

Table 1 Business Impact Levels tool – Assessing damage to the national interest, government, organisations or individuals

Sub-impact category ↓	OFFICIAL	Sensitive information	PROTECTED	Security classified information SECRET	TOP SECRET
	1 Low business impact	2 Low to medium business impact	3 High business impact	4 Extreme business impact	5 Catastrophic business impact
	The majority of official information created or processed by the public sector. This includes routine business operations and services. OFFICIAL is not a security classification and compromise of OFFICIAL information would result in no or insignificant damage to individuals, organisations or government.	OFFICIAL information that due to its sensitive nature requires limited dissemination. OFFICIAL: Sensitive is not a security classification. It is a dissemination limiting marker (DLM), indicating compromise of the information would result in limited damage to an individual, organisation or government.	Valuable, important and sensitive information. Compromise of PROTECTED information would be expected to cause damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.	Very valuable, important and sensitive information. Compromise of SECRET information would be expected to cause serious damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.	The most valuable, important and sensitive information. Compromise of TOP SECRET information would be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.
Potential impact on individuals from compromise of the information					
Dignity or safety of an individual (or those associated with the individual)	Information from routine business operations and services. Includes personal information as defined in the <i>Privacy Act</i> . ⁱ This may include information (or an opinion) about an identifiable individual (eg members of the public, staff etc) but would not include information defined as sensitive information under the <i>Privacy Act</i> .	Limited damage to an individual is: a. potential harm, for example injuries that are not serious or life threatening or b. discrimination, mistreatment, humiliation or undermining an individual's dignity or safety that is not life threatening.	Damage to an individual is discrimination, mistreatment, humiliation or undermining of an individual's dignity or safety that leads to potentially significant harm or potentially life threatening injury.	Serious damage is discrimination, mistreatment, humiliation or undermining people's dignity or safety that could reasonably be expected to directly threaten or lead to the loss of life of an individual or small group.	Exceptionally grave damage is: a. widespread loss of life b. discrimination, mistreatment, humiliation or undermining people's dignity or safety that could reasonably be expected to directly lead to the death of a large number of people.
Potential impact on organisations from compromise of the information					
Entity operations, capability and service delivery	Information from routine business operations and services.	Limited damage to entity operations is: a. a degradation in organisational capability to an extent and duration that, while the entity can perform its primary functions , the effectiveness of the functions is noticeably reduced b. minor loss of confidence in government.	Damage to entity operations is: a. a degradation in, or loss of, organisational capability to an extent and duration that the entity cannot perform one or more of its primary functions b. major loss of confidence in government.	Serious damage to entity operations is: a. a severe degradation in, or loss of, organisational capability to an extent and duration that the entity cannot perform any of its functions b. directly threatening the internal stability of Australia.	Not applicable. Impacts on an entity or organisation due to compromise of information are assessed as to the level of impact to the national interest.
Entity assets and finances, eg operating budget	Information compromise would result in insignificant impact to the entity assets or annual operating budget.	Limited damage to entity assets or annual operating budget is equivalent to \$10 million to \$100 million.	Damage is: a. substantial financial loss to an entity b. \$100 million to \$10 billion damage to entity assets.	Not applicable. Impacts on an entity or organisation at this scale are considered a matter of national interest.	Not applicable. Impacts on an entity or organisation due to compromise of information are assessed as to the level of impact to the national interest.
Legal compliance, eg information compromise would cause non-compliance with legislation,ⁱⁱ commercial confidentiality or legal professional privilege	Information compromise would not result in legal and compliance issues.	Limited damage is: a. issues of legal professional privilege for communications between legal practitioners and their clients b. contract or agreement non-compliance c. failure of statutory duty d. breaches of information disclosure limitations under legislation resulting in less than two years' imprisonment.	Damage is: a. failure of statutory duty or breaches of information disclosure limitations under legislation resulting in two or more years' imprisonment.	Not applicable. Impacts on an entity or organisation at this scale are considered a matter of national interest.	Not applicable. Impacts on an entity or organisation due to the compromise of information are assessed as to the level of impact to the national interest.
Aggregated dataⁱⁱⁱ	An aggregation of routine business information.	A significant aggregated holding of information that, if compromised, would cause limited damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.	A significant aggregated holding of sensitive information that, if compromised, would cause damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.	A significant aggregated holding of sensitive or classified information that, if compromised, would cause serious damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.	A significant aggregated holding of sensitive or classified information that, if compromised, would cause exceptionally grave damage to the national interest, organisations or individuals.
Potential impact on government or the national interest from compromise of the information					
Policies and legislation	Information compromise from routine business operations and services. For example, this may include information in a draft format (not otherwise captured by higher business impact level).	Limited damage to government is impeding the development or operation of policies.	Damage to the national interest is: a. impeding the development or operation of major policies b. revealing deliberations or decisions of Cabinet, or matters submitted, or proposed to be submitted, to Cabinet ^{iv} (not otherwise captured by higher level business impacts).	Serious damage to the national interest is: a. a severe degradation in development or operation of multiple major policies to an extent and duration that the policies can no longer be delivered.	Exceptionally grave damage to the national interest is the collapse of internal political stability of Australia or friendly countries.

