



Decision and Statement of reasons issued under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

Decision and reason for decision of Suzanne (Position Number 62210948), Information Access Officer, Information Access Unit, Client Access and Rehabilitation Branch, Department of Veterans' Affairs

Applicant: Julie A

Date of primary decision: 13 April 2022

FOI reference number (Primary): LEX 47940

Internal review decision date: 25 May 2022

Internal review reference number: LEX 49238

Sent by email: foi+request-8406-89fxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.au

Dear Julie A,

Freedom of Information Internal Review Request: LEX 49238

Decision

1. The purpose of this letter is to give you a decision about your request for internal review for the decision made in LEX 47940 under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (**FOI Act**).
2. I have made the decision to affirm the original decision made by Llewellyn (Position Number 62329531), Information Access Officer, Information Access Unit, Client Access Rehabilitation Branch. That decision was to grant part access to the documents within the scope of your request.
3. In affirming the original decision, I have made one amendment to document that was created under section 17 of the FOI Act and released to you, on the basis that I have identified a typographical error in that document that was created.

4. I otherwise affirm the decision and make no changes to the document bundles released to you.
5. A copy of the document created under section 17 with the amendment that I have made, is enclosed with this internal review decision. That document is page 1 of the document bundle set out in **Schedule 1**, together with applicable exemption provisions that apply to the balance of the documents in the document bundle. I have not made any changes to that document bundle, and affirm the redactions made in the original decision.

Authority to make decision

6. I, Suzanne (Position Number 62210948), Information Access Officer, Information Access Unit, Client Access Rehabilitation Branch, 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

Original Decision

7. On 11 February 2022, you made a request for access to documents in the possession of the Department. Your request sought access on the following terms:

... While a FOI request is for documents, in this instance given the potentially sensitive personal information that might otherwise be in scope, you may wish to make a s 17 document like was done in FOI 38412

https://www.righttoknow.org.au/request/all_contract_medical_advisers_to#incoming-19110

I seek copy of reports of self harm and suicide, including intention to self harm or suicide, received by the Department of Veterans Affairs (excluding Open Arms/VVCS) during 2021.

I do not seek the details of self harm and suicide (or intention) received, beyond the number of such incidents and their distribution throughout the year (a breakdown by month would be ideal).

I also seek copy of any brief provided to the Secretary during 2021 on such events, but again do not wish the details of the private individual involved or the type of self harm or suicide that occurred or was expressed.

I also seek copy of any current quick reference instructions Veterans Affairs give staff to follow when report of self harm and suicide, including intention to self harm or suicide, is made to them...

8. On 16 February 2022, the Department acknowledged your request via email.
9. On 10 March 2022, the Department consulted with you to confirm the terms of your request. We note that, as per the terms of your request, all personal information within relevant documents that pertain to veteran self-harm or suicide is out of scope of your request, with it being explicitly stated in your request that you do not seek this information, and that you are only seeking *“the number of such incidents and their distribution throughout the year”*.
10. As an extension of time was applied to process your request in accordance with section 15AB of the FOI Act, a decision on your request is due by 13 April 2022.
11. On 13 April 2022, the Department made a decision to grant access in part to these two (2) document bundles within the scope of your request, under the following provisions of the FOI Act:
 - a. Section 11B Public interest exemption - factors
 - b. Section 15 Request for Access
 - c. Section 17 Requests involving use of computers etc (e.g. request for the Department to create a document)
 - d. Section 22 Access to edited copies with exempt or irrelevant material deleted
 - e. Section 47E Public interest conditional exemptions--certain operations of agencies
 - f. Section 47F Public interest conditional exemptions--personal privacy

Internal Review

12. After receiving the Department’s decision on 13 April 2022, you contacted the Department on 25 April 2022 requesting an internal review of the handling of this FOI request. Your internal review request was made in the following terms:

...I am writing to request an internal review of Department of Veterans' Affairs's handling of my FOI request 'Self harm reporting...

13. As your application was made within the 30 day of the original decision being made, the internal review decision is valid.
14. As no extension of time has been applied to process this internal review, a decision on your internal review application is due 25 May 2022.

