

REASONS FOR DECISION/GROUNDS FOR DELETIONS.

What you requested

On 31 October 2022 you made a freedom of information request by email to the Repatriation Medical Authority's (RMA) mailbox in the following terms:

“a FULL COPY of the minutes of each meeting from 22 October 2021 as it relates to atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter, including all briefing papers that have been written. I am comfortable for the requested minutes to redact surnames, email addresses and phone numbers if required, of DVA staff and the secretariat plus those mentioned who have made a submission to atrial fibrillation or any and other conditions being discussed, but NOT the names of the 6 RMA members.”

In your email of 1 November 2022 you agreed that you were seeking “ a full copy of any minutes since 22 October 2021 which mention atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter “ and “ any briefing papers concerning atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter written since 22 October 2021”

What I took into account

In reaching my decision I took into account:

- your requests dated 31 October 2022 and 1 November 2022
- a review of the records of the RMA
- guidelines issued by the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (Guidelines), and
- the FOI Act.

Reasons for my decision

I am authorised to make decisions under section 23(1) of the FOI Act. My search identified the following documents (“the documents”) as within scope of your requests:

1. Endorsed minutes of meeting - Repatriation Medical Authority – 2 August 2022
2. Briefing paper Atrial Fibrillation and Atrial Flutter

Personal privacy

Section 47F conditionally exempts a document to the extent that its disclosure would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person. Personal information includes any information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable, whether the information or opinion is true or not.

The documents contain the names of the following individuals:

- Individuals who are current or past employees of the Authority
- An individual who was an external attendee at the RMA's meeting in June 2022
- Individuals who are the Chair or Members of the Authority

I am satisfied that this information in the context of the documents is personal information about these individuals.

Personal information will be conditionally exempt if disclosure would be 'unreasonable'. In considering whether disclosure would be unreasonable, s 47F(2) of the FOI Act requires me to take into account:

- the extent to which the information is well known 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
- the availability of the information from publicly accessible sources
- any other matter I consider relevant.

The personal details of the employees of the authority or external attendees at the RMA's meetings are not well known or publically available. Nor are they known to be associated with the matters dealt with in the documents. Likewise, the name of the Member of the Authority contained in the briefing paper, despite that person's membership of the Authority being a matter of public record, is not known to be associated with the matters dealt with in the briefing paper specifically.

I therefore find that the documents are conditionally exempt in part under s 47F of the FOI Act.

Nonetheless I must give access to the documents unless, in the circumstances, access at this time would on balance be contrary to the public interest.

I acknowledge that there is a public interest in documents of the Authority being made available to the public for the purpose of encouraging public debate and to promote oversight of its activities. I do not consider that disclosure of the personal details of these individuals would facilitate any of these objects. I do not consider disclosure of the personal details of these individuals would shed any light on the workings of the Authority, enhance public accountability or would have any benefit or value to the public.

Taking into account the above matters, on balance, I find that disclosure of this information in the documents is contrary to the public interest. Accordingly, I have decided that the documents are exempt in part under s 47F of the FOI Act.

Edited copies

I have decided that it is possible to prepare edited copies of the documents modified by deletions such that those edited copies would be documents required to be given under section 11A of the FOI Act.

Accordingly, and with a view to the application of section 47F of the FOI Act, I have removed the names of all employees of the authority or external attendees in all of the documents and the name of a member of the authority on the Briefing paper, whilst retaining the names of the Chair and members of the Authority in the minutes of the June 2022 meeting, as membership of the Authority is a matter of public record.