

Commonwealth Freedom of Information Principles, 1999

The Commonwealth Freedom of Information Principles were based on the recommendations in the 1999 Report of the Expert Group. Unfortunately, the final Principles endorsed by the Commonwealth Law Ministers at their Meeting in 1999 in Trinidad and Tobago were less comprehensive and progressive than the Principles and Guidelines submitted by the Expert Group. The Principles were noted by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their Durban Meeting in 1999. CHOGM recognised the importance of public access to official information, both in promoting transparency and accountable governance and in encouraging the full participation of citizens in the democratic process.

The Commonwealth Freedom of Information Principles state that:

1. Member countries should be encouraged to regard freedom of information as a legal and enforceable right.
2. There should be a presumption in favour of disclosure and Governments should promote a culture of openness.
3. The right of access to information may be subject to limited exemptions but these should be narrowly drawn.
4. Government should maintain and preserve records.
5. In principle, decisions to refuse access to records and information should be subject to independent review

Source:

http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/international/cw_standards.htm