



21 January 2019

In reply please quote:

FOI Request: FA 19/01/00194

File Number: ADF2019/6341

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information (FOI) request - Access Decision

On 7 January 2019, the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) received a request for access to documents 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 documents:

All detection reports where inspectors found asbestos in imported products in the period 1 January to 30 July 2018.

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 documents or to amend or annotate records.

3 Relevant material

In reaching my decision I referred to the following:

- the terms of your request
- the documents 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 Documents in scope of request

The Department has identified 32 documents as falling within the scope of your request. These documents were in the possession of the Department on 7 January 2019 when your request was received.

Attachment A is a schedule which describes the relevant documents and sets out my decision in relation to each of them.

5 Decision

The decision in relation to the documents in the possession of the Department which fall within the scope of your request is to release 32 documents in part with deletions.

6 Reasons for Decision

Detailed reasons for my decision are set out below.

Where the schedule of documents indicates an exemption claim has been applied to a document or part of document, 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 8 January 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.

I have therefore decided that parts of documents 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 documents, with the irrelevant material deleted pursuant to section 22(1)(a)(ii) of the FOI Act.

The remainder of the documents have been considered for release to you as they are relevant to your request.

6.2 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 the 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 operational 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 operational methods and procedures would result in the need for this Department, and potentially its law enforcement partners, to change those methods and/or procedures to avoid jeopardising their future effectiveness.

As such, I have decided that parts of 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 at paragraph 6.5 below.

6.3 Section 47F of the FOI Act – Personal Privacy

Section 47F of the FOI Act provides that a document is conditionally exempt if its disclosure under the FOI Act would involve the unreasonable disclosure of personal information of any person. 'Personal information' means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable, whether the information or opinion is true or not, and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not (see s 4 of the FOI Act and s 6 of the *Privacy Act 1988*).

I consider that disclosure of the information marked 's47F' in the documents would disclose personal information relating to third parties. The information within the documents would reasonably identify a person, either through names, positions or descriptions of their role or employment circumstance.

The FOI Act states that, when deciding whether the disclosure of the personal information would be 'unreasonable', I must have regard to four factors set out in s.47F(2) of the FOI Act. I have therefore considered each of these factors below:

- *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 available resources;*
- *any other matters that I consider relevant.*

The information relating to the third parties is not well known and would only be known to a limited group of people with a business need to know. As this information is only known to a limited group of people, the individuals concerned are not generally known to be associated with the matters discussed in the document. This information is not available from publicly accessible sources.

I do not consider that the information relating specifically to the third parties would be relevant to the broader scope of your request, as you are seeking access to information concerning the detection of asbestos rather than information which wholly relates to other individuals.

I am satisfied that the disclosure of the information within the documents would involve an unreasonable disclosure of personal information about a number of individuals.

I have decided that the information referred to above is conditionally exempt under section 47F 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 at paragraph 6.5 below.

6.4 Section 47G of the FOI Act – Business Affairs

Section 47G(1)(a) of the FOI Act permits conditional exemption of documents containing business information where disclosure of that information would, or could reasonably be expected to, unreasonably affect the organisation adversely in respect of its lawful business, commercial or financial affairs.

I am satisfied that the information marked 's47G' in the documents consists of information concerning the business, commercial or financial affairs of an organization.

In determining whether disclosure of the information within the documents would or could reasonably be expected to adversely affect the lawful business, commercial or financial affairs of an organisation, I have had regard to the following factors:

- (a) The extent to which the information is well known;
- (b) Whether the organisation or undertaking is known to be associated with the matters dealt with in the documents;
- (c) The availability of the information from publicly accessible sources; and
- (d) Any other matters that the Department considers relevant.

The information contained within these documents is not in the public domain, the organisation concerned is not generally known to be associated with the matters referred to in these documents, and the information is not available from publicly accessible sources, such as the organisation's website. I am therefore satisfied that the disclosure of the information would, or could reasonably be expected to, unreasonably affect that organisation in respect of its lawful business, commercial or financial affairs.

