



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

# **ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

**NB: These documents have been obtained from an electronic record. An original hard-copy version of this record does not exist.**

**From:** [Jenny](#)  
**To:** [INFORMATION.ACCESS](#)  
**Subject:** Freedom of Information request - Request for copy of the consent for the DVA/UniSA MATES program to operate  
**Date:** Friday, 17 November 2023 10:10:08 PM

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Dear Department of Veterans' Affairs,

According to the Hansard transcript (p.15) of Secretary Frame's testimony before the FADaT Senate Estimates Committee on Wednesday 15 November 2023 Secretary Frame, in response to a question from Senator Lambie, said about the DVA/UniSA MATES program (although still suspended since mid-year) that "There is a consent that has been in place for the program to operate it as it has for 18 years".

I have searched the DVA website, the UniSA website and Hansard but it does not appear that the Department of Veterans Affairs has made this 'consent' publicly available.

I have also checked the minutes the department has published of its ESO roundtables, back issues of VetAffairs, referred to by Secretary Frame (on the same transcript page) where it was suggested such information was communicated, but was unable to find any such information.

As the 'consent' referred to by Secretary Frame has not been made publicly available by DVA, can the Department of Veterans Affairs please provide copy of it.

As Secretary Frame appears quite aware of that 'consent' document for the DVA/UniSA MATES program and reviewed it before she gave her testimony to the committee this week, it should be able to be quickly located by the Secretary's office.

It sounds like a discrete document and one able to be reviewed quickly for release.

As I am sure more than just me would be interested in this 'consent' document, please ensure it will be accessible on release for me than just me.

Yours faithfully,

Jenny

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Please use this email address for all replies to this request:

 ~~xxxx~~

Is ~~xxxx~~ the wrong address for Freedom of Information requests to Department of Veterans' Affairs? If so, please contact us using this form:

[https://www.righttoknow.org.au/change\\_request/new?body=dva](https://www.righttoknow.org.au/change_request/new?body=dva)

This request has been made by an individual using Right to Know. This message and any reply that you make will be published on the internet. More information on how Right to Know works can be found at:

<https://www.righttoknow.org.au/help/officers>

Please note that in some cases publication of requests and responses will be delayed.

If you find this service useful as an FOI officer, please ask your web manager to link to us from your organisation's FOI page.

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**From:** [INFORMATION.ACCESS](#)  
**To:** "Jenny"  
**Subject:** LEX 62809 - Information Access Request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Saturday, 25 November 2023 11:05:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[image002.jpg](#)

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Dear Jenny,

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (the department) has received your request for access to information under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). I note you have requested access to the following:

*'...According to the Hansard transcript (p.15) of Secretary Frame's testimony before the FADaT Senate Estimates Committee on Wednesday 15 November 2023 Secretary Frame, in response to a question from Senator Lambie, said about the DVA/UniSA MATES program (although still suspended since mid-year) that "There is a consent that has been in place for the program to operate it as it has for 18 years".*

*I have searched the DVA website, the UniSA website and Hansard but it does not appear that the Department of Veterans Affairs has made this 'consent' publicly available.*

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*As Secretary Frame appears quite aware of that 'consent' document for the DVA/UniSA MATES program and reviewed it before she gave her testimony to the committee this week, it should be able to be quickly located by the Secretary's office.*

*It sounds like a discrete document and one able to be reviewed quickly for release.*

*As I am sure more than just me would be interested in this 'consent' document, please ensure it will be accessible on release for me than just me...'*

Your request was received by the department on 17 November 2023 and the ordinary 30 day statutory period for processing your request commenced from the day after that date.

If we are in a position to make a decision on your request earlier than this date, we will endeavour to do so.

The statutory period may also be extended if we need to consult third parties or for other reasons permitted under the FOI Act. We will advise you if this happens.

### **Charges**

The Department will notify you within 14 days of an estimate of the charges that will apply to

your request for non-personal information before we process any requested documents or impose a final charge.

**Your address**

The FOI Act requires that you provide us with an address that we can send notices to. You have advised your contact address is [xx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx](mailto:xx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx) . Unless you tell us otherwise, we will send all notices and correspondence to this address.

