



Ref no. 16/001544

1 June 2016

Phillip Sweeney

By email: foi+request-1924-39a2c051@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Mr Sweeney

Request for access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act)

I refer to your email dated 7 May 2016 (your FOI request) which was received by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) on 7 May 2016.

In your FOI request you sought the following information:

“a copy of the document recently lodged with APRA by the legal firm representing Dr Benjamin Koh seeking APRA to enforce Section 156C of the Life Insurance Act 1995 which alleges victimisation by one or more senior managers of Comminsure”.

APRA acknowledged receipt of your FOI request on 19 May 2016.

Attached is the notice of decision with statement of reasons. The statement of reasons also sets out your rights of review.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Ben Carruthers
FOI Officer
Tel: 02 9210 3000
Fax: 02 9210 3411
foi@apra.gov.au

**NOTICE OF DECISION MADE UNDER SECTION 23
OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (Cth) (FOI ACT)
WITH REASONS FOR DECISION PROVIDED UNDER SECTION 26**

- Applicant:** Phillip Sweeney
- Decision-maker:** Ben Carruthers, an authorised officer of the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) for the purposes of section 23(1) of the FOI Act.
- Relevant documents:** Request for legal documents relating to Benjamin Koh and CommInsure.
- My decision:** Refuse access, under section 38 of the FOI Act and section 56 of the *Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act 1998* (Cth) (APRA Act), to the document specified in the Applicant's request.

MATERIAL FACTS

1. I refer to your email dated 7 May 2016, in which you sought access under the FOI Act to:

"a copy of the document recently lodged with APRA by the legal firm representing Dr Benjamin Koh seeking APRA to enforce Section 156C of the Life Insurance Act 1995 which alleges victimisation by one or more senior managers of CommInsure"

(your FOI request).

2. By email dated 19 May 2016, APRA acknowledged receipt of your request.

EVIDENCE AND MATERIAL RELIED ON

3. In making my decision, I have relied on the following evidence and material:
 - a) the Applicant's request received by APRA on 7 May 2016;
 - b) acknowledgment email from FOI Officer to the Applicant dated 19 May 2016;
 - c) the document relevant to your FOI request;
 - d) relevant sections of the *Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act 1998* (Cth) (APRA Act);
 - e) relevant sections of the *Life Insurance Act 1995* (Cth) (Life Insurance Act);
 - f) relevant sections of the FOI Act; and
 - g) guidelines issued by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner to date (FOI Guidelines).

DECISION

4. APRA has identified a document that is relevant to your FOI request.
5. I have decided to refuse access to the document as it is protected under section 38 of the FOI Act and section 56 of the APRA Act.

REASONS FOR DECISION

Secrecy Provisions

6. I have taken the following approach in relation to the application of section 56 of the APRA Act and section 38 of the FOI Act:
 - i. under section 38 of the FOI Act, a document is exempt if disclosure is prohibited under a provision of an enactment and section 38 expressly applies to that provision;
 - ii. subsection 56(11) of the APRA Act expressly applies section 38 of the FOI Act so that any document that is a 'protected document' within the meaning of subsection 56(1) of the APRA Act is also an exempt document under section 38 of the FOI Act;
 - iii. under section 56(2) of the APRA Act it is an offence to directly or indirectly disclose protected documents unless a specified exemption applies. This offence provision is binding on me as an APRA staff member. The offence is punishable by up to two years imprisonment;
 - iv. a 'protected document' is defined in section 56(1) of the APRA Act to include documents given or produced under or for the purposes of a prudential regulation framework law, and containing information relating to the affairs of a financial sector entity. The Life Insurance Act and the APRA Act are prudential regulation framework laws. The document relates to CommInsure, which is a financial sector entity. The document was provided to APRA in accordance with its regulatory functions and powers under the Life Insurance Act and the APRA Act. Therefore, the document you requested is a protected document unless it is otherwise publicly available; and
 - v. The document you requested is not otherwise publicly available.
7. I am satisfied that the document you requested is a protected document as defined in section 56(1) of the APRA Act and that the document is consequently exempt under section 38 of the FOI Act.

ADVICE TO APPLICANT AS TO RIGHTS OF REVIEW

Application for Internal Review of Decision

8. Pursuant to section 54 of the FOI Act, you have the right to apply for an internal review of the decision if you disagree with my decision. If you make an application for review, another officer of APRA will be appointed to conduct a review and make a fresh decision on the merits of the case.

