



**Australian Government**  
**Classification Board**

Our reference: CB 24-129

Mr Ryan Austin

By Email: [foi+request-10732-d703dac7@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-10732-d703dac7@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Mr Austin,

## **Decision on your Freedom of Information Request**

I refer to your request of 07 October 2023, to the Classification Board (the Board), seeking access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

### **1 Your request**

You requested access to:

All documents relating to the classification of the film 'A Little Life' (R18+)  
- September 28, 2023 (DCP) (File number: T23/21179) (CLAS-264058)

#### **1.1 Clarification/Modification of scope of request**

On 09 October 2023, following consultation with you, you agreed to modify the scope of your request to the following:

The Classification Board reports, Classifiers blues papers, and Classification Certificates for:

The classification of the film 'A Little Life' (R18+): September 28, 2023 (DCP) (File number: T23/21179) (CLAS-264058)

### **2 Authority to make decision**

I am authorised to make decisions in relation to Freedom of Information requests under section 23(1) of the FOI Act.

### **3 Decision**

I have identified three documents that are relevant to your request. These documents were in the possession of the Board when your request was received.

I have decided to:

- grant access in full to relevant information in one document
- grant partial access to two documents

A schedule setting out the documents relevant to your request, with my decision in relation to those documents, is at **ATTACHMENT A**.

#### **4 Finding of facts and reasons for decision**

My findings of fact and reasons for deciding that exemptions apply to the parts of documents relevant to your request are set out below.

##### **4.1 Section 47F – Documents affecting personal privacy**

Section 47F of the FOI Act provides that a document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person (including a deceased person).

##### **Personal Information**

Personal information has the same meaning as in the Privacy Act. Specifically, section 6 of the Privacy Act provides that *personal information* means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable whether the information or opinion is true or not; and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.

Paragraph 6.131 of the FOI Guidelines states that for particular information to be personal information, an individual must be identified or reasonably identifiable.

Paragraph 6.130 of the FOI Guidelines states that personal information can include a person's name, address, telephone number, date of birth, medical records, bank account details, taxation information and signature.

An individual is a natural person rather than a corporation, trust, body politic or incorporated association.

I am satisfied that parts of the documents marked 's47F' includes personal information about one individual.

##### **Unreasonable Disclosure of Personal Information**

Section 47F(2) of the FOI Act provides that, in determining whether the disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information, I must have regard to the following matters:

- (a) the extent to which the information is well known
- (b) whether the person to whom the information relates is known to be (or to have been) associated with the matters dealt with in the document
- (c) the availability of the information from publicly accessible sources
- (d) any other matters that the agency or Minister considers relevant.

Paragraph 6.138 of the FOI Guidelines states that:

The personal privacy exemption is designed to prevent the unreasonable invasion of third parties' privacy. The test of 'unreasonableness' implies a need to balance the public interest in disclosure of government-held information and the private interest in the privacy of individuals. The test does not,

however, amount to the public interest test of s 11A(5), which follows later in the decision making process. It is possible that the decision maker may need to consider one or more factors twice, once to determine if a projected effect is unreasonable and again when assessing the public interest balance.

I note that the AAT, in *Re Chandra and Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs [1984]* AATA 437 at paragraph 259, stated that:

... whether a disclosure is 'unreasonable' requires ... a consideration of all the circumstances, including the nature of the information that would be disclosed, the circumstances in which the information was obtained, the likelihood of the information being information that the person concerned would not wish to have disclosed without consent, and whether the information has any current relevance ... it is also necessary in my view to take into consideration the public interest recognised by the Act in the disclosure of information ... and to weigh that interest in the balance against the public interest in protecting the personal privacy of a third party ...

Paragraphs 6.142 and 6.143 of the FOI Guidelines state:

6.142 Key factors for determining whether disclosure is unreasonable include:

- the author of the document is identifiable
- the documents contain third party personal information
- release of the documents would cause stress on the third party
- no public purpose would be achieved through release

6.143 As discussed in the leading s 47F IC review decision of *'FG' and National Archives of Australia [2015]* AICmr 26, other factors considered to be relevant include:

- the nature, age and current relevance of the information
- any detriment that disclosure may cause to the person to whom the information relates
- any opposition to disclosure expressed or likely to be held by that person
- the circumstances of an agency's collection and use of the information
- the fact that the FOI Act does not control or restrict any subsequent use or dissemination of information released under the FOI Act
- any submission an FOI applicant chooses to make in support of their application as to their reasons for seeking access and their intended or likely use or dissemination of the information, and
- whether disclosure of the information might advance the public interest in government transparency and integrity

I am satisfied that the disclosure of personal information contained within the documents would, in the circumstances, constitute an unreasonable disclosure of personal information.

For the reasons outlined above, I decided that the part of the documents marked 's47F' are conditionally exempt from disclosure under section 47F of the FOI Act.

Where information is found to be conditionally exempt, I must give access to that information unless access at this time would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest. I have addressed the public interest considerations below.

## 4.2 Public interest considerations

Pursuant to section 11A(5) of the FOI Act, I must give access to conditionally exempt information unless access to that information at that time would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest. I have therefore considered whether disclosure of the conditionally exempt information would be contrary to the public interest.

I note that paragraph 6.5 of the FOI Guidelines states that the public interest test is considered to be:

- something that is of serious concern or benefit to the public, not merely of individual interest
- not something of interest to the public, but in the interest of the public
- not a static concept, where it lies in a particular matter will often depend on a balancing of interests
- necessarily broad and non-specific and
- relates to matters of common concern or relevance to all members of the public, or a substantial section of the public.

