



28 October 2021

A

BY EMAIL: foi+request-7926-aeb7e49a@righttoknow.org.au

In reply please quote:

FOI Request: FA 21/10/00220

File Number: OBJ2021/29943

Dear A

Freedom of Information (FOI) request - Access Decision

On 5 October 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:

How long are applicants expected to wait for a citizenship ceremony in Willoughby Council who have received their citizenship approval on 1 April 2021?

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 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

The Department has undertaken reasonable searches in relation to the documents you have requested access to.

5 Decision

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

- Refuse one document from release

6 Reasons for Decision

Detailed reasons for my decision are set out below.

6.1 Searches

The Department does not hold an existing discrete document that provides the waiting time for a citizenship ceremony in Willoughby Council for applicants approved on 1 April 2021.

Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation across Australia, the Department recognises that many councils may be constrained in holding citizenship ceremonies. To assist local government councils in continuing to welcome new citizens into their community and to manage demand for citizenship ceremonies, the Department has encouraged councils to move to online citizenship ceremonies where COVID-19 restrictions are in place and in person citizenship ceremonies currently cannot take place. Information on citizenship processing times, including between the point of approval and ceremony, can be found on the Department of Home Affairs' website at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/citizenship/citizenship-processing-times>.

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.

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.

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

Having regard to your request and the types of documents 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 documents relevant to your request.

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 your request and that documents relating to your request were not in the possession of the Department on 5 October 2021 when your FOI request was received. As such, I am refusing your request based on the application of section 24A of the FOI Act.

7 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.

8 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 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 Fact Sheet 12 "Freedom of information – Your review rights", available online at <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-review-process>.

9 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.

10 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.

Elaine

Position number 60097486

Authorised Decision Maker

Department of Home Affairs