



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

Decision and reason for decision of Nick (Position Number 62209913), Information Law Section, Legal Services and Assurance Branch, Department of Veterans' Affairs

Applicant: Julie

Decision date: 26 March 2019

FOI reference number: FOI 24432

Sent by email: foi+request-4797-34a0582d@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Julie

Freedom of Information Request: FOI 24432

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

Summary

2. I, Nick (Position Number 62209913), Acting Director, Information Law Section, am an officer authorised by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (**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* (**FOI Act**).
3. On 11 September 2018, you made a request, under the FOI Act, for access to documents in the Department's possession. Your request was made in the following terms:

...I understand from a recent ANAO report that DVA compiles monthly statistics about its Rehabilitation & Compensation (R&C) functions via its Rehabilitation and Compensation Integrated Support Hub (ISH) system and associated spreadsheets.

I understand liability decisions are stored electronically now, with no paper files existing (other than as short term working documents, and that the exercise of delegations are digital only) on ISH and HP Content Manager, which ANAO stated was DVA's primary records management systems.

So under FOI I seek copy of the summary statistic report for the month of June 2018 that details the number of liability claims accepted and rejected in that month, for VEA, DRCA and MRCA liability claims.

If such a document cannot be located, I seek under s 17 of the FOI Act for such a compilation to be compiled from DVA's primary electronic records management systems ISH and HP Content Manager (which I believe DVA refers to as TRIM).

I searched the DVA website but I could not find any such published statistics, nor has DVA contributed any datasets to data.gov.au (unlike other Commonwealth agencies), so it appears FOI is the only option here...

4. As the Department did not issue you with a decision on your request within statutory timeframe, the Department was considered to have made a decision personally refusing to give access to the documents you sought. This is also known as a deemed refusal in accordance with section 15AC(3) of the FOI Act. Despite this, the Department maintained an obligation to continue processing your request.
5. The Department has undertaken a reasonable search of its records and have identified one document that meets the scope of your request. The document relevant to your request is listed at **Schedule 1**.

Decision and reasons for decision

6. I have made a decision to grant you **full access** to one document.

Material taken into account

7. I have taken the following material into account in making my decision:
 - the terms of your request, dated 11 September 2018;
 - the types of information and documents that are in the Department's possession;
 - the content of the documents that fall within the scope of your request;
 - the guidelines issued by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (**OAIC**) under section 93A of the FOI Act; and
 - 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.
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 FOI Act, except in specified circumstances. I am of the view that details of your request should be made available on the Department's disclosure log. 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 my decision, you may request the OAIC review my decision.

OAIC review

12. Under section 54L of the FOI Act, you may apply to the OAIC to review my decision. An application for review by the OAIC 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 2000

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

Contact us

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

Post: Legal Services and Assurance Branch, Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO Box 9998 CANBERRA ACT 2601

Facsimile: (02) 6289 6337

Email: information.law@dva.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Nick (Position Number 62209913)

Acting Director
Information Law Section | Legal Services and Assurance Branch
Legal Assurance and Governance Division

26 March 2019



Schedule of documents

Applicant: Julie

Decision date: 26 March 2019

FOI reference number: FOI 24432

Document reference	Date of document	Document description	Pages	Decision	Exemption provision
1	17/07/2018	Primary Claims, Client Benefits National Summary	1-5	Release in full	N/A



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).

23 Decisions to be made by authorised persons

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), a decision in respect of a request made to an agency may be made, on behalf of the agency, by the responsible Minister or the principal officer of the agency or, subject to the regulations, by an officer of the agency acting within the scope of authority exercisable by him or her in accordance with arrangements approved by the responsible Minister or the principal officer of the agency.
- (2) A decision in respect of a request made to a court, or made to a tribunal, authority or body that is specified in Schedule 1, may be made on behalf of that court, tribunal, authority or body by the principal officer of that court, tribunal, authority or body or, subject to the regulations, by an officer of that court, tribunal, authority or body acting within the scope of authority exercisable by him or her in accordance with arrangements approved by the principal officer of that court, tribunal, authority or body.

26 Reasons and other particulars of decisions to be given

- (1) Where, in relation to a request, a decision is made relating to a refusal to grant access to a document in accordance with the request or deferring provision of access to a document, the decision-maker shall cause the applicant to be given notice in writing of the decision, and the notice shall:
- (a) state the findings on any material questions of fact, referring to the material on which those findings were based, and state the reasons for the decision; and
 - (aa) in the case of a decision to refuse to give access to a conditionally exempt document—include in those reasons the public interest factors taken into account in making the decision; and

Note: Access must generally be given to a conditionally exempt document unless it would be contrary to the public interest (see section 11A).

- (b) where the decision relates to a document of an agency, state the name and designation of the person giving the decision; and
- (c) give to the applicant appropriate information concerning:

- (i) his or her rights with respect to review of the decision;
 - (ii) his or her rights to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner in relation to the decision; and
 - (iii) the procedure for the exercise of the rights referred to in subparagraphs (i) and (ii); including (where applicable) particulars of the manner in which an application for internal review (Part VI) and IC review (Part VII) may be made.
- (1A) Section 13 of the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977 does not apply to a decision referred to in subsection (1).
- (2) A notice under this section is not required to contain any matter that is of such a nature that its inclusion in a document of an agency would cause that document to be an exempt document.
(see section 11A).