### Factors favouring disclosure

Section 11B of the FOI Act provides that factors favouring access to conditionally exempt information in the public interest include whether access to that information would do any of the following:

- promote the objects of the FOI Act (including all matters set out in sections 3 and 3A)
- inform debate on a matter of public importance
- promote effective oversight of public expenditure
- allow a person to access his or her own personal information.


Having regard to the above, I consider that disclosure of the conditionally exempt information at this time:

- would provide access to documents held by an agency of the Commonwealth which would promote the objects of the FOI Act by providing the Australian community with access to information held by the Australian Government.
- would not inform debate on a matter of public importance
- would not promote effective oversight of public expenditure
- would not allow you access to your own personal information.

### Factors weighing against disclosure

I consider that the following factors weigh against disclosure of the conditionally exempt information at this time, on the basis that disclosure:

- could reasonably be expected to prejudice the protection of a number of individuals' right to personal privacy
  - The Board is committed to complying with its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988*, which sets out standards and obligations that regulate how we must handle and manage personal information. I consider it is firmly in the public interest that we uphold the rights of individuals to their own privacy and meet our statutory obligations under the Privacy Act.
  - I note that the substance of the information that is relevant to your request has been released to you and disclosure of the conditionally exempt personal information would not provide you with any further insight into the workings of government beyond that substantive information.



In making my decision, I have not taken into account any of the irrelevant factors set out in section 11B(4) of the FOI Act, which are:

- (a) access to the conditionally exempt information could result in embarrassment to the Commonwealth Government, or cause a loss of confidence in the Commonwealth Government
- (b) access to the conditionally exempt information could result in any person misinterpreting or misunderstanding that information
- (c) the author of the document was (or is) of high seniority in the agency to which the request for access to the document was made
- (d) access to the conditionally exempt information could result in confusion or unnecessary debate.

### **Conclusion – disclosure is not in the public interest**

For the reasons set out above, after weighing all public interest factors for and against disclosure, I decided that, on balance, disclosure of the conditionally exempt information would be contrary to the public interest. I am satisfied that the benefit to the public resulting from disclosure of the conditionally exempt information is outweighed by the benefit to the public of withholding that information.

### **4.3 Section 22 – deletion of irrelevant and/or exempt material**

Section 22 of the FOI Act applies to documents containing irrelevant and/or exempt material and allows an agency to delete such material from a document.

I decided that the documents captured by your request contain material which can reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to your request. As such, an edited copy of those documents has been prepared in accordance with section 22(1)(a)(ii) of the FOI Act. This information is marked 's22' in the documents released to you.

The documents contain personal identifiers of public servants. When your request was acknowledged, we notified you that personal information of public servants below the SES level and all email addresses, signatures and direct telephone numbers would be considered irrelevant to the scope of your request unless you told us that you were expressly seeking access to that information. On the basis that you did not notify us otherwise, I decided this information is irrelevant to your request and it has been deleted under section 22 of the FOI Act as outlined above.

In addition, as I decided that some information you have requested is exempt from disclosure, I have prepared an edited copy of the documents being released by deleting the exempt information under section 22(1)(a)(i) of the FOI Act.

## **5 Material taken into consideration**

In making my decision, I had regard to the following:

- the terms of your request
- the content of the documents captured by your request
- the provisions of the FOI Act
- the guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (the FOI Guidelines)
- advice from officers with responsibility for the subject matter contained in the documents captured by your request

## 6 Legislative provisions

The FOI Act, including the provisions referred to in my decision, are available on the Federal Register of Legislation website: [www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A02562](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A02562).

## 7 Your review rights

Your review rights in relation to this decision are set out at **ATTACHMENT B**.

## 8 Publication of material released under the FOI Act

Where I have decided to release documents to you, we may also publish the released material on our Disclosure Log. We will not publish personal or business affairs information where it would be unreasonable to do so.

For your reference our Disclosure Log can be found here: [www.infrastructure.gov.au/about-us/freedom-information/freedom-information-disclosure-log](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/about-us/freedom-information/freedom-information-disclosure-log).

### Further information

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts provides administrative assistance to the Classification Board in relation to FOI matters. If you require further information regarding this decision, please contact the Department's FOI Section at [FOI@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:FOI@infrastructure.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Jolly', is positioned above the typed name.

Fiona Jolly  
Director  
Classification Board

Date: 19 October 2023

**SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS CB 24-129**

Doc No.	Date of document	Description of document	Num of Pages	Decision on access	Provision of FOI Act
1.	28 Sep 2023	Classification Certificate – <i>A Little Life</i>	2	Partial access granted	s 47F
2.	28 Sep 2023	Classification Board Decision Report - <i>A Little Life</i>	5	Partial access granted	s 22 s 47F
3.	27 Sep 2023	Classification Board ‘blues’ – classifier notes on content of film <i>A Little Life</i>	12	Access grant in full to relevant information	s 22

## **YOUR REVIEW RIGHTS**

If you are dissatisfied with my decision, you may apply for a review of it.

### **Information Commissioner review or complaint**

You have the right to seek a review by the Information Commissioner of this decision.

An application for IC review must be made in writing to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) within 60 days of the decision.

If you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your FOI request, you can lodge a complaint with the OAIC. However, the OAIC suggests that complaints are made to the agency in the first instance.

More information about the Information Commissioner reviews and complaints is available on the OAIC website here: [www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-review-process](http://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-review-process).