9. Pursuant to section 54B of the FOI Act, you must apply in writing for a review of the decision within 30 days after the day the decision has been notified to you.
10. You do not have to pay any other fees or processing charges for an internal review, except for providing access to further material in the document released as a result of the review (for example, photocopying, inspection, etc).
11. No particular form is required to apply for review although it is desirable (but not essential) to set out in the application the grounds on which you consider that the decision should be reviewed.
12. Application for an internal review of the decision should be addressed to:

*FOI Officer
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
GPO Box 9836, Sydney NSW 2001
Telephone: (02) 9210 3000
Facsimile: (02) 9210 3411*

13. If you make an application for internal review and we do not make a decision within 30 days of receiving the application, the agency is deemed to have affirmed the original decision. However, under section 54D of the FOI Act, APRA may apply, in writing to the Information Commissioner for further time to consider the internal review.

Application for review by Information Commissioner

14. Pursuant to section 54L of the FOI Act, you have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner for a review of the original decision or a review of a decision made on review.
15. Any application must be in writing and must give details of an address where notices may be sent and include a copy of the original decision or the decision made on internal review.
16. An application for review by the Information Commissioner should be sent:
 - Online: www.oaic.gov.au
 - Post: GPO Box 2999, Canberra ACT 2601
 - Fax: +61 2 9284 9666
 - Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au
 - In person:
*Level 3, 25 National Circuit
Forrest, ACT, or at
Level 8, Piccadilly Tower, 133 Castlereagh Street,
Sydney, NSW*

Application for review by Administrative Appeals Tribunal

17. If the decision on review by the Information Commissioner is not to grant access to all of the documents within your request, you would be entitled to seek review of that decision by the AAT.
18. The AAT is an independent review body with the power to make a fresh decision. An application to the AAT for a review of an FOI decision does not attract a fee. The AAT cannot award costs either in your favour or against you, although it may in some circumstances recommend payment by the Attorney-General of some or all of your costs. Further information is available from the AAT on 1300 366 700.

Complaints to the Information Commissioner

19. You may complain to the Commissioner concerning action taken by this agency in the exercise of powers or the performance of functions under the FOI Act. There is no fee for making a complaint. The Commissioner will conduct an independent investigation of your complaint.
20. You may complain to the Commissioner either orally or in writing, by any of the methods outlined above, or by telephone, on 1300 363 992.



Ben Carruthers
FOI Officer
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
Date: 1.6.16

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982

38 Documents to which secrecy provisions of enactments apply

- (1) Subject to subsection (1A), a document is an exempt document if:
 - (a) disclosure of the document, or information contained in the document, is prohibited under a provision of an enactment; and
 - (b) either:
 - (i) that provision is specified in Schedule 3; or
 - (ii) this section is expressly applied to the document, or information, by that provision, or by another provision of that or any other enactment.
- (1A) A person's right of access to a document under section 11 or 22 is not affected merely because the document is an exempt document under subsection (1) of this section if disclosure of the document, or information contained in the document, to that person is not prohibited by the enactment concerned or any other enactment.
- (2) Subject to subsection (3), if a person requests access to a document, this section does not apply in relation to the document so far as it contains personal information about the person.
- (3) This section applies in relation to a document so far as it contains personal information about a person if:
 - (a) the person requests access to the document; and
 - (b) disclosure of the document, or information contained in the document, is prohibited under section 503A of the *Migration Act 1958* as affected by section 503D of that Act.
- (4) In this section:

enactment includes a Norfolk Island enactment.

