



Statement of reasons made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

Decision and reason for decision of Position Number 01003014

Applicant: Verity Pane
Decision date: 30 April 2018
FOI reference number: FOI 21664

Dear Verity Pane

Freedom of Information Request: FOI 21664

1. I have made a decision to grant access to the document falling within the scope of your request in full.

Summary

2. I, Position Number 01003014, am an officer authorised by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (the Department) to make decisions about access to documents in the possession of the Department in accordance with section 23(1) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act).
3. On 29 March 2018 you made a request for access to information in the possession of the Department. Your request was in the following terms:

"I apply under FOI, s 17 in particular, for summary statistical information to be provided on the abandonment rate of initial liability and permanent impairment compensation applications made against the Department by veterans (and if possible, broken down to the abandonment rate for veterans under 40 years of age [young veterans], and those over 40 years of age [older veterans]).

...if the Department does not formally collate these statistics, we can refine the scope from there, based on what the Department advises it can collate and tabulate."

4. I have decided not to impose a charge in relation to this request, in accordance with regulation 3(1) of the *Freedom of Information (Charges) Regulations 1982*.
5. The Department has undertaken a reasonable search of its records and has created one (1) document that meets the scope of your request, as set out above. The document relevant to your request is listed at Schedule 1.

Decision and Reasons for Decision

6. I have made a decision to grant access to the document that falls within the scope of your request in full. The document that I have chosen to release under the FOI Act is set out in Schedule 1.

Material taken into account

7. I have taken the following material into account in making my decision:
- the content of the document that falls within the scope of your request;
 - Sections 3, 11 and 11A of the FOI Act which give the Australian community a legally enforceable right to obtain access to information held by the Government of the Commonwealth.
 - the Guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (FOI Guidelines);
8. A full extract of all FOI Act provisions used to make my decision are provided in Schedule 2.

Access to documents

9. The document released to you in accordance with the FOI Act is enclosed.

Information Publication Scheme

10. The Information Publication Scheme requires the Department to publish information released in response to individual requests made under the Act, except in specified circumstances. As such details of your request will be published by the Department on its disclosure log, which can be accessed at:

<http://www.dva.gov.au/about-dva/freedom-information/foi-disclosure-log>

Your rights of review

11. If you are dissatisfied with the searches the Department did to create the document related to your request, you may apply for internal review or Information Commissioner review of the decision. We encourage you to seek internal review as a first step as it may provide a more rapid resolution of your concerns.

Internal Review

12. Under section 54 of the FOI Act, you may apply in writing to the Department for an internal review of my decision. The internal review application must be made within 30 days of the date of this letter. Where possible please attach reasons why you believe review of the decision is necessary. The internal review will be carried out by another officer within 30 days.
13. You can make your application for internal review in one of the following ways:

Post: Legal Services & Assurance, Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO Box 9998 CANBERRA ACT 2601
Facsimile: (02) 6289 6337
Email: information.access@dva.gov.au

Information Commissioner Review

14. Under section 54L of the FOI Act, you may apply to the Australian Information Commissioner to review my decision. An application for review by the Information Commissioner must be made in writing within 60 days of the date of this letter, and be lodged in one of the following ways:

Online: www.oaic.gov.au

Post: Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

Facsimile: (02) 9284 9666

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

In person: Level 3, 175 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW.

15. More information about your review rights under the FOI Act is available in Fact Sheet 12 published by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: <http://oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-resources/freedom-of-information-fact-sheets/foi-factsheet-12-your-review-rights>

Contact us

16. If you wish to discuss this decision, please do not hesitate to contact me using the following details:

Post: Legal Services & Assurance, Department of Veterans' Affairs

GPO Box 9998 CANBERRA ACT 2601

Facsimile: (02) 6289 6337

Email: information.access@dva.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Position Number 01003014

Position Number 01003014

Authorised officer

30 April 2018



Schedule of documents

Applicant: Verity Pane

Decision date: 30 April 2018

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Doc ref	Date of document	Document description	Pages	Decision	Exemption provision
1	-	Document prepared under section 17 of FOI Act showing number of withdrawals against claim types for the last four financial years (2013-14 to 2016-17)	1	Released in full	-



Schedule of relevant provisions in the FOI Act

3 Objects—general

- (1) The objects of this Act are to give the Australian community access to information held by the Government of the Commonwealth or the Government of Norfolk Island, by:
 - (a) requiring agencies to publish the information; and
 - (b) providing for a right of access to documents.
- (2) The Parliament intends, by these objects, to promote Australia's representative democracy by contributing towards the following:
 - (a) increasing public participation in Government processes, with a view to promoting better informed decision-making;
 - (b) increasing scrutiny, discussion, comment and review of the Government's activities.
- (3) The Parliament also intends, by these objects, to increase recognition that information held by the Government is to be managed for public purposes, and is a national resource.
- (4) The Parliament also intends that functions and powers given by this Act are to be performed and exercised, as far as possible, to facilitate and promote public access to information, promptly and at the lowest reasonable cost.

11 Right of access

- (1) Subject to this Act, every person has a legally enforceable right to obtain access in accordance with this Act to:
 - (a) a document of an agency, other than an exempt document; or
 - (b) an official document of a Minister, other than an exempt document.
- (2) Subject to this Act, a person's right of access is not affected by:
 - (a) any reasons the person gives for seeking access; or
 - (b) the agency's or Minister's belief as to what are his or her reasons for seeking access.

11A Access to documents on request

Scope

- (1) This section applies if:
 - (a) a request is made by a person, in accordance with subsection 15(2), to an agency or Minister for access to:
 - (i) a document of the agency; or
 - (ii) an official document of the Minister; and
 - (b) any charge that, under the regulations, is required to be paid before access is given has been paid.
- (2) This section applies subject to this Act.

Note: Other provisions of this Act are relevant to decisions about access to documents, for example the following:

- (a) section 12 (documents otherwise available);
- (b) section 13 (documents in national institutions);
- (c) section 15A (personnel records);

- (d) section 22 (access to edited copies with exempt or irrelevant matter deleted).

Mandatory access—general rule

- (3) The agency or Minister must give the person access to the document in accordance with this Act, subject to this section.

Exemptions and conditional exemptions

- (4) The agency or Minister is not required by this Act to give the person access to the document at a particular time if, at that time, the document is an exempt document.

Note: Access may be given to an exempt document apart from under this Act, whether or not in response to a request (see section 3A (objects—information or documents otherwise accessible)).

- (5) The agency or Minister must give the person access to the document if it is conditionally exempt at a particular time unless (in the circumstances) access to the document at that time would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.

Note 1: Division 3 of Part IV provides for when a document is conditionally exempt.

Note 2: A conditionally exempt document is an exempt document if access to the document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest (see section 31B (exempt documents for the purposes of Part IV)).

Note 3: Section 11B deals with when it is contrary to the public interest to give a person access to the document.

- (6) Despite subsection (5), the agency or Minister is not required to give access to the document at a particular time if, at that time, the document is both:
- (a) a conditionally exempt document; and
 - (b) an exempt document:
 - (i) under Division 2 of Part IV (exemptions); or
 - (ii) within the meaning of paragraph (b) or (c) of the definition of exempt document in subsection 4(1).