



23 July 2019

[Redacted]

**In reply please quote:**

FOI Request: FA 19/05/01103  
File Number: ADF2019/157680

Dear [Redacted]

**Freedom of Information (FOI) request - Access Decision**

On 17 May 2019, 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:

*All ministerial briefing notes, as well as any summaries of internal reviews or investigation reports, regarding the cause and effect of, and response to, the 29 April 2019 disruption to the SmartGates immigration system.*

**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 document relevant to the request
- the FOI Act
- Guidelines published by the Office of the Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (the FOI Guidelines)

#### **4 Document in scope of request**

The data produced in the document existed in the possession of the Department on 17 May 2019 when your FOI request was received.

#### **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:

- Release one document in part with deletions

#### **6 Reasons for Decision**

Detailed reasons for my decision are set out below.

My findings of fact and reasons for deciding that the exemption provision applies to that information are set out below.

##### **6.1 Section 22 of the FOI Act – irrelevant to request**

Section 22 of the FOI Act provides that if giving access to a document would disclose information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request, it is possible for the Department to prepare an edited copy of the document, modified by deletions, ensuring that the edited copy would not disclose any information that would reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to the request.

On 17 May 2019, the Department advised you that its policy is to exclude the personal details of officers not in the Senior Executive Service (SES), as well as the mobile and work telephone numbers of SES staff, contained in documents that fall within scope of an FOI request.

Information specific to a data centre and incident numbers have also identified as irrelevant to the request.

I have therefore decided that parts of document marked 's22(1)(a)(ii)' would disclose information that could reasonably be regarded as irrelevant to your request, and have therefore prepared an edited copy of the document, with the irrelevant material deleted pursuant to section 22(1)(a)(ii) of the FOI Act.

The remainder of the document has been considered for release to you as it is relevant to your request.

##### **6.2 Section 22 of the FOI Act – deletion of exempt material**

I have decided to prepare an edited copy of the document. The grounds upon which the edited copy of this document has been prepared is set out in the Schedule of Documents.

##### **6.3 Section 47E of the FOI Act – Operations of Agencies**

Section 47E(d) of the FOI Act provides that documents are conditionally exempt if 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.

I consider that the disclosure of the parts of documents marked 's47E(d)' would, or could reasonably be expected to, have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of the Department.

Managing the security and integrity of Australia's borders is integral to the operations of the Department. Any prejudice to the effectiveness of the Department's Information Technology (IT) systems, methods and procedures used in undertaking that role would result in a substantial adverse effect on the operations of the Department.

Any disclosure resulting in the prejudice of the effectiveness of the Department's IT systems, methods and procedures would result in the need for this Department, and potentially its law enforcement partners, to change those IT systems to avoid jeopardising their future effectiveness.

Accordingly, I have decided that the documents are conditionally exempt under section 47E(d) of the FOI Act. Access to a conditionally exempt document must generally be given unless it would be contrary to the public interest to do so. I have turned my mind to whether disclosure of the information would be contrary to the public interest, and have included my reasoning in that regard below.

#### **6.4 The public interest – section 11A of the FOI Act**

As I have decided that parts of the document are conditionally exempt, I am now required to consider whether access to the conditionally exempt information would be contrary to the public interest (section 11A of the FOI Act).

A part of a document which is conditionally exempt must also meet the public interest test in section 11A(5) before an exemption may be claimed in respect of that part.

In summary, the test is whether access to the conditionally exempt part of the document would be, on balance, contrary to the public interest.

In applying this test, I have noted the objects of the FOI Act and the importance of the other factors listed in section 11B(3) of the FOI Act, being 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.

Having regard to the above:

- I am satisfied that access to the document would promote the objects of the FOI Act.
- I consider that the subject matter of the document does not seem to have the character of public importance. The matter has a very limited scope and, in my view, would be of interest to a very narrow section of the public.
- I consider that no insights into public expenditure will be provided through examination of the document.



- I am satisfied that you do not require access to the document in order to access your own personal information.

I have also considered the following factors that weigh against the release of the conditionally exempt information in the document:

- Information about IT service and systems affected: disclosure to the world at large of the conditionally exempt information contained within document numbered 1 in the schedule would have a substantial adverse effect on the IT operations of the Department. This conditionally exempt information is of value to individuals or organisations who may be interested in crafting a hostile cyber security attack on the IT systems of the Department. I consider that this would be contrary to the public interest and that this factor weighs strongly against disclosure.

I have also had regard to section 11B(4) which sets out the factors which are irrelevant to my decision, which are:

- 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.

I have not taken into account any of those factors in this decision.

Upon balancing all of the above relevant public interest considerations, I have concluded that the disclosure of the conditionally exempt information in the documents would be contrary to the public interest and it is therefore exempt from disclosure under 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:foi@homeaffairs.gov.au).



**Authorised Decision Maker  
Department of Home Affairs**

## SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS

APPLICANT: [REDACTED]  
FOI request: FA 19/05/01103

No.	Date of document	No. of pages	Description	Decision on release	
				Exempt in part	s.47E(d)
1.	29 April 2019	3	Post Incident report	Exempt in part	s.47E(d)
	Total pages	3			