



29 August 2023

Alex Pentland

By email: [foi+request-10525-8ace0f8e@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-10525-8ace0f8e@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Alex,

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) REQUEST – RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS**

The purpose of this letter is to give you a decision about access to documents that you requested under the *Freedom of information Act 1982* (Cth) (**FOI Act**).

### **Summary**

I, Dr Richard Johnson, am an officer authorised under section 23(1) of the FOI Act to make decisions in relation to FOI requests.

You requested access to documents relating to the Australian Research Council (**ARC**) Style Guide on 3 August 2023, which the ARC received on 4 August 2023. Specifically, you sought access to:

*‘...Dear Australian Research Council,*

*This is a Freedom of Information Request for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 1982.*

*I request access to the Style Guide for the Australian Research Council.’*

### **Background**

Background information relevant to your request is your email dated 3 August 2023 (**original request**) and the Australian Research Council (**ARC**) response dated 7 August 2023. Relevantly, the ARC in responding to you on 7 August 2023 said:

*‘Thank you for your email, seeking access to information about the Style Guide for the Australian Research Council (ARC) under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) (FOI Act).*

*The ARC can give you administrative access to the requested information, i.e., outside of the FOI Act process. Administrative access arrangements coexist, but operate independently of the FOI Act, and provide a less formal mechanism for accessing information. You can read more about the advantages of administrative access in the OAIC FOI Guidelines at paragraphs 3.2 to 3.5 FOI Guidelines ([oaic.gov.au](http://oaic.gov.au)). These advantages may include cost benefits and potentially quicker processing times. Importantly, gaining administrative access to information does not prevent you from making FOI Act requests for additional information in the future.*

*If you agree to receive the requested information through administrative access, please let us know as soon as possible by replying to this email. In your response, please also confirm that you agree to withdraw your FOI request, as the FOI legislation does not contemplate the two processes running concurrently. Once the ARC receives confirmation of your FOI request withdrawal, we will provide you with administrative access to the requested information.*

*Please note, if we do not hear from you by 11 August, we will proceed on the basis that you wish to continue with your FOI request and will continue to process it under the legislation, in accordance with statutory timeframes.*

*If you have any questions, please contact me to discuss.'*

Where the ARC did not receive a response from you by 11 August, this letter is now in response to your email dated 3 August 2023.

### **Decision**

My decision in relation to the documents listed **above** is at **Attachment A** to this letter; a 'Schedule of Documents' concerning documents that fall within the scope of your request is at **Attachment B**; together with the ARC's guidelines for rights of review at **Attachment C**.

If you have any questions in relation to your FOI request, I can be contacted via email at [foi@arc.gov.au](mailto:foi@arc.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



Dr Richard Johnson  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Research Council

### **Attachments:**

- A. Decision relating to FOI request
- B. Schedule of Documents
- C. Your Review Rights

## Attachment A: Decision relating to FOI request by Alex Pentland

I, Dr Richard Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Australian Research Council, am an officer authorised under section 23 of the FOI Act to make decisions in relation to access to documents. What follows is my decision and the reasons for that decision.

### BACKGROUND

The decision relates to a request you made to the ARC for access under FOI to the ARC Style Guide (as outlined in the covering letter).

### DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION

I have identified one (1) document which falls within the scope of your request, together with guidance that is publicly accessible.

The 'Schedule of Documents' concerning the document that falls within the scope of your request is at **Attachment B**. This Schedule of Documents provides a description of the document that falls within the scope of your request and the access decision for the document.

I have decided to:

- grant you full access to document numbered one (1).

More information, including my reasons for my decision, is set out **below**.

The ARC does not apply a charge to this request.

### MATERIAL CONSIDERED

I have taken the following material into account in making my decision:

- the content of the document that falls within the scope of your request, together with the publicly accessible guidance.
- details of relevant correspondence entered by you and the ARC dated 3 August 2023 and 7 August 2023.
- the FOI Act
- the Guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act, and
- previous FOI decisions.

### REASONS FOR DECISION

The Schedule of Documents at **Attachment B** indicates each document to which access is granted and refused. I have decided to grant you access to document one (1) in full. My reasons for providing access are given **below**.

- (a) The Australian Research Council (**ARC**) uses the *ARC Style Guidelines*, which is an online resource consistent with the *Australian Government Style Manual*, publicly accessible at [Australian Government Style Manual \(stylemanual.gov.au\)](https://stylemanual.gov.au).
- (b) The Australian Government Style Manual (**Style Manual**) was updated and released in 2020.

(c) The ARC approach to almost all the guidance in the Style Manual is digital first. This reflects the Australian Government's vision under the [Data and Digital Government Strategy | Digital Transformation Agency \(dta.gov.au\)](#).

(d) The ARC also has some exceptions to the Style Manual due to the scope of ARC's responsibility. **Below** are ARC preferences which are not referenced in the Style Manual (not exhaustive, and this list may be updated):

- **Italics** – When referring to a funding scheme, the ARC preference is to always italicise the actual scheme name, not the word 'scheme' and the names of ARC Centres of Excellence. For example: the *ARC Discovery Projects* scheme and *ARC Centre of Excellence for Electromaterial Science* (ACES). For all other matters the advice is to limit the use of [Italics | Style Manual](#).
- **Font** – The ARC's preferred style for formal writing, such as contracts and policy documents, or printed publications such as the Annual Report and promotional brochures (particularly if they are to be published online), **is sans serif font Arial size 11 or serif font Times New Roman size 12.**

(e) The Style Manual does not necessarily provide advice for the purposes of writing:

- Briefs and Ministerials
- Legislative instruments
- Legal documents, and
- Content for the ARC website.

(f) This is because the **ARC** has its own specific set of guidelines or templates that may slightly differ from Style Manual guidance.

Document one (1) is the ARC Style Placement, which is the ARC Style Guide Tips and Tricks. This is based on the (**above**) online resource material, is in line with the ARC Style Guidelines (as consistent with the Australian Government Style Manual) and, assists ARC staff in preparing professional documents and material for the ARC to a standard expected of an Australian Government agency.

#### **Attachment B: Schedule of Documents**

<b>Document No</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1.	N/A	ARC Style Placement - ARC Style Guide Tips and Tricks	Access is granted in full.

#### **Attachment C: Your Review Rights**

If you do not agree with my decision, then you may apply to the Information Commissioner.

Under section 54 of the FOI Act, you may apply in writing to the Australian Research Council for an internal review of my decision. An internal review application must be made within 30 days of the date of this letter to:

email: [foi@arc.gov.au](mailto:foi@arc.gov.au)

post: GPO Box 2702 Canberra ACT 2601

Please attach reasons why you believe review of the decision is necessary. The internal review will be carried out by another officer within 30 days.

Under section 54L of the FOI Act, you may apply to the Australian Information Commissioner (**Information Commissioner**) to review my decision.

An application for review by the Information Commissioner must be made in writing within 60 days of the date of this letter, and be lodged in one of the following ways:

**online:**

[https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=ICR\\_10](https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=ICR_10)

**email:** [foidr@oaic.gov.au](mailto:foidr@oaic.gov.au)

**post:** GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2001

You will also find useful information on the Office of Australian Information Commissioner's (**OAIC's**) website:

<https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/reviews-and-complaints/information-commissioner-review/>.

You can contact the OAIC on 1300 363 992.