AUSTRALIAN PRUDENTIAL REGULATION AUTHORITY ACT 1998

56 Secrecy—general obligations

- (1) In this section:

body regulated by APRA includes a body that has at any time been a body regulated by APRA.

court includes a tribunal, authority or person having the power to require the production of documents or the answering of questions.

financial sector entity has the same meaning as in the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001*.

officer means:

- (a) an APRA member; or
- (b) an APRA staff member; or
- (c) any other person who, because of his or her employment, or in the course of that employment:
 - (i) has acquired protected information; or
 - (ii) has had access to protected documents;

other than an employee of the body to which the information or document relates.

personal information has the same meaning as in the *Privacy Act 1988*.

produce includes permit access to.

protected document means a document given or produced (whether before or after the commencement of this section) under, or for the purposes of, a prudential regulation framework law and containing information relating to the affairs of:

- (a) a financial sector entity; or
- (b) a body corporate (including a body corporate that has ceased to exist) that has at any time been, or is, related (within the meaning of the *Corporations Act 2001*) to a body regulated by APRA or to a registered entity; or
- (c) a person who has been, is, or proposes to be, a customer of a body regulated by APRA or of a registered entity;; or
- (ca) a person in relation to whom information is, or was, required to be given under a reporting standard made in accordance with subsection 13(4A) of the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001*;

other than:

- (d) a document containing information that has already been lawfully made available to the public from other sources; or
- (e) a document given or produced under, or for the purposes of, a provision of the *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993*:
 - (i) administered by the Commissioner of Taxation; or
 - (ii) being applied for the purposes of the administration of a provision administered by the Commissioner of Taxation.

It also includes a document that is given to APRA under Part 7.5A of the *Corporations Act 2001*, other than a document containing information that has already been lawfully made available to the public from other sources.

protected information means information disclosed or obtained (whether before or after the commencement of this section) under, or for the purposes of, a prudential regulation framework law and relating to the affairs of:

- (a) a financial sector entity; or
- (b) a body corporate (including a body corporate that has ceased to exist) that has at any time been, or is, related (within the meaning of the *Corporations Act 2001*) to a body regulated by APRA or to a registered entity; or
- (c) a person who has been, is, or proposes to be, a customer of a body regulated by APRA or of a registered entity;; or
- (ca) a person in relation to whom information is, or was, required to be given under a reporting standard made in accordance with subsection 13(4A) of the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001*;

other than:

- (d) information that has already been lawfully made available to the public from other sources; or
- (e) information given or produced under, or for the purposes of, a provision of the *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993*:
 - (i) administered by the Commissioner of Taxation; or
 - (ii) being applied for the purposes of the administration of a provision administered by the Commissioner of Taxation.

It also includes information that is given to APRA under Part 7.5A of the *Corporations Act 2001*, other than information that has already been lawfully made available to the public from other sources.

registered entity means a corporation that is, or has at any time been, a registered entity within the meaning of the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001*.

- (2) A person who is or has been an officer is guilty of an offence if:
- (a) the person directly or indirectly:
 - (i) discloses information acquired in the course of his or her duties as an officer to any person or to a court; or
 - (ii) produces a document to any person or to a court; and
 - (b) the information is protected information, or the document is a protected document; and
 - (c) the disclosure or production is not in accordance with subsection (3), (4), (5), (5AA), (5A), (5B), (5C), (6), (7), (7A), (7B) or (7C).

Penalty: Imprisonment for 2 years.

Note: Chapter 2 of the *Criminal Code* sets out the general principles of criminal responsibility.

- (3) It is not an offence if the disclosure of protected information or the production of a protected document by a person is for the purposes of a prudential regulation framework law.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (3) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (4) It is not an offence if the disclosure of protected information or the production of a protected document by a person:
- (a) is by an employee of the person to whose affairs the information or document relates; or
 - (b) occurs after the person to whose affairs the information or document relates has agreed in writing to the disclosure or production.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (4) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (5) It is not an offence if the disclosure of protected information or the production of a protected document by a person:
- (a) occurs when the person is satisfied that the disclosure of the information, or the production of the document, will assist a financial sector supervisory agency, or any other agency (including foreign agencies) specified in the regulations, to perform its functions or exercise its powers and the disclosure or production is to that agency; or
 - (b) is to another person and is approved by APRA by instrument in writing.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (5) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (5AA) It is not an offence if the disclosure of protected information or the production of a protected document is made:

- (a) by an officer of an agency to which the information or document has been disclosed or produced under paragraph (5)(a); and
- (b) for the same purpose as the information or document was so disclosed or produced to that agency.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (5AA) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (5A) It is not an offence if the production by a person of a document that was given to APRA under section 9 or 13 of the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001* is to the Australian Statistician for the purposes of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to matters in subsection (5A) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

(5B) It is not an offence if the production by a person of a document that was given to APRA under section 9 or 13 of the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001* is to:

- (a) the Reserve Bank of Australia; or
- (b) another prescribed authority.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to matters in subsection (5B) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

(5C) If:

- (a) a document is a reporting document given to APRA under section 13 of the *Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001*; and
- (b) either:
 - (i) a determination has been made under section 57 that the document does not, or documents of that kind do not, contain confidential information; or
 - (ii) a determination has been made under section 57 that a specified part of the document, or of documents of that kind, does not contain confidential information;

it is not an offence to disclose the document or that part of the document, or any information contained in the document or that part of the document, to any person (including by making the document, the part of the document or the information available on APRA's website).

