



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**

By email: [foi+request-1313-c3d691ea@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-1313-c3d691ea@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Dr Lloyd

**Freedom of Information Request No. 15/16-051**

I refer to your FOI request received by the Department of Social Services (**the Department**) on 14 October 2015, in which you requested access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (**the FOI Act**) to the following documents relating to the consultation process of the recent Reference Group on Welfare Reform:

- "1. Transcripts of initial stakeholder consultations conducted in late 2013 and early 2014;*
- 2. Copies of the 231 online comments made in response to the Reference Group's Interim Report;*
- 3. Transcripts of 'stakeholder roundtables' conducted in July and August 2014; [and]*
- 4. Transcripts of 'individual customer roundtables' conducted with income support payment customers during August 2014...*

*I am, of course, expecting any personally-identifying information about individuals to be redacted".*

I am authorised to make decisions under subsection 23(1) of the FOI Act.

**Notice of intention to refuse your FOI request**

I am writing to notify you of my intention to refuse your request under section 24 of the FOI Act.

I am satisfied that a practical refusal reason exists under subparagraph 24AA(1)(a)(i), in that processing your request would amount to a substantial and unreasonable diversion of the Department's resources.

Accordingly, I am initiating a request consultation process under section 24AB of the FOI Act, and I encourage you to contact me within 14 days of receiving this notice to discuss your request further (more information is provided below).

**Substantial and unreasonable diversion of resources**

I have consulted with departmental officers in the Eligibility and Participation Policy Branch regarding the number and nature of documents held by the Department which are likely to be relevant to your request, and the work involved in processing your request.

I am advised by departmental officers that there is no material held by the Department which pertains to Parts 1, 3 or 4 of your request because no formal, verbatim records of proceedings were created for the consultations conducted in late 2013 or early 2014 (or for the stakeholder roundtables conducted in

mid-2014), and the individual customer roundtables (mentioned in Part 4 of your request) were run by the Department of Human Services.

However, the Department is in possession of approximately 345 pages of material pertaining to the 231 online comments made in response to the Reference Group's interim report (based on an estimate of approximately 1.5 pages per comment).

As each online comment contains personal information relating to the individuals and (in most cases) merely redacting the names of those individuals will not be sufficient to remove all information which may identify those individuals, I conservatively estimate that it would take approximately 133 to process the request (taking into account the time needed to consult with least 100 third party individuals in relation to their online responses and the time required to redact the personal information, such as the names, of other individuals where doing so would not dilute the quality or substance of the response).

Accordingly, I consider that the work required to process your request would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the Department from its other operations.

### **Request consultation process**

As required by section 24AB of the FOI Act, I am now writing to provide you with an opportunity to make a written submission in support of your request as currently worded, or to revise the scope of your request so that the practical refusal reason no longer exists.

For example, you may wish to reduce the scope of your request to a lesser number of online comments.

You have **14 days** from the day you receive this letter to contact me and do one of the following:

- (a) withdraw your request;
- (b) make a revised request; or
- (c) indicate that you do not wish to revise the request.

You can contact me by writing to the following address:

Attention: Alexandra Brown  
 Information Team, TOP AE3  
 Commercial, Child Care, Disability and Information Law Branch  
 Legal Services Group  
 Department of Social Services  
 PO Box 7576  
 Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

Alternatively, you can send an email to [foi@dss.gov.au](mailto:foi@dss.gov.au)

If you do not contact the Department within this period, your FOI request will be taken to have been withdrawn under subsection 24AB(7) and will not be dealt with any further.

If you have any questions about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6146 2607.

Sincerely



Alexandra Brown  
Senior Legal Officer  
Information Team  
Commercial, Child Care, Disability and Information Law Branch  
Legal Services Group

2 November 2015