As such, I have decided that the parts of the documents marked 's47G' are conditionally exempt under section 47G 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 at paragraph 6.5 below.

6.5 The public interest – section 11A of the FOI Act

As I have decided that parts of the documents 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 documents would promote the objects of the FOI Act.
- I consider that the subject matter of the documents 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 documents.
- I am satisfied that you do not require access to the documents 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 documents:

- disclosure of the parts of the documents that are conditionally exempt under **section 47E(d)** of the FOI Act could reasonably be expected to prejudice law enforcement functions of the Department and, as a result, the ability of the Department to protect Australia's borders. I consider there to be a strong public interest in ensuring that the ability of the Department to conduct its law enforcement functions and operational activities is not compromised or prejudiced in any way. I consider that it would be contrary to the public interest for the Department's ability to protect the borders of Australia to be compromised and that this factor weighs strongly against disclosure.
- disclosure of the personal information which is conditionally exempt under **section 47F** of the FOI Act could reasonably be expected to prejudice the protection of those individuals' right to privacy.
- The Department is committed to complying with its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988*, which sets out standards and obligations that regulate how the Department must handle and manage personal information. It is firmly in the public interest that the Department uphold the rights of individuals to their own privacy and meets its obligations under the Privacy Act. I consider that non-compliance with the Department's statutory obligations concerning the protection of personal information would be contrary to the public interest and that this factor weighs strongly against disclosure.

- disclosure of the parts of the documents that are conditionally exempt under **section 47G** of the FOI Act could reasonably be expected to prejudice the competitive commercial activities of third party organisations. 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/Details/C2017C00251>. 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

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 <http://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-reviews>.

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

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.



**Authorised Decision Maker
Department of Home Affairs**

ATTACHMENT A

SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS REQUEST UNDER *FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982*

FOI request: FA 19/01/00194

	Date of document	No. of pages	Description	Decision on release	
1.	04/01/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos C3JAT49G	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
2.	04/01/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3EWAAAP	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
3.	12/01/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3C7KTAF	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
4.	10/01/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3JNRGEM	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
5.	15/01/2018	2	Confirmation of the presence of reported asbestos AC3NYMLKS	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
6.	24/01/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3PNJ7NS	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
7.	31/1/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC3NLLX9N	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
8.	30/01/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3NYMLKS	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
9.	02/02/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC3TLHT97	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
10.	06/02/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3YHACCN	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
11.	06/02/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC3XWNMJ9	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G

	Date of document	No. of pages	Description	Decision on release	
12.	26/02/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC3XXNX94	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
13.	23/01/2018	2	Detection of declared asbestos AC3WNRGCE	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
14.	07/03/2018	2	Detection of declared asbestos AC3YMT6R	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
15.	26/03/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC4C4CHP9	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
16.	28/03/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
17.	04/04/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC4HK67TF	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
18.	05/04/2018	2	Detection of declared asbestos AC4KNPAWR	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
19.	23/04/2018	2	Detection of declared asbestos AC4M9MFJW	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
20.	23/04/2018	2	Detection of declared asbestos AC4M9M6MJ	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
21.	22/03/2018	2	Confirmation of the presence of reported asbestos AC4CXG6J9	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
22.	30/04/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC4N7MHJP	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
23.	30/04/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
24.	04/05/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC4PR9CEE	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G

	Date of document	No. of pages	Description	Decision on release	
25.	18/05/2018	2	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC4LAYAFX	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
26.	20/06/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC49F3PGG	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
27.	04/07/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC6F7GEMS	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
28.	09/07/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC4YPMRNM	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
29.	10/07/2018	2	Detection of Undeclared Asbestos AC6FF4MGC	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47G
30.	12/07/2018	2	Asbestos Detection AC6FX7XM9	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G
31.	17/07/2018	1	Detection of undeclared asbestos AC47YXWFE	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F
32.	09/07/2018	1	Detection of declared asbestos AC6FXGY34	Release in part	22(1)(a)(ii) 47E(d) 47F 47G