



Our ref. 177/2020

Brenda Barton
Via email

Dear Brenda,

Notice of intention to refuse FOI request - request consultation process

1. Your revised FOI request, dated 28 January 2020 and received by the DTA on 28 January 2020, requested access to the following documents:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I write to request copies of any emails, briefing notes, Requests for Quote or procurement probity advice sent from or to the following staff members:

- 1) the Chief Executive Officer*
- 2) the Chief Digital Officer*
- 3) the Chief Operating Officer*
- 4) the Chief Financial Officer*
- 5) the Head of MyGov / Head of Government Digital Experience*

in relation to:

- a) the creation of the 'Services Australia Vision' video - as available on the DTA's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NqxcNoT_kE*
- b) the delivery of a prototype demonstrating system integration approaches for, and capabilities of, a digital experience platform*
- c) related strategies, audits, reviews and business cases*

Documents are only requested for the time period between 20 May 2019 and 24 January 2020.

2. This is a notice of an intention to refuse access to the documents you have requested because a practical refusal reason exists under s 24(1) of the FOI Act. I am issuing this notice under s 24AB(2) of the FOI Act.
3. The practical refusal reason is that the work involved in processing the request would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the DTA from its other operations as specified in s 24AA(1)(a)(i) of the FOI Act.

Request is substantial

4. Following our electronic searches of documents and emails within the date range and a combination of search terms including "Services Australia + video", "myGov replacement" and "DXP", I estimate that there are approximately 770 documents totalling 7569 pages relevant

to your request as presently framed. This estimate was adjusted to exclude documents that appear to be duplicate versions. I estimate that retrieval and processing of these documents so they can be reviewed for decision making would require 19 hours.

5. The nature of the documents you have requested captures deliberations and decision documents that are likely to include commercial information and legal advice.
6. In addition to the significant volume of material that would need to be reviewed, the inherent complexity of the material will require a detailed and careful analysis and review to make a decision. I estimate 2 minutes per page would be required for document review and decision making. I also estimate that consultation with up to 7 third parties would be required and would take 7 hours. It is also reasonable to expect that a significant amount of material might require redaction to exclude exempt parts and would require a further 2 minutes per page. Further time would be required to prepare a decision and statement of reasons and reflect this in a schedule of documents.
7. In total, I estimate this would require over 350 hours of processing time to deal with this request. In other words, if one person were to dedicate themselves to processing this request full time, it would take them almost 10 weeks. I am satisfied that this is a 'substantial' request.

Request is unreasonable

8. For the purpose of providing you with this notice, I have considered that the substantial resource burden would be unreasonable having regard to:
 - the fact that the work involved in processing your request will require DTA staff to be taken away from their usual duties for a substantial period of time.
 - The way your request is worded and the nature of searching in agency emails would mean that there may be a large number of irrelevant pages in the results generated, which have to be reviewed manually.
9. This is consistent with guidance from the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in *VMQD and Commissioner of Taxation (Freedom of information)* [2018] AATA 4619 (17 December 2018) about the threshold for a practical refusal reason where SM Puplick commented that:

[100] The Information Commissioner has noted in relation to the other element of the test that, “whether or not disclosure would be “unreasonable” is a question of fact and degree which calls for a balancing of all the legitimate interests involved.”

[101] What constitutes valid practical refusal grounds is thus agency specific and resource dependent. Nevertheless for any agency, a burden in excess of 200 hours would almost certainly make the threshold of a rational and objective test. As is illustrated above, burdens as (relatively) small as 74 hours have been so characterised.

What you should do

10. I am the agency officer with whom you may consult with a view to making the request in a form that would remove the ground for refusal. You can contact me on 02 6120 8541.
11. I will assist you, as far as possible, to revise your request so that the practical refusal reason no longer exists. In order to attempt to avoid this we have already made suggestions which you accepted, which reduced the number of documents which might be included in scope,

however the number of documents in scope is still too large. If you are able to reduce the time frame, pinpoint the specific documents within your request, or clarify more particularly the information you are seeking, that may assist. I would be pleased to discuss with you in greater detail how your request might be appropriately further revised.

12. You have 14 days from the date you receive this notice to either:
 - withdraw your request
 - make a revised request
 - indicate you do not wish to revise your request.
13. If you do not respond in one of these ways within 14 days your request will be taken to have been withdrawn pursuant to s 24AB(7) of the FOI Act. If you indicate you do not wish to revise your request, I will proceed to make a decision on whether to refuse your request on resource grounds under s 24(1). If you need more time to respond, please contact me within the 14 day period to discuss your need for an extension of time.
14. Under s 24AB(8) of the FOI Act, the time for processing your FOI request is suspended from the day you receive this notice until the day you do one of the things listed in paragraph 9 above.

Yours sincerely

Morgan

FOI Officer

Date: 19/02/2019