Material taken into account

15. In accordance with section 26(1)(a) 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 grant partial access to the document follows

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

- the terms of your original request made on 11 February 2022 and the original decision made on this request on 13 April 2022;
- the records of the searches carried out in processing your original request;
- the terms of your internal review request made on 25 April 2022;
- the types of information and documents that are in the Department's possession;
- the content of the document that fall within the scope of your request;
- 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 have also considered the following provisions of the FOI Act relevant to my decision:
 - Section 11B Public interest exemption – factors
 - Section 15 Request for Access
 - Section 17 Requests involving use of computers etc (e.g. request for the Department to create a document)
 - Section 22 Access to edited copies with exempt or irrelevant material deleted
 - Section 47E Public interest conditional exemptions--certain operations of agencies
 - Section 47F Public interest conditional exemptions--personal privacy;
 - Section 54C Internal review – decision on internal review; and
- the Guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (**FOI Guidelines**).

17. A full extract of all FOI Act provisions used to make my decision are provided in **Schedule 2**.

Reasons for decision

18. I have decided to affirm the original decision made on 13 April 2022 and grant part access to the documents that come within the scope of your request. In affirming the original

decision, I confirm that I have made an amendment to the document created under section 17 of the FOI Act, to correct a typographical error. I otherwise affirm the redactions made to the document bundles.

19. In response to your request on the 11 February 2022, Information Access Officer Llewellyn (Position Number 62329531), created a document under section 17 of the FOI Act.
20. This document was created with reference to the Secretary briefs on reported suicides in 2021, provided by the Mental Health & Wellbeing Services Division (MHWSD).
21. The date of the brief was used in determining the month of the possible suicide or misadventure. I am satisfied this is appropriate given the date of actual death can sometimes be unknown.
22. Upon review of these briefs I noted a duplicate brief used for the total count for the month of September 2021.
23. Given this, the duplicate brief has been removed from the document bundle and an update to the tally has been amended from a total of 45 to a revised total of 44.
24. I am satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to find information relevant to your request, having regard to:
 - The subject matter of your request; and
 - The individuals and areas within the Department who may be able to assist with the location of the information you seek access to.
25. In view of the specific scope of your request, search minutes were directed to the Secretary's Office, MHWSD and the Client's Benefits Division (CBD).
26. Per your advice to the Department on the 10 March 2022, citing personal information of individuals as irrelevant, the decision to provide the Secretary's briefing notes with sensitive and personal information as irrelevant/exempt under s 22 of the FOI Act is affirmed.
27. In reviewing information within the scope of your application, the primary decision maker decided to redact staff surnames and their direct contact details pursuant to section 47E and section 47F of the FOI Act. I have reviewed his reasoning for applying these redactions, as well as his balancing of the public interest test pursuant to section 15A(5) of the FOI Act.

28. After reviewing the redactions and reasoning for all other material redacted, I am satisfied that the correct and preferable decision has been made by the original decision maker.
29. I am satisfied that the documents released to you in response to a 'quick reference' guide for Department staff satisfactorily meet the scope of your request.
30. This included an internal presentation delivered to staff by the Triage and Connect team. The Information Access Unit also conducted its own self-directed search on the Department's Intranet page to provide further information on what is available to Department staff. The documentation provided to you is a sufficient procedural guide for staff when referring to the Triage and Connect team.
31. Taking into account the documentation provided after referral to both the Secretary's office and the Mental Health and Well-being Services Division I am satisfied the Department has provided an appropriate response to your request with all reasonable searches being conducted.

Delete exempt or irrelevant material from documents and provide access to edited copies (section 22)

32. The Department may refuse access to a document on the grounds that it is exempt. If so, the Department must consider whether it would be reasonably practicable to prepare an edited copy of the document for release, that is, a copy with relevant deletions made under section 22 of the FOI Act. The Department is under the same obligation to consider preparing an edited copy of a document by removing information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request.
33. As explained above, some of the documents subject to your request contain exempt information.
34. Per your email dated 10 March 2022 you further clarified that you had "...excluded the personal information of private individuals as irrelevant..." Therefore all such personal information within the documents released to you has been redacted under section 22 of the FOI Act
35. On this basis, I have prepared the documents for release by removing the exempt and irrelevant material in accordance with section 22 of the FOI Act. The material that has been edited for release is marked within the documents as well as at **Schedule 1**.

