



15 May 2018
FOI ref: 2317

James Adams
By email: foi+request-4536-c4fbb1a5@righttoknow.org.au

Freedom of Information (FOI) Request – Consultation

Dear Mr Adams

I refer to your request, dated 25 April 2018 to the Department of the Treasury (the **department**), for the following documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the **Act**):

Please supply any documents (including reports, briefings and memos) that discuss universal basic income initiatives (either in Australia or elsewhere).

For clarity, I am interested in any document that discusses universal basic income pilots, negative income taxes, unconditional cash transfers, papers that model the effects of this sort of scheme, and any document that discusses design issues associated with introducing a universal basic income, whether hypothetically or otherwise.

Please note that I am only interested in documents dated since 1 January 2000.

I am an authorised decision maker under section 23 of the Act.

An initial assessment of your request has determined that relevant documents are held by a number of different policy areas. In particular, the second paragraph of your request expands the scope beyond the topic of universal basic income. Coordinating a large number of documents on a diverse range of topics would be a significant undertaking.

Additionally, the long timeframe you have specified (in excess of 18 years) would create further difficulties in identifying documents, as many of the older documents are archived and may not be searchable other than by retrieving and manually reviewing hundreds of files.

While it's not currently possible to accurately identify the number of documents relevant to your request, I'm satisfied on the basis of the initial assessment that even collecting such documents would place a significant burden on a limited number of Treasury staff.

Sections 24 and 24AA of the Act together provide that an agency may refuse a request if it is satisfied that the work involved in processing the request would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the agency from its other operations.

Section 24(1) of the Act provides that, before an agency can refuse a request on this ground, it must first undertake a 'request consultation process' with the applicant under section 24AB of the Act. The purpose of this process is to, firstly, advise the applicant that the agency is intending to refuse the request on that ground and, secondly, to give the applicant an opportunity to revise the request to make it more manageable.

Therefore, pursuant to section 24AB of the Act, I am formally advising you that I intend to refuse your request under section 24(1) of the Act as the work involved in processing it would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the department from its other operations.

As a means of possibly assisting you to narrow the scope of your request, I would note that the following steps on your part may assist:

- Limit the definition of the scope to focus on one particular aspect of the request (eg 'universal basic income initiatives').
- Provide a more recent date range
- Limit the scope to certain classes of documents (eg briefs, guidelines)
- Exclude certain classes of documents (such as emails)

If you wish to discuss this matter, please contact the FOI team on 02 6263 2800 or send comments by email to FOI@treasury.gov.au during the consultation period. The consultation period will run for 14 days from the day after you receive this letter.

The Act provides that you may now:

- revise your request;
- advise us that you do not wish to revise your request; or
- withdraw your request.

It further provides that if you have not done any of the above by the end of the consultation period of 14 days, your request will be deemed withdrawn.

I should lastly advise that, pursuant to section 24AB(8) of the Act, the period starting on the day you receive this notice and ending on the day you do any of the above, will be disregarded for the purpose of calculating the 30 day period within which all reasonable steps must be taken to finalise your request.

Yours sincerely



Vicki Wilkinson
Division Head
Social Policy Division