



Office of the
Minister for Revenue and Financial Services
Minister for Women
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service
The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP

Ref: FOI/MAPMPS/2018/001

27 JUN 2018

foi+request-4641-99c5ab75@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to your email of 13 June 2018, to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, in which you made a request under the *Freedom of Information Act* /1982 (the FOI Act) in the following terms:

The following is an application for the purposes of the FOI Act.

I seek access to all email correspondence between your office and staff and the Australian Public Service Commissioner, Mr John Lloyd, falling between the period of 14 May 2018 to the date of this application (including email documents sent by you or your staff to Mr Lloyd and email documents sent by Mr Lloyd to you or your staff).

Documents falling within the scope of my request can be quickly identified and retrieved by searching all items (including archived items) in your or your office's email account profiles according to persons sent to, and received from.

I am willing to agree to the redaction, from any relevant document, the personal information of any person mentioned in that document, except where that person was, at the relevant time: i) a public servant; or ii) a member of parliament. Noting paragraphs 6.153-6.154 of the FOI guidelines, this refinement of my request should negate any need for consultation with any third parties under s.27A of the FOI Act.

I write to advise you of my decision on your FOI request.

Authorised decision-maker

I am authorised by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service to make decisions on her behalf in relation to requests made under the FOI Act.

Decision and reasons for decision

Section 24A(1) of the FOI Act provides that:

- (1) An agency or Minister may refuse a request for access to a document if:
 - (a) all reasonable steps have been taken to find the document;
and
 - (b) the agency or Minister is satisfied that the document:
 - (i) is in the agency's or Minister's possession but cannot be found; or
 - (ii) does not exist.

The Minister's office has undertaken a search for documents within the scope of the FOI request and has not found any documents.

I have therefore decided to refuse your FOI request under section 24A(1)(b)(ii) of the FOI Act.

Review rights

Information about applicants' rights of review is attached to this decision.

Complaint rights

The Information Commissioner cannot investigate a minister's handling of FOI matters. However, the Information Commissioner can investigate agency actions relating to the handling of FOI matters. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (the OAIC) advises that before making a complaint, a person should raise their concerns directly with the agency.

Information about how to make a complaint is available at:
<https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-complaints>.

Should you require more information, please contact the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on (02) 6271 5849 or by email to foi@pmc.gov.au.

Yours sincerely


Gerry Antioch
Chief of Staff



Freedom of information – Your review rights

July 2012

If you disagree with the decision of an Australian Government agency or minister under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act), you can ask for the decision to be reviewed. You may want to seek review if you sought certain documents and were not given full access, if someone is to be granted access to information that is about you, if the agency has informed you that it will impose a charge for processing your request or if your application to have your personal information amended was not accepted. There are two ways you can ask for review of a decision: internal review by the agency, and external review by the Australian Information Commissioner.

Internal review

If an agency makes an FOI decision that you disagree with, you can ask the agency to review its decision. The review will be carried out by a different agency officer, usually someone at a more senior level. There is no charge for internal review.

You must apply within 30 days of being notified of the decision, unless the agency extended the application time. You should contact the agency if you wish to seek an extension. The agency must make a review decision within 30 days. If it does not do so, its original decision is considered to be affirmed.

Internal review is not available if a minister or the chief officer of the agency made the decision personally.

Review by the Information Commissioner

The Information Commissioner is an independent office holder who can review the decisions of agencies and ministers under the FOI Act.

Is a review the same as a complaint?

No. The Information Commissioner also investigates complaints about agency actions under the FOI Act. However, if you are complaining that an agency decision is wrong, it will be treated as an application for a review. Your matter will be treated as a complaint when a review would not be practical

or would not address your concerns (for example, if you were not consulted about a document that contains your personal information before it was released). For more information see [How do I make an FOI complaint?](#)

Do I have to go through the agency's internal review process first?

No. You may apply directly to the Information Commissioner. However, going through the agency's internal review process gives the agency the opportunity to reconsider its initial decision, and your needs may be met more quickly without undergoing an external review process.


Do I have to pay?

No. The Information Commissioner's review is free.

How do I apply?