**Disclosure log**

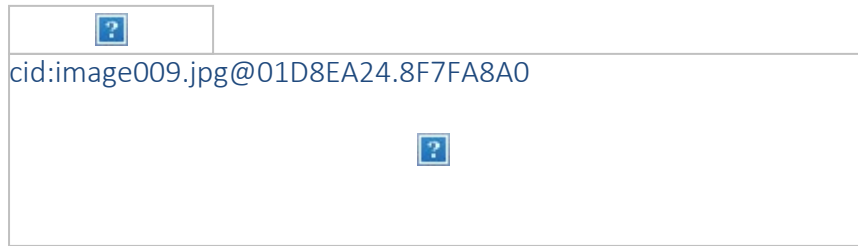
Information released under the FOI Act may be published on a disclosure log on our website, subject to certain exceptions. These exceptions include where publication of personal, business, professional or commercial information would be unreasonable.

**Further assistance**

If you have any questions about your request, please email [xxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx](mailto:xxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx)

Yours sincerely

**Kevin** | Information Access Officer  
Position 62373493  
Information Access Unit  
Ministerial, International & Stakeholder Relations Branch  
Ministerial, Communication & Engagement Division  
Department of Veterans' Affairs  
1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)  
[xxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx](mailto:xxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx)  
[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)



**From:** s 47F [Louis](#)  
**To:** s 47E  
**Cc:** s 47E  
**Subject:** FW: OVERDUE: Due 29 Jan: LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 6 March 2024 2:41:02 PM  
**Attachments:** [LEX 62809 - Search Minute request - JENNY.docx](#)  
[RE OVERDUE Due 29 Jan LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY SECOFFICIAL.msg](#)

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Hi Joshua

Please find **attached** completed search minute and AS approval.

Kind regards

**Louis** s 47F A/g Director

Information Law | Corporate Legal Branch

Legal & Audit Division

*This email may contain legal advice that is subject to legal professional privilege. Care should be taken to avoid unintended waiver of that privilege. The Department of Veterans' Affairs Legal & Audit Division should be consulted prior to any decision to disclose the existence or content of any advice contained in this email to a third party.*

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**From:** s 47F Louis

**Sent:** Wednesday, 6 March 2024 10:36 AM

**To:** Foat, Ally

**Cc:** s 47E

**Subject:** OVERDUE: Due 29 Jan: LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Ally

Completed search minute **attached** for your clearance. This is one we discussed yesterday.

Kind regards

**Louis** s 47F | A/g Director

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**From:** s 47F Faith **On Behalf Of** s 47E

**Sent:** Friday, 19 January 2024 1:25 PM

**To:** s 47F Trent

**Cc:** s 47E ; Foat, Ally s 47E

**Subject:** Due 29 Jan: LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Litigation and Advisings teams,

Can you please assist with this FOI request Search Minute, in relation **JENNY**, in the attached template?

Due to AS 29 Jan

Due to Info Access 30 Jan

The wording of the request is:

*re the DVA/UniSA MATES program (although still suspended since mid-year) that "There is a consent that has been in place for the program to operate it as it has for 18 years".*

*I have searched the DVA website, the UniSA website and Hansard but it does not appear that the Department of Veterans Affairs has made this 'consent' publicly available.*

*As the 'consent' referred to by Secretary Frame has not been made publicly available by DVA, can the Department of Veterans Affairs please provide copy of it.*

If you are aware of other teams that should undertake searches, please advise asap.

Faith

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**From:** INFORMATION.ACCESS <x@xx>

**Sent:** Friday, 19 January 2024 12:59 PM

**To:** s 47E

**Subject:** LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear colleagues,

The department has received a new information access request from JENNY under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). The request was received on 17 November 2023 and was made in the following terms:

*'...According to the Hansard transcript (p.15) of Secretary Frame's testimony before the FADaT Senate Estimates Committee on Wednesday 15 November 2023 Secretary Frame, in response to a question from Senator Lambie, said about the DVA/UniSA MATES program (although still suspended since mid-year) that "There is a consent that has been in place for the program to operate it as it has for 18 years".*

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*As I am sure more than just me would be interested in this 'consent' document, please ensure it will be accessible on release for me than just me...*

Your area has been identified as the area that is most likely to hold additional documents relevant to the request. Please confirm by **COB 23 January 2024** the following information:

- The nominated contact officer for this request (the person who will be the contact person

for our team to liaise with).

