



1 April 2022

Our reference: LEX 66862

Faustus

By email: [foi+request-8536-66821aef@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-8536-66821aef@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Faustus

### **Decision on your Freedom of Information Request**

I refer to your request to Services Australia (the **agency**) dated 2 March 2022 for access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the **FOI Act**) made in the following terms:

I have a report titled 'Final Report of the Independent Review of Health Providers' Access to Medicare Card Numbers, Commonwealth of Australia 2017'. It states:

"At 30 June 2017, 24.9 million individuals were eligible for Medicare, and there were 14.1 million active Medicare cards. The number of Medicare cards is lower than the number of eligible persons because Medicare cards are issued to families, so not every individual has their own Medicare card. 1.4 million individuals were on two Medicare cards"

I am looking for any document or documents, that contains the following information, or from which it could be reasonably inferred:

1. Total number of individuals in Australia who are eligible for Medicare
2. Total number of active Medicare cards
3. Total number of individuals on more than one Medicare card
4. Total number of individual who are Medicare eligible, but for some reason do not have an active Medicare card

If at all possible, I am seeking a document that provides some sort of breakdown of these numbers by state.

#### **Publicly available information**

Some of the information you requested is readily available in the public domain. We have provided you with information below to assist you in accessing the information you are seeking.

As such, your request for the following documents (in bold) is taken to be finalised:

- 1. Total number of individuals in Australia who are eligible for Medicare**
- 2. Total number of active Medicare cards**
- 3. Total number of individuals on more than one Medicare card**

You can find the relevant information for the above parts of your request on the Services Australia website – Monthly and Quarterly Standard Reports – Table 2.2: Effective Enrolment Data:

[http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/mth\\_qtr\\_std\\_report.jsp](http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/mth_qtr_std_report.jsp).

This information can be viewed as a Monthly Report or Quarterly Report.

### **My decision**

In relation to the remainder of your request, I have decided to refuse your request for access to:

4. Total number of individual who are Medicare eligible, but for some reason do not have an active Medicare card,

under section 24A of the FOI Act on the basis that all reasonable steps have been taken to locate the documents you have requested and I am satisfied that they do not exist.

Please see **Attachment A** for the reasons for my decision.

### **You can ask for a review of our decision**

If you disagree with any part of the decision you can ask for a review. There are two ways you can do this. You can ask for an internal review from within Services Australia, or an external review by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. See **Attachment B** for more information about how to request a review.

### **Further assistance**

If you have any questions please email [FOI.LEGAL.TEAM@servicesaustralia.gov.au](mailto:FOI.LEGAL.TEAM@servicesaustralia.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Phillipa  
Authorised FOI Decision Maker  
Freedom of Information Team  
Information Access Branch | Legal Services Division  
Services Australia

**Attachment A****REASONS FOR DECISION****What you requested**

I have a report titled 'Final Report of the Independent Review of Health Providers' Access to Medicare Card Numbers, Commonwealth of Australia 2017'. It states:

"At 30 June 2017, 24.9 million individuals were eligible for Medicare, and there were 14.1 million active Medicare cards. The number of Medicare cards is lower than the number of eligible persons because Medicare cards are issued to families, so not every individual has their own Medicare card. 1.4 million individuals were on two Medicare cards"

I am looking for any document or documents, that contains the following information, or from which it could be reasonably inferred:

1. Total number of individuals in Australia who are eligible for Medicare
2. Total number of active Medicare cards
3. Total number of individuals on more than one Medicare card
4. Total number of individual who are Medicare eligible, but for some reason do not have an active Medicare card

If at all possible, I am seeking a document that provides some sort of breakdown of these numbers by state.

**What I took into account**

In reaching my decision I took into account:

- your original request dated 2 March 2022;
- documents that fall within the scope of your request;
- consultations with Services Australia officers about:
  - the nature of the documents;
  - Services Australia's operating environment and functions;
- guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (the **Guidelines**); and
- the FOI Act.

**Reasons for my decisions**

I am authorised to make decisions under section 23(1) of the FOI Act.

**Section 24A of the FOI Act**

Section 24A of the FOI Act provides that:

- (1) 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.

We have consulted with the Health Strategy Branch (the **Branch**) in relation to part 4 of your request. The Branch conducted searches of the agency's electronic and paper files. The Branch has advised that the agency does not hold information relating to Medicare eligible individuals who do not have an active Medicare card, and accordingly, no such documents exist.

On the basis of these searches, I am satisfied that in accordance with section 24A of the FOI Act:

1. all reasonable steps have been taken to find the document relating to part 4 of your request; and
2. the document does not exist.

**Attachment B****INFORMATION ON RIGHTS OF REVIEW*****FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982*****Asking for a full explanation of a freedom of information (FOI) decision**

Before you ask for a formal review of a FOI decision, you can contact us to discuss your request. We will explain the decision to you. This gives you a chance to correct misunderstandings.

**Asking for a formal review of a FOI decision**

If you still believe a decision is incorrect, the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act)* gives you the right to apply for a review of the decision. Under sections 54 and 54L of the FOI Act, you can apply for a review of an FOI decision by:

1. an Internal Review Officer in Services Australia; and/or
2. the Australian Information Commissioner.

**Applying for an internal review by an Internal Review Officer**

If you apply for internal review, a different decision maker to the Services Australia delegate who made the original decision will carry out the review. The Internal Review Officer will consider all aspects of the original decision and decide whether it should change. An application for internal review must be:

- made in writing
- made within 30 days of receiving this letter
- sent to the address at the top of the first page of this letter.

**Note 2:** You do not need to fill in a form. However, it is a good idea to set out any relevant submissions you would like the Internal Review Officer to further consider, and your reasons for disagreeing with the decision.

**Applying for external review by the Australian Information Commissioner**

If you do not agree with the original decision or the internal review decision, you can ask the Australian Information Commissioner to review the decision.

If you do not receive a decision from an Internal Review Officer in Services Australia within 30 days of applying, you can ask the Australian Information Commissioner for a review of the original FOI decision.

You will have 60 days to apply in writing for a review by the Australian Information Commissioner.

You can **lodge your application:**

Online: [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)

Post: Australian Information Commissioner  
GPO Box 5218  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Email: [enquiries@oaic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@oaic.gov.au)

**Note 3:** The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner generally prefers FOI applicants to seek internal review before applying for external review by the Australian Information Commissioner.

**Important:**

- If you are applying online, the application form the 'Merits Review Form' is available at **[www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)**.
- If you have one, you should include with your application a copy of the Services Australia decision on your FOI request
- Include your contact details
- Set out your reasons for objecting to Services Australia's decision.

**Complaints to the Australian Information Commissioner and Commonwealth Ombudsman**

***Australian Information Commissioner***

You may complain to the Australian Information Commissioner concerning action taken by an agency in the exercise of powers or the performance of functions under the FOI Act, There is no fee for making a complaint. A complaint to the Australian Information Commissioner must be made in writing. The Australian Information Commissioner's contact details are:

Telephone: 1300 363 992  
Website: [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)

***Commonwealth Ombudsman***

You may also complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman concerning action taken by an agency in the exercise of powers or the performance of functions under the FOI Act. There is no fee for making a complaint. A complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. The Commonwealth Ombudsman's contact details are:

Phone: 1300 362 072  
Website: [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)

The Commonwealth Ombudsman generally prefers applicants to seek review before complaining about a decision.