



Our reference: RQ23/05154
Agency reference: 687/22/23

Andrew Quilty

By email: foi+request-10196-95542bee@righttoknow.org.au
CC: foireview@defence.gov.au

Extension of time under s 54D

Dear Mr Quilty

On 5 October 2023, the Department of Defence (Department) advised this office that it had not made a decision on your internal review request of 4 September 2023 within the statutory period provided by the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (the FOI Act). Consequently, the FOI Act deems that the Department has refused your internal review request and affirmed its original decision.

However s 54D of the FOI Act allows the Information Commissioner to extend the processing time for an internal review where the initial decision period has ended and the agency or Minister has not provided the applicant with notice of a decision. The Department has applied for further time to make a decision on your internal review request.

Decision

As a delegate of the Information Commissioner, I am authorised to make decisions on applications for extensions of time under s 54D of the FOI Act.

I have decided to grant the Department further time under s 54D of the FOI Act to **20 October 2023** to process your request for an internal review. My reasons and considerations follow:

- The Department has advised the OAIC:
 - ‘Given that the matter is a sensitive matter, it is currently awaiting the relevant line areas to provide their comments on the review’; and
 - ‘After incorporating feedback from the line area, the statement of reasons and the documents in question will be ready for review by the director’.
- I have partially extended the requested extra time from 18 October 2023 to 20 October 2023 to enable the Department to consider this extension of time decision when finalising your FOI request.
- I have considered that granting this extension of time is expected to provide you with a substantive decision by the Department on your request by 20 October 2023.

Granting this extension is also expected to extend the timeframe for you to apply for IC review of a decision by the Department.

This extension of time under s 54D of the FOI Act means that the deemed affirmation of the original decision is taken never to have applied if the Department makes a decision on your request by 20 October 2023. Such an extension can only be granted once and cannot be extended by a variation.

You may wish to seek Information Commissioner review [here](#). Further information on [applying for IC review](#) is available on the OAIC [website](#).

Contact

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact me on 1300 363 992 or via email at foidr@oaic.gov.au. In all correspondence please include OAIC reference: RQ23/05154.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Thomas Hanaee', written in a cursive style.

Thomas Hanaee
Assistant Review Adviser
Freedom of Information Branch

18 October 2023

Review rights

If you disagree with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's (OAIC) decision you can apply to the Federal Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit Court for a review of a decision of the Information Commissioner if you think that a decision by the Information Commissioner to grant an extension of time is not legally correct. You can make this application under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977*.

The Court will not review the merits of your case but it may refer the matter back to the Information Commissioner for further consideration if it finds the decision was wrong in law or the Information Commissioner's powers were not exercised properly.

An application for review must be made to the Court within 28 days of the OAIC sending the decision to you. You may wish to seek legal advice as the process can involve fees and costs. Please contact the Federal Court registry in your state or territory for more information, or visit the Federal Court website at <http://www.fedcourt.gov.au/>.

Further information

Further information about how applications to extend the timeframe to process an FOI request are handled by the OAIC can be found published on our website:

For FOI applicants: [How to make an FOI request: Extensions of time](#)

For agencies and ministers: [Guidance and advice: Extension of time for processing requests](#)

The OAIC has the power to investigate complaints about an agency's actions under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act). This is a separate process from asking for an Information Commissioner review following a decision made under the FOI Act. Complaints usually focus on how an agency has handled your FOI request or complied with other obligations under the FOI Act, rather than the decision itself.

In some cases, the Information Commissioner's investigation of a complaint may lead to the agency addressing the issues that you have complained about. In other cases, the Information Commissioner may make suggestions or recommendations that the agency should implement. The Information Commissioner can only make non-binding recommendations as a result of a complaint. You and the agency will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

FOI complaints to the OAIC must be made in writing. Our preference is for you to use the **[online FOI complaint form](#)** if at all possible.

Further information about how to make a complaint can be found published on our website: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/reviews-and-complaints/make-an-foi-complaint/>.