(6) It is not an offence if the disclosure of protected information or the production of a protected document is to:

- (a) an APRA member; or
- (b) an APRA staff member;

for the purposes of the performance of APRA's functions, or the exercise of APRA's powers, under a law of the Commonwealth or of a State or a Territory.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (6) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

(6A) It is not an offence if the disclosure of protected information or the production of a protected document is to:

- (a) an auditor who has provided, or is providing, professional services to a general insurer, authorised NOHC or a subsidiary of a general insurer or authorised NOHC; or
 - (b) an actuary who has provided, or is providing, professional services to a general insurer, authorised NOHC or a subsidiary of a general insurer or authorised NOHC;
- and the disclosure is for the purposes of the performance of APRA's functions, or the exercise of APRA's powers, under a law of the Commonwealth or of a State or Territory.

(7) It is not an offence if the information, or the information contained in the document, as the case may be, is in the form of a summary or collection of information that is prepared so that information relating to any particular person cannot be found out from it.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (7) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

(7A) It is not an offence if the information, or the information contained in the document, as the case may be, is all or any of the following:

- (a) the names of bodies that are regulated by APRA;
- (b) the addresses at which bodies referred to in paragraph (a) conduct business;

- (c) any other information that is reasonably necessary to enable members of the public to contact persons who perform functions in relation to bodies referred to in paragraph (a).

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (7A) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (7B) It is not an offence if the information, or the information contained in the document, as the case may be, is:

- (a) a statement of APRA's opinion as to whether or not a body regulated by APRA is complying, or was complying at a particular time, with a particular provision of a prudential regulation framework law; or
- (b) a description of:
 - (i) court proceedings in relation to a breach or suspected breach by a person of a provision of a prudential regulation framework law; or
 - (ii) activity engaged in, or proposed to be engaged in, by APRA in relation to such a breach or suspected breach; or
- (c) a description of action under a prudential regulation framework law that APRA has taken or is proposing to take in relation to:
 - (i) a body regulated by APRA; or
 - (ii) an individual who holds or has held a position with or in relation to such a body.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (7B) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (7C) If information referred to in subsection (7A) or paragraph (7B)(a) that relates to a body that is, or has at any time been, regulated by APRA under the *Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993* is disclosed to the Registrar of the Australian Business Register established under section 24 of the *A New Tax System (Australian Business Number) Act 1999*, the Registrar may enter the information in that Register.

Note: A defendant bears an evidential burden in relation to the matters in subsection (7C) (see subsection 13.3(3) of the *Criminal Code*).

- (8) A person who is, or has been, an officer cannot be required to disclose to a court any protected information, or to produce in a court a protected document, except when it is necessary to do so for the purposes of a prudential regulation framework law.
- (9) If a person discloses information or produces a document under this section to another person, the first person may, at the time of the disclosure, impose conditions to be complied with in relation to the information disclosed or the document produced.
- (10) A person is guilty of an offence if the person fails to comply with a condition imposed under subsection (9).

Penalty: Imprisonment for 2 years.

Note: Chapter 2 of the *Criminal Code* sets out the general principles of criminal responsibility.

- (11) A document that:

- (a) is a protected document; or
- (b) contains protected information;

is an exempt document for the purposes of section 38 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Note: For additional rules about personal information, see the *Privacy Act 1988*.

- (12) A disclosure of personal information is taken to be authorised by this Act for the purposes of paragraph 6.2(b) of Australian Privacy Principle 6 if:
- (a) the information is protected information and the disclosure is made in accordance with any of subsections (4), (5), (5AA), (6), (7A), (7B) and (7C); or
 - (b) the information is contained in a protected document and the disclosure is made by the production of the document in accordance with any of those subsections.