



Australian Government
Department of Defence

Reference: R30646299

FOI 020/17/18 STATEMENT OF REASONS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

1. I refer to the application by Mr Alan Cole under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act), for access to:

“...the schedule and flight manifests including crews of all special purpose flights outside of Australia i.e international flights between January and July of 2017.”

excluding personal email addresses, signatures, PMKeys numbers and mobile telephone numbers, contained in documents that fall within the scope of the FOI request. In addition, excluding duplicates of document.

FOI decision maker

2. I am the accredited officer pursuant to section 23 of the FOI Act to make a decision on this FOI request.

Documents identified

3. A number of documents will be prepared for tabling in Parliament. I identified no documents as currently matching the description of the request.

Decision

4. I have decided to defer access to the documents in accordance with section 21(1)(c) [Deferment of access] of the FOI Act.

Material taken into account

5. In making my decision, I had regard to:
- the terms of the request;
 - relevant provisions in the FOI Act;
 - the Guidelines published by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (the Guidelines); and
 - advice received from the Ministerial and Parliamentary Committee (in the Ministerial and Executive Coordination and Communication Division).

Reasons for decision

Section 21 – Deferment of access

6. I have decided to defer access to the documents related to the scope of the request in accordance with paragraph 21(1)(c) [Deferment of access] of the FOI Act until early 2018.

7. The Department of Defence (Defence) is responsible to the Minister for Defence for compiling the Schedule of Special Purpose Flights. The schedule is planned to be tabled in parliament biannually and includes details on all legs flown, passengers carried, hours and financial costing.

8. The schedule of special purpose flights between January and July 2017 will be prepared by Defence for tabling in parliament. The practice is to table the schedule six months after the relevant reporting period, during the corresponding winter or summer parliamentary sitting breaks. The documents can be expected to be tabled out of session in early 2018.

9. My reason for deferring access to the documents is that premature release would be contrary to the public interest. While I acknowledge that there is a public interest in disclosure of official information to inform legitimate public debate, there is, in my view a greater public interest in following established procedures for accessing this information.

Further information

10. The applicant asked why there has been no publication of any 2016 flights given the schedules of special purpose flights are published twice yearly.

11. The schedule for Jan-Jun 2016 was tabled in Parliament in July 2017. The schedule for July – December 2016 is being prepared and is expected to be publicly available by the end of 2017.

Nicola Viney
Accredited Decision Maker
Associate Secretary Group