

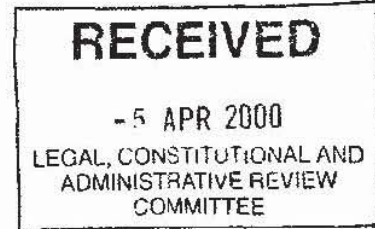


Queensland  
Board of Senior Secondary School Studies

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3 April 2000

Ms Kerryn Newton  
Research Director  
Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee  
Parliament House, George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000



Submission NO 126  
Spec 1-4

Dear Ms Newton

Thank you for the opportunity to present a submission on Discussion Paper No. 1 of the review of The Freedom of Information Act 1992 (Qld).

One of the sections of the discussion paper which relate directly to the activities of the Board is B(iv)—‘Whether the FOI Act allows appropriate access to information in electronic and non-paper formats’—and its discussion point: ‘Should the FOIQ confer a general right of access to *information* instead of a right to documents? If so, what should “information” encompass?’

The Board collects, analyses and stores a great deal of data from schools, usually in electronic format. These data may ultimately contribute to certain printed documents, such as Senior Certificates, Tertiary Entrance Statements and research reports, but the detail of the data may often be stored only in an electronic database rather than in a ‘document’ that can be located and reproduced. This may be the case even when ‘document’ is understood, as it is under the Queensland Act, to include electronic documents. Requests for information in the form of summaries, syntheses or analyses that the agency would not normally make, even though all the data necessary for these are in the agency’s possession, may be an unreasonable demand. If the Act were to be amended to confer a right to information rather than to documents, ‘information’ may need to be defined as something that can be retrieved rather than created in response to a request.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

Yours sincerely

John A Pitman  
Director