



Information Rights: Law and Practice

Philip Coppel

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This is the fourth edition of what is the leading practitioner's text on freedom of information law. Providing in-depth legal analysis and practical guidance, it offers complete, authoritative coverage for anyone either making, handling or adjudicating upon requests for official information. The three years since the previous edition have seen numerous important decisions from the courts and tribunals in the area. These and earlier authorities supply the basis for clear statements of principle, which the work supports by reference to all relevant cases. The book is logically organised so that the practitioner can quickly locate the relevant text. It commences with an historical analysis that sets out the object of the legislation and its relationship with other aspects of public law. Full references to Hansard and other Parliamentary materials are provided. This is followed by a summary of the regime in five other jurisdictions, providing comparative jurisprudence which can assist in resolving undecided points. The potential of the Human Rights Act 1998 to support rights of access is dealt with in some detail, with reference to all ECHR cases. Next follows a series of chapters dealing with rights of access under other legislative regimes, covering information held by EU bodies, requests under the Data Protection Act and the Environmental Information Regulations, public records, as well as type-specific rights of access. These introduce the practitioner to useful rights of access that might otherwise be overlooked. They are arranged thematically to ensure ready identification of potentially relevant ones. The book then considers practical aspects of information requests: the persons who may make them; the bodies to whom they may be made; the time allowed for responding; the modes of response; fees and vexatious requests; the duty to advise and assist; the codes of practice; government guidance and its status; transferring of requests; third party consultation. The next 13 chapters, comprising over half the book, are devoted to exemptions. These start with two important chapters dealing with general exemption principles, including the notions of 'prejudice' and the 'public interest'. The arrangement of these chapters reflects the arrangement of the FOI Act, but the text is careful to include analogous references to the Environmental Information Regulations and the Data Protection Act 1998. With each chapter, the exemption is carefully analysed, starting with its Parliamentary history (giving full references to Hansard and other Parliamentary material) and the treatment given in the comparative jurisdictions. The analysis then turns to consider all court judgments and tribunal decisions dealing with the exemption. The principles are stated in the text, with footnotes giving all available references. Whether to prepare a case or to prepare a response to a request, these chapters allow the practitioner to get on top of the exemption rapidly and authoritatively. The book concludes with three chapters setting out the role of the Information Commissioner and the Tribunal, appeals and enforcement. The chapter on appeals allows the practitioner to be familiar with the processes followed in the tribunal, picking up on the jurisprudence as it has emerged in the last eight or so years. Appendices include: precedent requests for information; a step-by-step guide to responding to a request; comparative tables; and a table of the FOI Act's Parliamentary history. Finally, the book includes an annotated copy of the FOIA Act, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, all subordinate legislation made under them, EU legislation, Tribunal rules and practice directions, and the Codes of Practice. Contributors Prof John Angel, former President of the Information Tribunal Richard Clayton QC, 4-5 Gray's Inn Square Joanne Clement, 11 KBW Gerry Facena, Monkton Chambers Eleanor Gray QC

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