



19 January 2017

Our reference: LEX 24877

Mr William Shakespeare  
Right to Know

By email: [foi+request-2900-bffd82de@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-2900-bffd82de@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Mr Shakespeare

### Acknowledgement of your Freedom of Information Request

I refer to your request, dated 3 January 2017 and received by the Department of Human Services (the **department**) on the same date, for access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the **FOI Act**) to the following documents:

'I assume A DHS employee, or group employees, would have been responsible for creating the 'model' which data matched ATO data to DHS data, which produced a target population to be sent letters, many of whom are clearly not in any debt to the Commonwealth.

With respect to the particular 'model' that is relevant here, I request the following documents:

1. All documents which describe, or otherwise concern decision making and approval processes.
2. Any document which details why a more 'sophisticated' model was not considered, for example, one that considered data at the Centrelink reporting period level, rather than an aggregate annual earnings figure'.

An acknowledgement letter was sent to you on 6 January 2017 advising that you could expect a decision from us by 2 February 2017.

The processing time was suspended during a period of consultation under section 24AB. As this consultation occurred, you can now expect a decision from us by **6 February 2017**.

You revised your request to the following documents:

'Centrelink will be aware there has been significant media attention with respect to notices sent to large numbers of Centrelink clients recently, who were asked to confirm previous employment earnings. The letters to which I refer are detailed in articles such as this: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/public-service/centrelinks-debt-230000-have-now-been-hit-20170110-gtp8zt.html>

It has been reported that Centrelink has data matched annual-based ATO data to fortnightly-based Centrelink data which I assume was previously provided to Centrelink by individuals in receipt of some Centrelink payments such as Newstart.

In undertaking this exercise, I assume it was authorised by an appropriate delegate(s), and following their decision(s), appropriate instruction must have been given to the relevant officers in a team involved in data analysis.

I therefore request the following documents:

1. The request sent to the delegate for approval to undertake this exercise.
2. The approval given by the delegate
3. All documents which give instructions and any specifications given to the data analysis officer(s) involved in the development of this data matching exercise.'

The processing time may be extended if we need to consult third parties or for other reasons. We will advise you if this happens.

### **Charges**

The department will advise you if a charge is payable to process your request and the amount of any such charge as soon as practicable.

### **Your Address**

The FOI Act requires that you provide us with an address which we can send notices to. You have advised your electronic address is [foi+request-2900-bffd82de@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-2900-bffd82de@righttoknow.org.au). We will send all notices and correspondence to this address. Please advise us as soon as possible if you wish correspondence to be sent to another address or if your address changes. If you do not advise us of changes to your address, correspondence and notices will continue to be sent to the address specified above.

### **Disclosure Log**

Please note that information released under FOI Act may be published in a disclosure log on the department's website. Section 11C of the FOI Act requires this publication, however it is subject to certain exceptions, including where publication of personal, business, professional or commercial information would be unreasonable.

### **Exclusion of junior departmental employee details**

The department is working towards ensuring that all employees have a choice about whether they provide their full name, personal logon identifiers and direct contact details in response to public enquiries. Where such details are included in the scope of a request, this may add to processing time and applicable charges as it may be necessary to consider whether the details are exempt under the FOI Act. On this basis, unless you tell us otherwise, we will assume that these details are out of scope of your request and they will be redacted under section 22 of the FOI Act.

**Further assistance**

If you have any questions please email [FOI.LEGAL.TEAM@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:FOI.LEGAL.TEAM@humanservices.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Authorised FOI Decision Maker  
Freedom of Information Team  
FOI and Litigation Branch | Legal Services Division  
Department of Human Services  
[FOI.LEGAL.TEAM@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:FOI.LEGAL.TEAM@humanservices.gov.au)