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Australian economy	Information from routine business operations and services.	Limited damage to government is: a. undermining the financial viability of one or more individuals, minor Australian-based or owned organisations or companies b. disadvantaging a major Australian organisation or company.	Damage to the national interest is: a. undermining the financial viability of a major Australian-based or owned organisation or company b. disadvantaging a number of major Australian organisations or companies c. short-term material impact on national finances or economy.	Serious damage to the national interest is: a. undermining the financial viability of an Australian industry sector (multiple major organisations in the same sector) b. long-term damage to the Australian economy to an estimated total in excess of \$20 billion.	Exceptionally grave damage to the national interest is the collapse of the Australian economy.
National infrastructure	Information from routine business operations and services.	Limited damage to government is damaging or disrupting state or territory infrastructure.	Damage to the national interest is damaging or disrupting significant state or territory infrastructure.	Serious damage to the national interest is shutting down or substantially disrupting significant national infrastructure.	Exceptionally grave damage to the national interest is the collapse of all significant national infrastructure.
International relations	Information from routine business operations and diplomatic activities.	Limited damage to government is minor and incidental damage or disruption to diplomatic relations.	Damage to the national interest is: a. short-term damage or disruption to diplomatic relations b. disadvantaging Australia in international negotiations or strategy.	Serious damage to the national interest is: a. severely disadvantaging Australia in major international negotiations or strategy b. directly threatening internal stability of friendly countries, leading to widespread instability c. raising international tension or severely disrupting diplomatic relations resulting in formal protest or sanction.	Exceptionally grave damage to the national interest is directly provoking international conflict or causing exceptionally grave damage to relations with friendly countries.
Crime prevention, defence or intelligence operations	Information from routine business operations and services.	Limited damage to government is: a. impeding the detection, investigation, prosecution of, or facilitating the commission of low-level crime b. affecting the non-operational effectiveness of Australian or allied forces without causing risk to life.	Damage to the national interest is: a. impeding the detection, investigation, prosecution of, or facilitating the commission of an offence with two or more years imprisonment b. affecting the non-operational effectiveness of Australian or allied forces that could result in risk to life.	Serious damage to the national interest is major long-term impairment to the ability to investigate or prosecute serious organised crime ^v affecting the operational effectiveness, security or intelligence capability of Australian or allied forces.	Exceptionally grave damage to the national interest is significantly affecting the operational effectiveness, security or intelligence operations of Australian or allied forces.

Table 1 notes:

ⁱ Section 6 of the *Privacy Act 1988* provides definitions of ‘personal information’ and ‘sensitive information’:

‘**personal information**’ means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:

- (a) whether the information or opinion is true or not; and
- (b) whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.’

‘**sensitive information**’ means:

- (a) information or an opinion about an individual’s:
 - (i) racial or ethnic origin; or
 - (ii) political opinions; or
 - (iii) membership of a political association; or
 - (iv) religious beliefs or affiliations; or
 - (v) philosophical beliefs; or
 - (vi) membership of a professional or trade association; or
 - (vii) membership of a trade union; or
 - (viii) sexual orientation or practices; or
 - (ix) criminal record;
- (that is also personal information); or
- (b) health information about an individual; or
- (c) genetic information about an individual that is not otherwise health information; or
- (d) biometric information that is to be used for the purpose of automated biometric verification or biometric identification; or

(e) biometric templates.’

Where compromise of personal information, especially sensitive information under the Privacy Act would lead to damage, serious damage or exceptionally grave damage to individuals, this information warrants classification.

ⁱⁱ In its report *Secrecy Laws and Open Government in Australia* the Australian Law Reform Commission identified 506 secrecy provisions in 176 pieces of legislation, including 358 distinct criminal offences. Examples of legislation including secrecy provisions include: *Social Security Act 1991* and *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*, *Taxation Administration Act 1953*, *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, and, more generally, the *Criminal Code*.

ⁱⁱⁱ A compilation of information may be assessed as requiring a higher security classification where the compilation is significantly more valuable than its individual components. This is because the collated information reveals new and more sensitive information or intelligence than would be apparent from the main source records and would cause greater damage than individual documents. When viewed separately, the components of the information compilation retain their individual classifications.

^{iv} This includes official records of Cabinet, Cabinet business lists, minutes, submissions, memoranda or matters without submission, and any other information that has been submitted or proposed to be submitted to Cabinet.

^v Serious organised crime as defined in the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime