

The Australian Privacy Principles

The Privacy Act

The [Privacy Act 1988](#) promotes and protects the privacy of individuals while regulating how Australian organisations and government agencies handle personal information.

The Australian Privacy Principles

The Privacy Act includes 13 [Australian Privacy Principles](#), which cover the standards, rights and obligations in relation to:

- an organisation's or agency's governance and accountability
- the collection, use and disclosure of personal information
- the integrity and correction of personal information
- individuals accessing their personal information.

The Australian Privacy Principles are technology neutral, so they can adapt to changing technologies. Breaching the Australian Privacy Principles can lead to regulatory action and penalties.

Privacy and health service providers

Since 21 December 2001, health service providers have been required to comply with the Privacy Act when collecting personal information.

An organisation that provides a health service or holds health information is considered to be a health service provider, even if it is not their primary activity or they are a small business.

Organisations that are considered to be health service providers include:

- general practitioners or medical practitioners
- private hospitals or day procedure centres
- private aged care or palliative care facilities
- pathology or radiology services
- blood or tissue banks
- assisted fertility or IVF clinics
- dentists
- pharmacists
- allied health professionals
- complementary medicine therapists

- health services provided in the non-government sector (such as a phone counselling service or drug and alcohol service)
- disability service providers (where they handle health information)
- online health services, telehealth businesses or health mail order businesses
- Gyms, weight loss clinics, childcare centres and private schools (if they hold health information).

State or territory public hospitals and health services are not covered by the Privacy Act, but may be covered by relevant state or territory legislation.

Guide to health privacy

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) has developed a [guide to health privacy](#) to help health service providers understand their obligations under the Privacy Act and embed best practice privacy processes.

Privacy action plan for your practice

To enable your practice to meet its privacy obligations and protect each patient's personal information, the OAIC recommends implementing a [privacy action plan](#) by following the steps below:

- Step 1 - develop and implement a privacy management plan.
- Step 2 - develop clear lines of accountability for privacy management.
- Step 3 - create a documented record of the types of personal information you handle.
- Step 4 - understand your privacy obligations and implement processes to meet them.
- Step 5 - hold staff training sessions on privacy obligations.
- Step 6 - create a privacy policy.
- Step 7 - protect the information you hold.
- Step 8 - develop a data breach response plan.

Further information

To find out more about the Privacy Act and the Australian Privacy Principles, visit the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) [website](#).

Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.