Public interest conditional exemptions--certain operations of agencies (sections 47E(c) and 47E(d))

36. The documents within the scope of your application contain the full names and contact information of staff of the Department. I have decided that s 47E(c) and 47E(d) applies to this material, as identified in **Schedule 1**.
37. Section 47E(c) conditionally exempts documents where disclosure would, or could reasonably be expected to, have a substantial adverse effect on the management or assessment of personnel by the Commonwealth or an agency. Management of personnel by the Department includes, among other things, human resources policies and activities, recruitment, and work health and safety.
38. Section 47E(d) conditionally exempts documents where disclosure would, or could reasonably be expected to, have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of an agency.
39. The Department has policies and procedures to support staff within its operating environment and to meet its obligations as an employer to provide a safe working environment. Some policies restrict the amount of identifying information generally provided by individual staff members to clients. For example, staff are generally required to identify themselves in correspondence with clients by a given name and position number.
40. This is consistent with the approach taken by other Commonwealth agencies with similar functions, including provision of support services and administration of statutory benefits schemes.
41. Implementation of these policies provides staff at more junior levels with confidence that they will not be inappropriately named or contacted in relation to actions taken in the course of their routine work for the Department.
42. Disclosure of identifying information about staff members contained within the documents would be inconsistent with these Departmental policies. Knowledge that identifying information about them may be disclosed in documents accessed under the FOI Act would be likely to undermine the confidence of staff in Departmental policies intended to support their work health and safety. Staff concern about inappropriate contact and the potential for harassment by clients is based on known instances of such things occurring. For example, public identification of individual staff members in an online client forum.
43. An adverse effect on the Department's ability to manage staff could reasonably be expected to result from widespread staff concern about disclosure of identifying information about

staff members. Staff members may experience concern even when not based on personal experience of harassment.

44. I also note that the Department provides a wide range of services to its clients. To facilitate efficient conduct of its operations, the Department has established channels for communication on specific topics and in relation to specific services. These channels, such as email inboxes and telephone support lines, enable services to be delivered efficiently by directing clients to the most appropriate point of contact. In addition, the Department is able to manage staffing efficiently by providing staff with access to communication points attached to a role rather than to an individual.
45. Disclosure of identifying information about staff members in these documents would disclose contact details for individual staff members, which is not generally available. Once contact details for individual staff members are disclosed they are likely to become publically known through private correspondence. Making it possible for clients to address correspondence to individual staff members or to seek to contact individuals directly is likely to undermine Departmental arrangements to channel communications based on role rather than individual. Reduced efficiency in communication and delivery of services could reasonably be expected to result.
46. Accordingly, for the reasons outlined above I consider that certain material, as identified in Schedule 1, meets the criteria for conditional exemption under section 47E(c) and 47E(d) of the FOI Act.

Public interest conditional exemptions--personal privacy (section 47F)

47. Section 47F of the FOI Act provides that a document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person (including a deceased person).
48. Section 4 of the FOI Act provides that personal information has the same meaning as in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act). Personal information is defined in section 6 of the Privacy Act as:

..information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:

- (a) whether the information or opinion is true or not;
- (b) whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.

49. The elements of 'personal information' are:
- (a) it relates only to a natural person (not, for example, a company);
 - (b) it says something about the individual;
 - (c) it may be in the form of an opinion, it may be true or untrue, and it may form part of a database;
 - (d) the individual's identity is known or is reasonably ascertainable using the information in the document.
50. If information is personal information, it will be conditionally exempt if disclosure would be 'unreasonable'. In considering whether disclosure would be unreasonable, section 47F(2) of the FOI Act requires me to take into account:
- (a) the extent to which the information is well known;
 - (b) whether the person to whom the information relates is known to be (or to have been) associated with the matters dealt with in the document;
 - (c) the availability of the information from publicly accessible sources; and
 - (d) any other matter I consider relevant.
51. The documents outlined in **Schedule 1** contain the full names and contact information of staff of the Department. Contact details of an individual staff member, such as their mobile phone number is personal information about that person.
52. The Department has policies and procedures to support staff within its operating environment and to meet its obligations as an employer to provide a safe working environment. Some policies restrict the amount of identifying information generally provided by individual staff members to clients. As outlined above, staff are generally required to identify themselves in correspondence with clients by a given name and position number. This reduces the likelihood that individuals are reasonably identifiable in a different context. For example, it reduces the likelihood that a private social media profile can be linked with an individual who is a staff member of the Department.
53. I consider that disclosure of personal information of individual staff members in the document would be unreasonable because it would be inconsistent with Departmental

policies and procedures designed to support a safe and efficient working environment. Additionally, it would be unreasonable because it would be contrary to the expectations of those individual staff members, who may rely on those Departmental policies and procedures for assurance of their personal privacy.

