



Policy: Confidentiality

Platinum Certification AQA Pty Ltd is legally obligated to maintain confidentiality and privacy of all personal and commercial information and records under the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in that Act.

Platinum Certification AQA will follow the APPs in all matters relating to the collection, secure storage, use and disclosure of all information and records; whether personal or commercial in confidence as gathered by authorised personnel for the purposes of conducting certification and audit business.

All personal or commercial information received by, or available to, Platinum Certification AQA, its' CEO, employees or contractors while conducting audit activities, other certification activities, or conducting business with an organisation for any other reason will be regarded as strictly confidential and shall not be divulged to any third party and managed according to the APP's. This includes any information obtained about the client from sources other than the client, such as from a complainant or regulators.

When Platinum Certification AQA is required by law or authorised by contractual arrangements (such as an accreditation or regulatory body), Platinum Certification AQA will release the required confidential information as advised. The client or any individual concerned will, unless prohibited by law, be notified of the request and the type of information provided.

Where an organisation is reasonably assessed to be operating contrary to legal or regulatory requirements or has operating practices that pose, or potentially pose, a danger to their participants, the community, Platinum Certification AQA employees and contractors or the environment, Platinum Certification AQA reserves the right to immediately report any incident to the relevant authority verbally and in writing. Such reporting will be undertaken within established timeframes by the officer or contractor on site immediately after authorisation by the CEO who will grant personnel immediate verbal and then written permission.

All records required for the purpose of conducting business and for certification purposes will be retained in a secure manner on local password protected servers and accessible to Platinum Certification AQA authorised employees and contractors only. Contractors, when conducting their contracted audit activities with an organisation, will have authorised, time-limited access to any information and records that are relevant to that contracted activity.

Records of all activities relating to audit or other related activities kept by Platinum Certification AQA will only be made available to organisations or persons who can demonstrate in writing a legitimate (and legal) right to view those records.

All CEO, employees and contractors will be required to agree to Platinum Certification AQA's Confidentiality Policy and sign a Confidentiality Agreement.



As an Approved Quality Auditor (AQA), Platinum Certification AQA Pty Ltd and our auditors are given access to documents and information that are considered to be highly confidential. We also work closely with many clients that are in direct competition with each other. For these reasons it is important to our business that we maintain a strictly high level of confidentiality for all of our clients. This policy describes how confidentiality is maintained and must be adhered to by all Platinum Certification AQA Pty Ltd staff and contractors.

General

Whilst the majority of our client's information remains confidential, there is some information that is made publicly available relating to the certification. This information includes the name and address of the organisation, and the standard to which it is certified. Clients are advised of this through the terms and conditions.

Where additional client information is requested by third party organisations such as government procurement departments, the client will be advised, and no information will be released without the written consent of the client (unless legally required).

Office Level

All client information that is collected including client documents, audit reports, complaints from external and regulatory bodies, audit notes are stored on computers that are password protected. Hard copies of documents, including those collected during audits, are destroyed after being noted in the audit report or scanned into the client's file.

Where client information is required to be released by law (typically by subpoena) the client will be notified, unless restricted by the subpoena, prior to the information being released by Platinum Certification AQA Pty Ltd.

Auditors

The nature of an audit also presents a large risk for maintaining confidentiality, as our auditors have client files on their laptops and there is also a potential for client information to be released during conversation. In order to control these risks, all auditors and technical experts are required to complete the Technical Expert / Auditor Agreement that includes a declaration of confidentiality. All auditors' laptops must be password protected and when left unattended must be secured. Auditors are also encouraged to minimise the use of hard copy notes except on sites that do not facilitate the use of a laptop as hard copy notes are less secure. Auditors are also discouraged from taking hard copy client documents off site.

Impartiality Committee

Impartiality Committee members need to review information relating to the client in order to perform their function. As some of the committee members come from outside the certification body, members are also required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.