



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

FOI Ref: 1405-F835

File No: 14/17106

8 August 2014

Mr Brendan Molloy
Councillor
Pirate Party Australia

Sent by email to: foi+request-636-872816ba@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Mr Molloy

Re: Freedom of Information Request

I refer to your current request for access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act) to:

"All correspondence from the Minister for Trade and Investment regarding the progress of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement since January 2014."

I am authorised under section 23 of the FOI Act to make access decisions, and have been appointed to be the decision-maker on your request as required by departmental procedures. I have been provided with the documents identified in searches within the Department as relevant to your request.

Decision

After careful consideration of the material and the terms and context of your request, I have identified two documents as being relevant to your request. I have decided to release those documents in part, with some irrelevant information deleted. I have excluded as reasonably outside the scope of your request correspondence concerning aspects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement which does not relate specifically to the progress of the negotiations.

Section 26 of the FOI Act provides that where access to a document has been denied in full or in part, a statement must be provided to the applicant setting out findings on material questions of fact, the material on which those findings were based, and the reasons for the decision. Please find this information below.

Material considered

The material on which my decision is based includes:

- the request and the documents within the scope of the request;

- the FOI Act;
- the Guidelines issued by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act; and
- the views of third parties consulted.

Reasons for my decision, including any material findings of fact

Some material has been deleted under section 22(1)(a)(ii) of the FOI Act, which allows material that is either irrelevant to the request or exempt from release to be deleted, to enable the remaining material in the document to be released.

I have decided to delete material which I consider to be outside the scope of the FOI request, and therefore irrelevant to you. I consider that details of the costs are irrelevant to your request regarding the progress of the TPP negotiations. I have also decided to exempt the personal information (names and contact details) of junior employees of the Department. I note that where there is no need for contact with a particular public servant in the future, disclosure of the public servant's name may be unreasonable and I have therefore deleted the identifying details of junior staff.

Some material is exempt from release under section 33(b) of the FOI Act, which provides that:

"A document is an exempt document if disclosure of the document under this Act would divulge any information or matter communicated in confidence by or on behalf of a foreign government, an authority of a foreign government or an international organization to the Government of the Commonwealth, to an authority of the Commonwealth or to a person receiving the communication on behalf of the Commonwealth or of an authority of the Commonwealth."

I have decided to delete material that was communicated in confidence by or on behalf of a foreign Government to the Australian Government. It is an accepted and fundamental tenet of diplomacy that foreign government interlocutors provide comments or information on the basis of confidentiality unless otherwise agreed. Public disclosure of the material in question could put at risk relations with foreign government contacts, could reduce the quality or quantity of future information provided to Australia and have a substantial adverse impact on the department's ability to perform its functions.

Internal review

Under the provisions of section 54 of the FOI Act, you are entitled to request a review of my access decision. Your request in writing within 30 days of the date of this letter should be directed to:

Director
Freedom of Information and Privacy Law Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
R G Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221

Australian Information Commissioner

Under the provisions of section 54 of the FOI Act, you are entitled to request a review by the Australian Information Commissioner of my access decision. You may also make a complaint to the Australian Information Commissioner under section 70 on the Department's performance of its functions or the exercise of power under the FOI Act.

Your request for review or complaint should be directed to:

GPO Box 2999
Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone: 1300 363 992
Fax: (02) 9284 9666
Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

Complaints to the Commonwealth Ombudsman

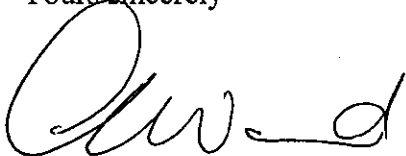
You may complain to the Ombudsman concerning actions taken by an agency in the exercise of its powers or, more specifically, the performance of its functions under the FOI Act. There is no fee for making a complaint. The Ombudsman will conduct an independent investigation of your complaint.

You may complain to the Ombudsman by calling or writing to:

Commonwealth Ombudsman
GPO Box 442
Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone: 1300 362 072
Fax: (02) 6249 7829

Should you have any queries regarding this matter please contact your FOI case officer, Ms Stephanie Allan on (02) 6261 2541.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Ward
Assistant Secretary
Goods and Investment Branch