54. Accordingly, I have decided that the parts of documents which are listed as exempt in accordance with this provision in **Schedule 1**, meet the criteria for conditional exemption. Where a document is assessed as conditionally exempt, access must be given subject to the public interest test in accordance with section 11A(5).
55. Please note that, where the contact details or full name relates to a Senior Executive Service level staff members or relates to contact details that are already publicly available, these have not been exempted from release.

Application of the public interest test – sections 47E(c), (d) and 47F

56. Section 11A(5) of the FOI Act provides that an agency must give the person access to the document if it is conditionally exempt at a particular time unless (in the circumstances) access to the document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.
57. In order to assess whether release of the exempt material would be contrary to the public interest, I considered the following factor which favours disclosure:
 - (a) disclosure would promote the objects of the FOI Act by providing access to government held information.
58. I also considered the following factors which do not favour disclosure:
 - (a) disclosure could be expected to adversely affect the management of staff of the Department, resulting in a likely reduction in the capability of the Department to efficiently carry out its functions;
 - (b) disclosure could be expected to adversely affect the delivery of services by the Department in accordance with its functions; and
 - (c) Disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice the protection of an individual's right to privacy, both in relation to the third-party individuals and staff of the Department and other commonwealth agencies.

59. I have placed greater weight on these factors. I consider that disruption of established channels for communication and delivery of services would be likely to follow disclosure of contact information about individual staff members. I consider that impairment of the Department's ability to efficiently deliver services to veterans and their families could reasonably be expected as a result. Further, I consider that there is little public interest in the disclosure of information identifying individuals who are, or have been, staff members in roles more junior than the Senior Executive Service. Disclosure of that information could reasonably be expected to result in interference with the privacy of those individuals by enabling them to be identified in their private lives and associated with actions for which the Department is responsible.
60. On balance, I consider the public interest factors against disclosure to be more persuasive than the public interest factors favouring disclosure. I am satisfied that the public interest is to withhold the exempt material.
61. I am satisfied that no irrelevant factor has been considered, as set out in section 11B(4) of the FOI Act.

Access to documents

62. You were provided with two document bundles previously on 13 April 2022, as part of the original decision in LEX 47940. I have enclosed with this decision the document bundle which contains the amended document created under section 17. Given I have made no changes to the second document bundle, I have not enclosed a further copy. Please contact xxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx if you require a further copy and one can be provided to you.

Your rights of review

63. If you are dissatisfied with my decision you may apply for Information Commissioner Review of the decision through the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (**OAIC**).

OAIC review

64. Under section 54L of the FOI Act, you may apply to the OAIC to review my decision. An application for review by OAIC must be made in writing within 60 days of the date of this letter, and be lodged in one of the following ways:

Online: www.oaic.gov.au

Post: Director of FOI Dispute Resolution
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

Facsimile: (02) 9284 9666

Phone: 1300 363 992

Email: XXXXX@XXXX.XXX.XX

65. More information about your review rights under the FOI Act is available in Fact Sheet 12 published by the OAIC: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/reviews-and-complaints/information-commissioner-review/>

Contact us

66. If you wish to discuss this decision, please do not hesitate to contact the Information Access Unit using the following details:

Online: <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/reporting/freedom-information/access-information>

Post: Information Access Unit
Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO Box 9998, Brisbane QLD 4001

Phone: 1800 838 372

Email: XXXXXXXXXXXX.XXXXXX@XXX.XXX.XX

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne (Position Number 62210948)

Information Access Officer

Information Access Unit

Client Access and Rehabilitation Branch

Department of Veterans' Affairs

25 May 2022



Document schedule

Applicant: Julie A
Decision date: 25 May 2022
FOI reference number: LEX 49238

| Document reference | Date of document | Document description | Page number | Decision | Exemption provision |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Various | LEX 49238_Incident Bundle | 1-89 | Part Access | s 17; s 22; s 47E; s 47F |



