



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

GPO Box 401 Canberra City ACT 2601

Telephone 02 6131 6131

Email foi@afp.gov.au

www.afp.gov.au

ABN 17 864 931 143

Our ref: 2017/152

21 October 2017

Mr Henare Degan
C/- foi+request-2240-428734f7righttoknow.org.au

Dear Mr Degan,

Freedom of Information request

I refer to your email dated 16 September 2016 under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the Act) seeking the following:

"...a copy of file number 2015/00011727 'Citizenship Loss Board – AFP Participation'"

Attached at Annexure A to this letter is my decision and statement of reasons for that decision. A "Schedule of Documents" identified as falling into the scope of your request is at Annexure B.

Information Publication Scheme (IPS)

As notified to you on 16 September 2016 it has been decided to publish the documents in part in respect of your request. Publication of the documents and any relevant documents will be made on the AFP website at <http://www.afp.gov.au/about-the-afp/information-publication-scheme/routinely-requested-information.aspx> in accordance with timeframes stipulated in section 11C of the Act.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Melissa Kelly', is written over a circular stamp or mark.

Melissa Kelly
Acting Coordinator
Freedom of Information
Australian Federal Police

**STATEMENT OF REASONS RELATING TO AN FOI REQUEST BY
HENARE DEGAN**

I, Melissa Kelly, Acting Coordinator, Freedom of Information, am an officer authorised under section 23 of the Act to make decisions in relation to the Australian Federal Police.

What follows is my decision and reasons for the decision in relation to your application.

BACKGROUND

On 16 September 2016 this office received your letter/application in which you requested:

"...a copy of file number 2015/00011727 'Citizenship Loss Board – AFP Participation'"

On 11 October 2016, you agreed to an extension of time pursuant to section 15AA of the Act.

SEARCHES

In relation to this request, a search of all records held by AFP officers with responsibility for matters relating to the documents to which you sought access was undertaken.

DECISION

I have identified six documents relevant to your request. A schedule of each document and details of my decision in relation to each document is at Annexure B.

I have decided that some of the documents itemised at Annexure B are released to you in their entirety. Some of the documents that relate to your request are released with deletions pursuant to subsection/s 22(1)(a)(ii), 33, 42(1), 47E(d) and 47F of the Act. Some of the documents that relate to your request are exempt in full, pursuant to subsection/s 33 and 47E(d) of the Act.

My reasons for this decision are set out below.

WAIVER OF CHARGES

Further, given that the request has totalled only 18 pages and was not a complex request to process, I am waiving any further fees and charges which are normally associated with the processing of applications under the Act.

REASONS FOR DECISION

Folios to which subsection 22(1)(a)(ii) apply:

Subsection 22(1)(a)(ii) of the Act provides that:

- "(1) *Where:*
- (a) *an agency or Minister decides:*
 - (ii) *that to grant a request for access to a document would disclose information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to that request;"*

The documents or parts of documents identified in the Schedule as exempt under this section of the Act contain information which is considered irrelevant to the request. I have determined that information contained in some of the folios should be deemed to be exempt because it does not come within the scope of your application and thus falls outside the ambit of your request. By way of further explanation, these exempt folios cover information which refers to other issues which are not mentioned in your FOI application.

I find that release of the documents or parts of the documents would be an unreasonable disclosure under subsection 22(1)(a)(ii) of the Act.

Folios to which Section 33 apply:

Section 33 of the Act provides that:

- "A document is an exempt document if disclosure of the document under this Act:*
- (a) *would, or could reasonably be expected to, cause damage to:*
 - (i) *the security of the Commonwealth;*
 - (ii) *the defence of the Commonwealth; or*
 - (iii) *the international relations of the Commonwealth; or*
 - (b) *would divulge any information or matter communicated in confidence by or on behalf of a foreign government, an authority of a foreign government or an international organisation to the Government of the Commonwealth, to an authority of the Commonwealth or to a person receiving the communication on behalf of the Commonwealth or of an authority of the Commonwealth."*

The documents or parts of documents identified in the schedule as exempt under this section of the act relates to information regarding the security and defence of the Commonwealth in conjunction with its international partners. Information that is shared with the Commonwealth and its international partners is undertaken with mutual cooperation and on the basis that the information was not to be disseminated further. I am satisfied that disclosure of the information would, or could reasonably be expected to cause damage to the security and defence of the Commonwealth as it relates to information that affect the protection of Australia and its population and undermine its relationships with foreign governments.

I find that release of the documents or parts of the documents would be an unreasonable disclosure under subsection 33 of the Act.

Folios to which subsection 42(1) apply:

Subsection 42(1) of the Act provides that:

"(1) A document is an exempt document if it is of such a nature that it would be privileged from production in legal proceedings on the ground of legal professional privilege."

The documents or parts of documents identified in the Schedule as exempt contain information brought into existence for the purpose of obtaining legal advice and for use in litigation. I am satisfied that these documents would be privileged from production in legal proceedings on the grounds of legal professional privilege. The AFP has not waived its right to hold privilege over these folios.

I find that release of the documents or parts of the documents would be an unreasonable disclosure under subsection 42(1) of the Act.

Folios to which subsection 47E(d) apply:

Subsection 47E(d) of the Act provides that:

"A document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure under this Act would, or could reasonably be expected to, do any of the following:

*...
(d) have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of an agency;..."*

The documents or parts of documents identified in the schedule as exempt under this section of the Act contain information, the release of which, would have a substantial adverse effect on the conduct of AFP and Border Force operations, specifically its operational functions in ensuring public safety, as it reveals how information is obtained and actioned for the purposes of protecting the public.

