processes
- waiving fees for victim-survivor applicants and their representatives,
- ensuring applicants receive appropriate clinical support if the information released may be traumatising.

Following the completion of this phase of the project, it was determined to pause further progress until the final recommendations of the COI were released to ensure alignment with core objectives.

There were several recommendations made in the final COI report relating to the *Right to Information Act 2009* and the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*. Legislative reform led by the Department of Justice is required to achieve these recommendations. In light of this it was agreed that the project should be reinstated in 2024 with a focus on improving internal skills development and processes.

A presentation was given to the Steering Committee in July 2024 on reform recommendations that have been made in relation to information management and a proposal was put to the Committee to deliver the above outputs. The Steering Committee agreed to the revised scope.

A new project manager commenced in September 2024 and the milestones are on track to be delivered in accordance with the updated project schedule.

Attachments:

- 1) Information Access Landscape
- 2) COI legislative reform recommendations