Schedule of relevant provisions in the FOI Act

3 Objects—general

- (1) The objects of this Act are to give the Australian community access to information held by the Government of the Commonwealth or the Government of Norfolk Island, by:
 - (a) requiring agencies to publish the information; and
 - (b) providing for a right of access to documents.
- (2) The Parliament intends, by these objects, to promote Australia's representative democracy by contributing towards the following:
 - (a) increasing public participation in Government processes, with a view to promoting better informed decision-making;
 - (b) increasing scrutiny, discussion, comment and review of the Government's activities.
- (3) The Parliament also intends, by these objects, to increase recognition that information held by the Government is to be managed for public purposes, and is a national resource.
- (4) The Parliament also intends that functions and powers given by this Act are to be performed and exercised, as far as possible, to facilitate and promote public access to information, promptly and at the lowest reasonable cost.

11 Right of access

- (1) Subject to this Act, every person has a legally enforceable right to obtain access in accordance with this Act to:
 - (a) a document of an agency, other than an exempt document; or
 - (b) an official document of a Minister, other than an exempt document.
- (2) Subject to this Act, a person's right of access is not affected by:
 - (a) any reasons the person gives for seeking access; or
 - (b) the agency's or Minister's belief as to what are his or her reasons for seeking access.

11A Access to documents on request

Scope

- (1) This section applies if:
 - (a) a request is made by a person, in accordance with subsection 15(2), to an agency or Minister for access to:
 - (i) a document of the agency; or
 - (ii) an official document of the Minister; and
 - (b) any charge that, under the regulations, is required to be paid before access is given has been paid.
- (2) This section applies subject to this Act.
Note: Other provisions of this Act are relevant to decisions about access to documents, for example the following:
 - (a) section 12 (documents otherwise available);
 - (b) section 13 (documents in national institutions);
 - (c) section 15A (personnel records);
 - (d) section 22 (access to edited copies with exempt or irrelevant matter deleted).

Mandatory access—general rule

- (3) The agency or Minister must give the person access to the document in accordance with this Act, subject to this section.

Exemptions and conditional exemptions

- (4) The agency or Minister is not required by this Act to give the person access to the document at a particular time if, at that time, the document is an exempt document.

Note: Access may be given to an exempt document apart from under this Act, whether or not in response to a request (see section 3A (objects—information or documents otherwise accessible)).

- (5) The agency or Minister must give the person access to the document if it is conditionally exempt at a particular time unless (in the circumstances) access to the document at that time would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.

Note 1: Division 3 of Part IV provides for when a document is conditionally exempt.

Note 2: A conditionally exempt document is an exempt document if access to the document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest (see section 31B (exempt documents for the purposes of Part IV)).

Note 3: Section 11B deals with when it is contrary to the public interest to give a person access to the document.

- (6) Despite subsection (5), the agency or Minister is not required to give access to the document at a particular time if, at that time, the document is both:
- (a) a conditionally exempt document; and
 - (b) an exempt document:
 - (i) under Division 2 of Part IV (exemptions); or
 - (ii) within the meaning of paragraph (b) or (c) of the definition of exempt document in subsection 4(1).

11B Public interest exemptions — factors

Scope

- (1) This section applies for the purposes of working out whether access to a conditionally exempt document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest under subsection 11A(5).
- (2) This section does not limit subsection 11A(5).

Factors favouring access

- (3) Factors favouring access to the document in the public interest include whether access to the document would do any of the following:
- (a) promote the objects of this Act (including all the matters set out in sections 3 and 3A);
 - (b) inform debate on a matter of public importance;
 - (c) promote effective oversight of public expenditure;
 - (d) allow a person to access his or her own personal information.

Irrelevant factors

- (4) The following factors must not be taken into account in deciding whether access to the document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest:
- (a) access to the document could result in embarrassment to the Commonwealth Government, or cause a loss of confidence in the Commonwealth Government;
 - (b) access to the document could result in any person misinterpreting or misunderstanding the document;
 - (c) the author of the document was (or is) of high seniority in the agency to which the request for access to the document was made;
 - (d) access to the document could result in confusion or unnecessary debate.

Guidelines

- (5) In working out whether access to the document would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest, an agency or Minister must have regard to any guidelines issued by the Information Commissioner for the purposes of this subsection under section 93A.

