In the first six weeks since the commencement of Territory’s new Information Act 43 requests for access to information have been lodged across the Territory, signalling a real interest by Territorians in freedom of information principles.

Attorney General Dr Peter Toyne said 12 government agencies have received the 43 applications with 19 of those applications seeking personal information.

"Government has well and truly got FOI up and running with 12 applications already finalised, 14 currently being processed and 17 being held pending further clarity about the information sought from the applicant.

"The Act was framed to ensure it served the interests of the community with clear guidelines to ensure Government agencies respond in a timely fashion and to date it is pleasing to see that Agencies have been very responsive.

"The Martin Government committed to freedom of information law and introduced the Territory’s Information Act, which is unique in Australia because it combines freedom of information principles, privacy laws and record management principles," Dr Toyne said.

An independent Information Commissioner, Mr Peter Shoyer, was also appointed to oversee the implementation and use of the Act.

Dr Toyne confirmed the Opposition has recently lodged an application for all material prepared for the Estimate Committee hearings held in June this year.

"The Opposition’s request is extremely wide, and in light of the fact it comes just after they have had the longest ever Estimates Committee process in the Territory’s history, and will cost tens of thousands of dollars and extensive time to process, seems somewhat ambit.

"The Freedom of Information provisions were not established to encourage fishing expeditions – and in this case, the Opposition had the opportunity to thoroughly examine each Minister about the details of their portfolio responsibilities during the Estimates process.

"The Estimates hearing was extensive and this type of application highlights that the Opposition should give more thought to using the FOI process and time of public servants processing applications, more effectively."