You must apply in writing and you can lodge your application in one of the following ways:

online: www.oaic.gov.au
post: GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001
fax: +61 2 9284 9666
email: enquixxx@xxxx.xxv.au
in person: Level 3
175 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000



An application form is available on the website at www.oaic.gov.au. Your application should include a copy of the notice of the decision that you are objecting to (if one was provided), and your contact details. You should also set out why you are objecting to the decision.

Can I get help in completing the application?

Yes. The Information Commissioner's staff are available to help you with your application if anything is unclear.

When do I have to apply?

If you are objecting to a decision to refuse access to documents, impose a charge or refuse to amend a document, you must apply to the Information Commissioner within 60 days of being given notice of the decision. If you are objecting to a decision to grant access to another person, you must apply within 30 days of being notified of that decision.

You can ask the Information Commissioner for an extension of time to apply, and this may be granted if the Information Commissioner considers it is reasonable in the circumstances.

Who will conduct the review?

Staff of the Information Commissioner will conduct the review. Only the Information Commissioner, the FOI Commissioner or the Privacy Commissioner can make a decision at the end of the review.

Does the Information Commissioner have to review my matter?

No. The Information Commissioner may decide not to review an application that is frivolous, misconceived or lacking in substance, or if you fail to cooperate with the process or cannot be contacted after reasonable attempts. You cannot appeal against that decision.

Alternatively the Information Commissioner may decide that the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) would be better placed to review the matter, and if so, will advise you of the procedure for applying to the AAT. This will not be common.

Can I withdraw my application?

Yes. An application can be withdrawn at any time before the Information Commissioner makes a decision.

What happens in the review process?

The review process is designed to be as informal as possible. The Information Commissioner may contact you or any of the other parties to clarify matters and seek more information. The Information Commissioner may also ask the agency or minister to provide reasons for their decision if the reasons given were inadequate.

Most reviews will be made on the basis of the submissions and papers provided by the parties. Sometimes the Information Commissioner may decide to hold a hearing if one of the parties applies. Parties may participate in a hearing by telephone. If confidential matters are raised, the hearing may be held partly or wholly in private.

Will there be other parties to the review?

There may be. The Information Commissioner can join other parties who are affected by the application. For example, if you are objecting to someone else being granted access to information that concerns you, that person may be joined in the review.

Can someone else represent me?

Yes, including a lawyer. However, the Information Commissioner prefers the process to be as informal and cost-effective as possible and does not encourage legal representation.

Will the Information Commissioner look at all documents, including ones that are claimed to be exempt?

Yes. The Information Commissioner's review is a fresh decision, so all the relevant material must be examined, including documents that the agency or minister has declined to release. Developments that have occurred since the original decision may also be considered.

What powers does the Information Commissioner have?

While the review process is designed to be informal, the Information Commissioner has formal powers to require anyone to produce information or documents, to compel anyone to attend to answer questions and to take an oath or affirmation that their answers will be true.

An agency or minister can also be ordered to undertake further searches for documents.

What decisions can the Information Commissioner make?

After reviewing a decision, the Information Commissioner must do one of three things:

- set the decision aside and make a fresh decision
- affirm the decision, or
- vary the decision.

The Information Commissioner will give reasons for the decision.

Will the decision be made public?

Yes. The Information Commissioner will publish decisions on the website. Exempt material (that is, material that is not released) will not be included. Nor will the name of the review applicant, unless that person requests otherwise or there is a special reason to publish it.

What can I do if I disagree with the Information Commissioner's review decision?

You can appeal to the AAT. The Information Commissioner will not be a party to those proceedings. There is a fee for lodging an AAT application, although there are exemptions for health care and pension concession card holders, and the AAT can waive the fee on financial hardship grounds. For further information see www.aat.gov.au/FormsAndFees/Fees.htm.

FOI applications made before 1 November 2010

The Information Commissioner can only review an agency's or minister's FOI decision if you made your FOI request on or after 1 November 2010. If you made your FOI request before 1 November, even if the decision was made after that date, the review process is different.

You must first ask the agency for internal review of the decision. You may then appeal to the AAT if you are not satisfied with the decision.

The information provided in this fact sheet is of a general nature. It is not a substitute for legal advice.

For further information

telephone: 1300 363 992

email: xxxxxxxxx@xxxx.xxx.au

write: GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001
or visit our website at www.oaic.gov.au