15 Requests for access (as related to the requirements for requests)

Persons may request access

- (1) Subject to section 15A, a person who wishes to obtain access to a document of an agency or an official document of a Minister may request access to the document.

Requirements for request

- (2) The request must:
- (a) be in writing; and
 - (aa) state that the request is an application for the purposes of this Act; and
 - (b) provide such information concerning the document as is reasonably necessary to enable a responsible officer of the agency, or the Minister, to identify it; and
 - (c) give details of how notices under this Act may be sent to the applicant (for example, by providing an electronic address to which notices may be sent by electronic communication).
- (2A) The request must be sent to the agency or Minister. The request may be sent in any of the following ways:
- (a) delivery to an officer of the agency, or a member of the staff of the Minister, at the address of any central or regional office of the agency or Minister specified in a current telephone directory;
 - (b) postage by pre-paid post to an address mentioned in paragraph (a);
 - (c) sending by electronic communication to an electronic address specified by the agency or Minister.

17 Requests involving use of computers etc

- (1) Where:
- (a) a request (including a request in relation to which a practical refusal reason exists) is made in accordance with the requirements of subsection 15(2) to an agency;
 - (b) It appears from the request that the desire of the applicant is for information that is not available in discrete form in written documents of the agency; and
 - (ba) it does not appear from the request that the applicant wishes to be provided with a computer tape or computer disk on which the information is recorded; and
 - (c) the agency could produce a written document containing the information in discrete form by:
 - (i) the use of a computer or other equipment that is ordinarily available to the agency for retrieving or collating stored information; or
 - (ii) the making of a transcript from a sound recording held in the agency;

the agency shall deal with the request as if it were a request for access to a written document so produced and containing that information and, for that purpose, this Act applies as if the agency had such a document in its possession.

- (2) An agency is not required to comply with subsection (1) if compliance would substantially and unreasonably divert the resources of the agency from its other operations.

22 Access to edited copies with exempt or irrelevant matter deleted

Scope

- (1) This section applies if:

- (a) an agency or Minister decides:
 - (i) to refuse to give access to an exempt document; or
 - (ii) that to give access to a document would disclose information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request for access; and
- (b) it is possible for the agency or Minister to prepare a copy (an edited copy) of the document, modified by deletions, ensuring that:
 - (i) access to the edited copy would be required to be given under section 11A (access to documents on request); and
 - (ii) the edited copy would not disclose any information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request; and
- (c) it is reasonably practicable for the agency or Minister to prepare the edited copy, having regard to:
 - (i) the nature and extent of the modification; and
 - (ii) the resources available to modify the document; and
- (d) it is not apparent (from the request or from consultation with the applicant) that the applicant would decline access to the edited copy.

Access to edited copy

- (2) The agency or Minister must:
 - (a) prepare the edited copy as mentioned in paragraph (1)(b); and
 - (b) give the applicant access to the edited copy.

Notice to applicant

- (3) The agency or Minister must give the applicant notice in writing:
 - (a) that the edited copy has been prepared; and
 - (b) of the grounds for the deletions; and
 - (c) if any matter deleted is exempt matter—that the matter deleted is exempt matter because of a specified provision of this Act.
- (4) Section 26 (reasons for decision) does not apply to the decision to refuse access to the whole document unless the applicant requests the agency or Minister to give the applicant a notice in writing in accordance with that section.

23 Decisions to be made by authorised persons

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), a decision in respect of a request made to an agency may be made, on behalf of the agency, by the responsible Minister or the principal officer of the agency or, subject to the regulations, by an officer of the agency acting within the scope of authority exercisable by him or her in accordance with arrangements approved by the responsible Minister or the principal officer of the agency.
- (2) A decision in respect of a request made to a court, or made to a tribunal, authority or body that is specified in Schedule 1, may be made on behalf of that court, tribunal, authority or body by the principal officer of that court, tribunal, authority or body or, subject to the regulations, by an officer of that court, tribunal, authority or body acting within the scope of authority exercisable by him or her in accordance with arrangements approved by the principal officer of that court, tribunal, authority or body.

