



27 October 2021

Ray Mehta

BY EMAIL: foi+request-7906-d7b4856c@righttoknow.org.au

In reply please quote:

FOI Request: FA 21/09/01303

File Number: OBJ2021/29491

Dear Ray Mehta

Freedom of Information (FOI) request - Access Decision

On 29 September 2021, the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) received a request for access to document under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act).

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a decision on your request for access under the FOI Act.

1 Scope of request

You have requested access to the following document:

Number of Applications Lodged, Granted and Refused for last 5 years for the applicants with Country of Citizenship as India, under the Sponsored Family Stream of Visitor Visa where the Sponsor paid a security bond.

2 Authority to make decision

I am an officer authorised under section 23 of the FOI Act to make decisions in respect of requests to access document or to amend or annotate records.

3 Relevant material

In reaching my decision I referred to the following:

- the terms of your request
- the document relevant to the request
- the FOI Act
- Guidelines published by the Office of the Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (the FOI Guidelines)
- advice from Departmental officers with responsibility for matters relating to the document to which you sought access

4 Document in scope of request

In accordance with section 17 of the FOI Act, the Department has used its computer system to produce one document that contains information that falls within the scope of your request. The data produced in the document existed in the possession of the Department on 29 September 2021 when your FOI request was received.

The Department has undertaken reasonable searches in relation to obtaining data to show the number of applications where the sponsor paid a security bond as falling in the scope of the request.

Searches

In summary, the searches undertaken by the relevant business area in relation to your request included:

- Search conducted in the Department's database visa processing system.
- The Department's database has limited ability to provide the required information for such a long period of time so data would need to be extracted manually on a monthly basis.
- There is no ability to filter by citizenship of the client on each application as this would require manual analysis.
- The data would require further manual analysis to determine figures for applications lodged, granted and refused.
- Given the large size of the data and the manual intervention involved in the process, accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed.

The Department estimates it would take a Departmental officer at a minimum of 112 hours (approximately 3 weeks) to obtain the data. The Department advises the work involved in the processing of the request would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the Department from its other operations under section 24AA of the FOI Act.

The Department does not hold an existing discrete document that contains the data you are seeking.

The Department has considered whether it can extract the data in accordance with section 17(1) of the FOI Act.

The obligation for retrieving or collating information stored in a computer system arises if:

- the Department could produce a written document containing the information using a computer or other equipment that is ordinarily available to the agency for retrieving or collating stored information, and
- producing a written document would not substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the agency from its other operations (s17(2))

In *Collection Point Pty Ltd v Commissioner of Taxation* the full bench of the Federal Court decided that if a new computer program is required to be written to produce the document

then a computer is not being used in a manner that is ordinarily available to the agency because an extraordinary step is required to be taken¹.

To compile the information you have requested into a discrete document would require a manual search of each relevant individual records and manual collation of the results. This is not what section 17 of the FOI Act requires. Section 17 only requires a new document to be created when it is possible to do so using a computer or other equipment to extract data. It is not possible to generate a document containing the information you have requested.

The data you have requested is of a detail that cannot be reported on from the Department's computer systems. Either the data is not collected to that granular detail, or it is not possible to extract the data using a computer system in a manner that is ordinarily available to it.

I am satisfied that the Department is not able to produce a written document containing the information you seek in a discrete form using a computer or other equipment ordinarily available to it.

Having regard to your request and the types of document that may fall within the scope of your request I am satisfied that the searches conducted were extremely thorough and all reasonable steps have been taken to locate any document relevant to your request.

5 Decision

Section 24A of the FOI Act provides that the Department may refuse a request for access to a document if all reasonable steps have been taken to find the document and the Department is satisfied that the document does not exist.

I am satisfied that the Department has undertaken reasonable searches in relation to point 2 of your request and that no documents were in the possession of the Department on 29 September 2021 when your FOI request was received. As such, I am refusing point 2 your request based on the application of section 24A of the FOI Act.

The decision in relation to the document in the possession of the Department which fall within the scope of your request is as follows:

- Release one document in full

6 Legislation

A copy of the FOI Act is available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A02562>. If you are unable to access the legislation through this website, please contact our office for a copy.

7 Your Review Rights

Internal Review

If you disagree with this decision, you have the right to apply for an internal review by the Department of this decision. Any request for internal review must be provided to the

¹ *Collection Point Pty Ltd v Commissioner of Taxation* [2013] FCAFC 67 [20].

Department within 30 days of you being notified of the decision. Where possible please attach reasons why you believe a review of the decision is necessary. The internal review will be carried out by an officer other than the original decision maker and the Department must make a review decision within 30 days.

Applications for review should be sent to:

By email to: foi.reviews@homeaffairs.gov.au
OR
By mail to:
Freedom of Information Section
Department of Home affairs
PO Box 25
BELCONNEN ACT 2617

Review by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

You may apply directly to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) for a review of this decision. You must apply in writing within 60 days of this notice. For further information about review rights and how to submit a request for a review to the OAIC, please see <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/reviews-and-complaints/information-commissioner-review/>.

8 Making a Complaint

You may complain to the Australian Information Commissioner about action taken by the Department in relation to your request.

Your enquiries to the Australian Information Commissioner can be directed to:
Phone 1300 363 992 (local call charge)
Email enquiries@oaic.gov.au

There is no particular form required to make a complaint to the Australian Information Commissioner. The request should be in writing and should set out the grounds on which it is considered that the action taken in relation to the request should be investigated and identify the Department of Home affairs as the relevant agency.

9 Contacting the FOI Section

Should you wish to discuss this decision, please do not hesitate to contact the FOI Section at foi@homeaffairs.gov.au.

[signed electronically]

Karla – Position No.60006174
Authorised Decision Maker
Department of Home affairs