



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Date: 2 December 2021

Our reference: FOI 2122-043

Applicant name: Ms Amanda Smith

By email: foi+request-8052-376ce63f@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Ms Smith,

Freedom of Information request FOI 2122-043

I refer to your correspondence received by the Department of Social Services (Department) on 2 November 2021, in which you requested access, under the Commonwealth *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act), to:

“...all communications, data and documents related to the number of compulsory income managed accounts that have been closed by the Department of Social Services or its branches and agencies - or by Services Australia since 2007.

This request is inclusive of ministerial, administrative and any other branch documents and data and specifically relates to the total number of Basics Card accounts and Cashless Debit Card accounts that have been closed in the time period January 2007 to October 2021.

Regarding the Cashless Debit Card I am also seeking the total number of successful Well Being and EXIT applications from February 2015 to October 2021 inclusive...”

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 FOI Act.

Summary

On 2 November 2021, you made a request for access to documents in the possession of the Department as detailed above.

The Department acknowledged your request on 10 November 2021. As no extensions of time have been applied to process your request, a decision on your request is due on 2 December 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*.

Material taken into account

In accordance with paragraph (a) of subsection 26(1) of the FOI Act, my findings on any material question of fact, the material on which those findings were based and the reasons for my decision to refuse access to the documents follow.

I have taken the following material into account in making my decision:

- the terms of your request;
- the types of documents that are in the possession of the Department;
- Sections 3, 11 and 11A of the FOI Act which give the Australian community a legally enforceable right to obtain access to information held by the Government of the Commonwealth. I also considered section 24A of the FOI Act (refers to where requests may be refused if documents cannot be found, do not exist or have not been received) relevant to my decision;
- the Guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (FOI Guidelines); and
- searches undertaken by relevant business areas of the Department.

A full extract of all FOI Act provisions used to make my decision are provided in **Attachment B**.

Reasons for decision

Requests may be refused if documents cannot be found, do not exist or have not been received (section 24A)

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.

Summary of document searches

A number of sections across the Department's Cashless Welfare Branches were engaged to complete this request, conducting searches of the Department's electronic records management systems, with no documents identified meeting the scope of your request.

I am satisfied that this is because no documents exist which contain the total number of Income Management or Cashless Debit Card accounts that have been closed since 2007.

With regard to the total number of successful wellbeing exemptions and exits, this is publically available at data.gov.au. This data is published each month and can be downloaded from the following 'landing page': <https://data.gov.au/dataset/ds-dga-e5a6ca38-b17c-4e65-af70-84e7759a0ffa/details?q=cashless%20debit%20card>.

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

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

2 December 2021