



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Our reference: FOI 2122-030

Applicant name: Amanda Smith

By email: foi+request-7894-bxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

Decision date: 1 November 2021

Dear Ms Smith,

Freedom of Information request FOI 2122-030

I refer to your correspondence received by the Department of Social Services (**Department**) on 25 September 2021, in which you requested access to documents under the Commonwealth *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (**FOI Act**).

Your request was framed in the following terms:

“I am requesting all and any available records and information, including any ministerial correspondence, DOMINO data and relevant demographic data regarding the number of people who have died or become deceased after being placed on any form of compulsory income management in Australia from 2007 to 2021.

*This request is inclusive of compulsory participants in the:
Placed Based income management program
Basics Card income management program
Cashless Debit Card income management program*

I am requesting all and any available records and information, including any ministerial correspondence, DOMINO data and relevant demographic data regarding regarding the number of people who have left the Centrelink system after being placed on any form of compulsory income management in Australia from 2007 to 2021.

*This request is also inclusive of compulsory participants in the:
Placed Based income management program
Basics Card income management program
Cashless Debit Card income management program...”*

Decision

The Department has undertaken a reasonable search of its records and has not been able to identify documents relevant to your request.

For this reason, I have made a decision to refuse your request under section 24A of the FOI Act, as the documents do not exist.

Authority to make this decision

I am an officer authorised by the Secretary of the 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)*.

Summary

On 25 September 2021 you made a request for access to documents in the possession of the Department.

On 20 October 2021, the Department sought your agreement to a seven (7) day extension of time under section 15AA of the FOI Act. You responded on 21 October 2021, providing your agreement to this extension.

As an extension of time was applied to process your request in accordance with section 15AA of the FOI Act, a decision on your request is due on 1 November 2021.

I have decided not to impose a charge in relation to this request, in accordance with Regulation 8 of the *Freedom of Information (Charges) Regulations 2019*.

Statement of reasons for decision

Section 24A of the FOI Act

- Requests may be refused if documents cannot be found, do not exist or have not been received

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

I am satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to find information relevant to your request, having regard to:

- the terms of your request;
- the subject matter of the documents;
- the current and past file management systems and the practice of orderly destruction or removal of documents;
- the Department's record management systems and practices; and
- the individuals and areas within the Department who may be able to assist with the location of the information you seek access to.

Despite the reasonable searches undertaken, the Department has been unable to identify documents relevant to your request, as the Department does not hold information regarding:

- Income Management participants that have passed away while a participant was on that program;
- individuals who have passed away after they have left the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) or Income Management programs; or
- the number of CDC or Income Management participants who have ceased to claim any payments administered by Centrelink (Services Australia) after being placed on the programs.

For these reasons, I am refusing your request for access to documents as described in your request of 25 September 2021, in accordance with section 24A of the FOI Act.

A description of the searches undertaken to locate the documents which you are seeking to access is at **Appendix 1**.

A schedule of the relevant provisions relied on in making my decision can be found at **Attachment B**.

Your rights of review

Information about your rights to seek a review of this decision are at **Attachment A**.

Should you have any enquiries concerning this matter please do not hesitate to contact the FOI team by email at FOI@dss.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

M. Blair

Assistant Director

Cabinet and FOI Section

Government and Executive Services Branch

1 November 2021



Summary of document searches

The Department conducted searches in its applicable electronic records management systems in order to identify files and documents that fall within scope of your request (“relevant documents”).

As provided above in the Department’s statement of reasons, no relevant documents addressing the specific terms of your request were identified.