

OFFICIAL



# **Information & Communications Technology Guide to Assessing and Protecting Official Information**

January 2025

## Table of Contents

|          |                                                   |          |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Introduction .....</b>                         | <b>3</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Assessing Information.....</b>                 | <b>3</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Protecting information appropriately .....</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>OFFICIAL .....</b>                             | <b>4</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>OFFICIAL: Sensitive.....</b>                   | <b>5</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>UNOFFICIAL .....</b>                           | <b>5</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>PROTECTED Information.....</b>                 | <b>5</b> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>FAQ .....</b>                                  | <b>6</b> |

## 1 Introduction

As staff, contractors and consultants, we are all accountable for ensuring official Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman Information is treated with the highest level of integrity, accountability and security.

Information security requirements must be clear so that the Office can confidently share information with partners, build a common understanding of confidentiality requirements and improve the application of protective information security measures.

The Office follows the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework guidance on how to classify information. More information about the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework Release 2024 is at <https://www.protectivesecurity.gov.au/publications-library/pspf-annual-release>

## 2 Assessing Information

The creator of enterprise information is best positioned to:

- assess the sensitivity of the information,
- apply the appropriate marker or classification, and
- protect the information appropriately.

**When assessing information security, it's important to consider how much harm the information could cause the OCO, individuals, or the Australian Government, if it was compromised (shared inappropriately).**

Ask the following questions:

- How sensitive is the information?
- Who is going to receive or access this information?
- What harm or negative impact will it cause if the information is compromised?

## 3 Protecting information appropriately

Information security classifications allow the Office to share and exchange information with confidence. It is a well-known system, that enables more precise and consistent application of protective security measures and provides guidance to colleagues on the sensitivity of documents and emails.

When marking information with a protective label or classification, you are identifying how sensitive or important the information is, who should have access and how the information must be handled.

There are three levels of protective markers and classifications used on the Office's main IT system:

- OFFICIAL
- OFFICIAL: Sensitive
- UNOFFICIAL

## OFFICIAL

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OFFICIAL</b>                | OFFICIAL Information includes all your OCO business activities and information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• notes that you take at an OCO meeting</li><li>• an email to a work colleague about an OCO matter</li><li>• information prepared for public access or circulation, such as websites or Frequently Asked Questions.</li></ul>                                                                                                          |
| <b>OFFICIAL:<br/>Sensitive</b> | OFFICIAL: Sensitive – Official Information containing sensitive data that could impact the Offices functions, reputation or the safety of an individual.<br><br>Official Sensitive Information could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OCO staffing matters,</li><li>• Commercial / procurement details or contracts or documents and advice provided by legal professionals,</li><li>• Executive meeting papers,</li><li>• Risks assessments.</li></ul> |
| <b>UNOFFICIAL</b>              | UNOFFICIAL Information is not related to your work at OCO                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## 4 OFFICIAL

All information relating to your work for the Office is Official Information. Official Information includes material held in any format including:

written documents, reports, memoranda, letters, emails, and notes

digital information stored on a computer, a video-camera or a mobile device

The majority of OCO information created for routine business operations and services, is usually marked as OFFICIAL. Information marked as OFFICIAL may be shared on approved systems with people who have a need-to-know.

Compromise of Official Information may cause limited damage to national security, government agencies, commercial entities or members of the public. The unauthorised disclosure or compromise of OFFICIAL information assets may undermine public confidence in the Office and/or government operations.

## 5 OFFICIAL: Sensitive

The OFFICIAL: Sensitive marker identifies Official Information that also contains sensitive material. The sensitivity of the material requires an additional layer of protection to the standard Official Information. Sensitive information is usually information that would affect the reputation or safety of a person, the Office, and the Australian government.

The OFFICIAL: Sensitive marker protects sensitive information by limiting its access and use to a more specific purpose (e.g. a need-to-know). OFFICIAL: Sensitive Information can only be shared with people who need-to-know.

## 6 UNOFFICIAL

The UNOFFICIAL marker is used to identify information that is not related to your work for OCO.

Even if you are using your OCO email address to send or receive emails, the information may not be OFFICIAL.

Examples of UNOFFICIAL Information include:

- an invitation to a birthday party
- arranging tennis coaching for the weekend.

UNOFFICIAL Information is not part of your work for OCO

## 7 PROTECTED Information

PROTECTED information can be accessed via a PROTECTED accredited network, such as FORTRESS.

If you receive PROTECTED information on a standard system you must contact ICT as general OCO environments such as Office365 should not be used for protected information.

The PROTECTED marker is a Classified information marker. PROTECTED information is an attractive target for domestic and international sources, who want to capture large amounts of information and data - aggregation of this information can reveal considerable details about the Office.

Examples of PROTECTED Information include:

- a Cabinet submission,
- budget papers.

Access:

A Baseline security clearance is required to access PROTECTED information.

## 8 FAQ

| Question                                                                                    | Answer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I am preparing a presentation for a conference does it need a classification?               | Yes, unless the information is going to be released to be publicly available it will need a classification.                                                                                                                           |
| I am creating content that will be published on our website, does it need a classification? | While the content is being drafted it will need a classification. Once the content has received final sign off to be released to the website the classification can be removed as the final step. ICT can assist with this if needed. |