

Commercial Insights

Privacy Awareness Week | 2 – 8 May 2022

While 84% of Australians consider privacy to be important when they are choosing a website or digital service, only 20% read privacy policies and are confident they understand them.¹ This highlights the trust Australians place in service providers – trusting that their personal information will be handled with integrity and care.

This year's Privacy Awareness Week (**PAW**) theme, '**Privacy: The foundation of trust,**' recognises the importance of implementing strong foundations to protect privacy and build trust. PAW 2022 reminds businesses that good privacy practices are fundamental to maintaining the community's trust. Respecting privacy and upholding that trust is the responsibility of all members of an organisation, and everyone has a role to play.

To help you build strong privacy foundations and gain and retain the trust of those whose personal information you collect and handle, we recommend the following fundamental principles:

1. **Know your obligations.** The *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* is the key to privacy protection in Australia. By ensuring you keep up to date with your responsibilities under the Privacy Act, and any developments or changes to your obligations, you can build trust with the community that you understand the importance of keeping their personal information safe.
2. **Have a privacy plan.** Having a holistic approach to privacy involves understanding the need to embed a culture of privacy into all aspects and levels of an organisation. A privacy management plan that turns policies into action will allow you to preserve and promote privacy from the top, and in your day-to-day operations.
3. **Assess privacy risks.** When embarking on projects that involve new information handling practices, you should perform a privacy impact assessment to ensure you keep privacy discussions at the forefront of your projects.

As an individual, you should also take care in who, and how, you entrust your personal information with others. Some tips to keep in mind include:

1. **Check before you share.** Before you share your personal information, make sure you trust the organisation or that the person or organisation you are sharing your information with is who they say they are.
2. **Read privacy policies.** The *Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey 2020* indicates that only a small proportion of Australians read privacy policies before agreeing to share their personal information.² Privacy policies can help you understand how and why your information will be used, so you can make informed decisions about who to trust with your personal information.

¹ Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, *Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey 2020* (Survey, September 2020) 5, 18.

² Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, *Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey 2020* (Survey, September 2020) 5.

April 2022

3. **Protect your devices.** A simple yet crucial way to address new security concerns is to keep your devices updated. Setting up and performing regular backups establishes a safety net to protect against loss of your personal information if something goes wrong.

For businesses entrusted with personal information, it is critical that information is handled with transparency, integrity and care.

For further information on PAW 2022 and for more tips on protecting privacy, see:

<https://education.oaic.gov.au/paw2022/>

Meridian Lawyers assists organisations and individuals to address their privacy obligations. If you have any questions about your obligations when handling personal information or require assistance in reviewing your privacy practices and policies, please contact Special Counsel Hayley Bowman.



Hayley Bowman

Special Counsel

+61 3 9810 6723

hbowman@meridianlawyers.com.au

Disclaimer: This information is current as of April 2022. This article does not constitute legal advice and does not give rise to any solicitor/client relationship between Meridian Lawyers and the reader. Professional legal advice should be sought before acting or relying upon the content of this article.