I have considered the public interest factors both in favour and against disclosure of the information in these folios.

In relation to the factors favouring disclosure, I believe the following are relevant:

- (a) the general public interest in access to documents as expressed in sections 3 and 11 of the FOI Act; and
- (b) the public interest in people being able to scrutinise the operations of a government agency and in promoting governmental accountability and transparency.

In relation to the factors against disclosure, I believe that the following are relevant:

- (c) the need for the agency to maintain the confidentiality with regard to the subject matter and the circumstances in which the information was obtained and collated;
- (d) that if information concerning the operation was revealed, it may have a substantial adverse effect on the conduct of agencies operations in the future; and
- (e) if such information was disclosed, it may prejudice security, law enforcement and public safety.

While there is a public interest in providing access to documents held by the AFP, I have given greater weight to factors (c), (d) and (e) above and conclude that on balance, disclosure is not in the public interest, given the need to ensure continued cooperation during police and Border Force operations and the effectiveness and integrity of current procedures. I find that release of the documents or parts of the documents would be an unreasonable disclosure under subsection 47E(d) of the Act.

Folios to which section 47F apply:

Section 47F of the Act provides that:

- “(1) A document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure under this Act would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person (including a deceased person).”*

The documents or parts of documents identified in the Schedule as exempt under this section of the Act contain personal information of third parties. Personal information is information or an opinion about an individual whose identity is known or easily ascertainable. I find that these documents contain personal information.

I have considered the public interest factors both in favour and against disclosure of the information in these folios.

In relation to the factors favouring disclosure, I believe the following are relevant:

- (a) the general public interest in access to documents as expressed in sections 3 and 11 of the FOI Act;
- (b) the extent to which the information is well known;
- (c) whether the person to whom the information relates is known to be (or to have been) associated with the matters dealt with in the documents;
- (d) the availability of the information from publicly accessible sources;
- (e) the current relevance of the information; and
- (f) the circumstances in which the information was obtained and any expectation of confidentiality.

In relation to the factors against disclosure, I believe that the following are relevant:

- (g) prejudice the protection of an individual’s right to privacy; and

- (h) the need for the agency to protect its employees' private lives from inappropriate contact from members of the public in relation to organisational matters.

While there is a public interest in providing access to documents held by the AFP, the information exempted under this section and in this instance are the names of public service employees. I have given greater weight to factors (f) and (h) above and conclude that on balance, disclosure is not in the public interest.

The AFP maintains that disclosure of that information would be contrary to an employee's right to the protection of their personal privacy, in particular, the identification of employees below the level of SES. I find that the release of this information would be an unreasonable disclosure of personal information and it is therefore exempt under section 47F of the Act.

EVIDENCE/MATERIAL ON WHICH MY FINDINGS WERE BASED

In reaching my decision, I have relied on the following documentary evidence:

- ❖ the scope of your application;
- ❖ the contents of the documents listed in the attached schedule;
- ❖ advice from AFP officers with responsibility for matters relating to the documents to which you sought access;
- ❖ consultation with relevant Commonwealth Agencies;
- ❖ *Freedom of Information Act 1982*;
- ❖ Guidance material issued by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; and
- ❖ Guidelines issued by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

**** YOU SHOULD READ THIS GENERAL ADVICE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982.**

REVIEW AND COMPLAINT RIGHTS

If you are dissatisfied with a Freedom of Information decision made by the Australian Federal Police, you can apply for an internal or Information Commissioner (IC) Review. You do not have to apply for Internal Review before seeking an IC review.

You do not need to seek a review by either the AFP or the IC should you wish to complain about the AFP's actions in processing your request.

REVIEW RIGHTS under Part VI of the Act

Internal Review by the AFP

Section 53A of the Act gives you the right to apply for an internal review in writing to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) within 30 days of being notified of a decision. No particular form is required. It would assist the independent AFP decision-maker responsible for the internal review if you set out in the application, the grounds on which you consider that the decision should be reviewed.

Section 54B of the Act provides that the internal review submission must be made within 30 days. Applications for a review of the decision should be addressed to:

Freedom of Information
Australian Federal Police
GPO Box 401
Canberra ACT 2601

REVIEW RIGHTS under Part VII of the Act

Review by the Information Commissioner (IC)

Alternatively, Section 54L of the Act gives you the right to apply directly to the IC or following an internal review by the AFP. In making your application you will need to provide an address for notices to be sent (this can be an email address) and a copy of the AFP decision. It would also help if you set out the reasons for review in your application.

Section 54S of the Act provides for the timeframes for an IC review submission. For an *access refusal decision* covered by subsection 54L(2), the application must be made within 60 days. For an *access grant decision* covered by subsection 54M(2), the application must be made within 30 days.

Applications for a review of the decision should be addressed to:

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
GPO Box 5128
Sydney NSW 2001.

Further, the OAIC encourages parties to an IC review to resolve their dispute informally, and encourages agencies to consider possible compromises or alternative solutions to the dispute in this matter. The AFP would be pleased to assist you in this regard.

Information about the IC review process can be found in Part 10 of the Guidelines which are available on our website at <http://www.oaic.gov.au/publications/guidelines.html>.

RIGHT TO COMPLAIN under Part VIIB of the Act

Section 70 of the Act provides that a person may complain to the IC about action taken by the Australian Federal Police in relation to your application.

A complaint to the IC may be made in writing and identify the agency against which the complaint is made.

The IC may be contacted on 1300 363 992. There is no particular form required to make a complaint, but the complaint should set out the grounds on which you consider the action should be investigated.