26 Reasons and other particulars of decisions to be given

- (1) Where, in relation to a request, a decision is made relating to a refusal to grant access to a document in accordance with the request or deferring provision of access to a document,

the decision-maker shall cause the applicant to be given notice in writing of the decision, and the notice shall:

- (a) state the findings on any material questions of fact, referring to the material on which those findings were based, and state the reasons for the decision; and
- (aa) in the case of a decision to refuse to give access to a conditionally exempt document—include in those reasons the public interest factors taken into account in making the decision; and

Note: Access must generally be given to a conditionally exempt document unless it would be contrary to the public interest (see section 11A).

- (b) where the decision relates to a document of an agency, state the name and designation of the person giving the decision; and
 - (c) give to the applicant appropriate information concerning:
 - (i) his or her rights with respect to review of the decision;
 - (ii) his or her rights to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner in relation to the decision; and
 - (iii) the procedure for the exercise of the rights referred to in subparagraphs (i) and (ii); including (where applicable) particulars of the manner in which an application for internal review (Part VI) and IC review (Part VII) may be made.
- (1A) Section 13 of the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977 does not apply to a decision referred to in subsection (1).
- (2) A notice under this section is not required to contain any matter that is of such a nature that its inclusion in a document of an agency would cause that document to be an exempt document.
(see section 11A).

47E Public interest conditional exemptions—certain operations of agencies

A document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure under this Act would, or could reasonably be expected to, do any of the following:

- (a) prejudice the effectiveness of procedures or methods for the conduct of tests, examinations or audits by an agency;
- (b) prejudice the attainment of the objects of particular tests, examinations or audits conducted or to be conducted by an agency;
- (c) have a substantial adverse effect on the management or assessment of personnel by the Commonwealth, by Norfolk Island or by an agency;
- (d) have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of an agency.

Note: Access must generally be given to a conditionally exempt document unless it would be contrary to the public interest (see section 11A).

47F Public interest conditional exemptions—personal privacy

General rule

- (1) A document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure under this Act would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person (including a deceased person).
- (2) In determining whether the disclosure of the document would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information, an agency or Minister must have regard to the following matters:
 - (a) the extent to which the information is well known;
 - (b) whether the person to whom the information relates is known to be (or to have been) associated with the matters dealt with in the document;
 - (c) the availability of the information from publicly accessible sources;
 - (d) any other matters that the agency or Minister considers relevant.

- (3) Subject to subsection (5), subsection (1) does not have effect in relation to a request by a person for access to a document by reason only of the inclusion in the document of matter relating to that person.

Access given to qualified person instead

- (4) Subsection (5) applies if:
- (a) a request is made to an agency or Minister for access to a document of the agency, or an official document of the Minister, that contains information concerning the applicant, being information that was provided by a qualified person acting in his or her capacity as a qualified person; and
 - (b) it appears to the principal officer of the agency or to the Minister (as the case may be) that the disclosure of the information to the applicant might be detrimental to the applicant's physical or mental health, or well-being.
- (5) The principal officer or Minister may, if access to the document would otherwise be given to the applicant, direct that access to the document, so far as it contains that information, is not to be given to the applicant but is to be given instead to a qualified person who:
- (a) carries on the same occupation, of a kind mentioned in the definition of qualified person in subsection (7), as the first-mentioned qualified person; and
 - (b) is to be nominated by the applicant.
- (6) The powers and functions of the principal officer of an agency under this section may be exercised by an officer of the agency acting within his or her scope of authority in accordance with arrangements referred to in section 23.
- (7) In this section:
- qualified person means a person who carries on, and is entitled to carry on, an occupation that involves the provision of care for the physical or mental health of people or for their well-being, and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes any of the following:
- (a) a medical practitioner;
 - (b) a psychiatrist;
 - (c) a psychologist;
 - (d) a counsellor;
 - (e) a social worker.

Note: Access must generally be given to a conditionally exempt document unless it would be contrary to the public interest (see section 11A).

54C Internal Review – decision on internal review

Scope

- (1) This section applies if an application for internal review of an access refusal decision OR an access grant decision (the original decision) is made in accordance with this Part.

Decision

- (2) The agency must, as soon as practicable, arrange for a person (other than the person who made the original decision) to review the decision.
- (3) The person must make a fresh decision on behalf of the agency within 30 days after the day on which the application was received by, or on behalf of, the agency.

Notice of decision

- (4) Section 26 extends to a decision made under this section.