- Whether or not this request is sensitive (this includes, but is not limited to, requests likely to attract SES, ministerial or media interest).
- Whether there are any other line areas that may hold documents relevant to the request.

I have attached a search minute for the nominated contact officer to complete. A signed copy of the search minute and the documents relevant to the scope of the request must be sent to

s 47E

no later than **COB 30 January 2024**

The FOI Act has strict statutory timeframes and a decision on access must generally be made 30 days after the day the FOI request is received. This is why the above timeframes have been specified. More information on the FOI process can be found [here](#).

If you have any queries or concerns then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

Kind regards

**Joshua | Assistant Director**

Position Number: 62336362

Information Access Unit

Ministerial, International & Stakeholder Relations Branch

Ministerial, Communication & Engagement Division

Department of Veterans' Affairs

1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

[x@xx](#)

[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)



**From:** s 47F [Louis](#)  
**To:** s 47E  
**Cc:** s 47E  
**Subject:** RE: OVERDUE: Due 29 Jan: LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 6 March 2024 3:22:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [LEX 62809 - Search Minute request - JENNY.docx](#)

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Now with AS signature

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**From:** s 47F Louis  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 6 March 2024 2:41 PM  
**To:** s 47E  
**Cc:** s 47E  
**Subject:** FW: OVERDUE: Due 29 Jan: LEX62809 - Search minute request - JENNY [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Hi Joshua

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Kind regards

**Louis** s 47F A/g Director  
Information Law | Corporate Legal Branch  
Legal & Audit Division

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Your area has been identified as the area that is most likely to hold additional documents relevant to the request. Please confirm by **COB 23 January 2024** the following information:

- The nominated contact officer for this request (the person who will be the contact person for our team to liaise with).
- Whether or not this request is sensitive (this includes, but is not limited to, requests likely to attract SES, ministerial or media interest).
- Whether there are any other line areas that may hold documents relevant to the request.

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**Joshua | Assistant Director**

Position Number: 62336362

Information Access Unit

Ministerial, International & Stakeholder Relations Branch

Ministerial, Communication & Engagement Division

Department of Veterans' Affairs

1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

[x@xx](#)

[www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)



**STATUTORY TIME LIMITS APPLY - ACTION REQUIRED BY 30 January 2024**

**FOI Document Retrieval Minute**

**Search request for documents sought under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)* (FOI Act)**

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**To** GC Div

**From** Joshua (62336362)  
Information Access Unit - Ministerial, International & Stakeholder Relations Branch  
s 47E

**Return by  
COB** 30 January 2024

<b>Client Details</b>	Client Name	JENNY
	File Number	n/a
	UIN	n/a
	Date of Birth	n/a

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**Purpose**

The Information Access Unit is asking your business area to undertake searches in response to a request received by the Department for access to documents under the *FOI Act*.

SES clearance is sought when responding to information access requests, including results of searches and the identification of any sensitivities in releasing the documents identified under the FOI and Privacy Acts.

**The Request**

The request is made in the following terms:

*'...According to the Hansard transcript (p.15) of Secretary Frame's testimony before the FADaT Senate Estimates Committee on Wednesday 15 November 2023 Secretary Frame, in response to a question from Senator Lambie, said about the DVA/UniSA MATES program (although still suspended since mid-year) that "There is a consent that has been in place for the program to operate it as it has for 18 years".*

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*As I am sure more than just me would be interested in this 'consent' document, please ensure it will be accessible on release for me than just me...*

It is my understanding that your area is best placed to provide information and collate **relevant** documents in relation to the request

### **Action Required**

1. Please allocate appropriate resources to the processing of this request.
2. Please also complete and return a signed copy of **this search minute** and all relevant documents (in original form) by 30 January 2024 to **s 47E**
3. **It is expected that business areas will escalate and raise concerns on sensitive requests with their relevant Executive.** Where appropriate, the Information Access Unit will also notify significant stakeholders, including the Secretary's Office, the Office for the Minister of Veterans' Affairs and other Commonwealth Departments and third parties should it be required.

Joshua (62336362)

Information Access Unit - Ministerial, International & Stakeholder Relations Branch

Ref No:-LEX 62809

16 May 2024

Action Officer: Louis <sup>s 47F</sup>

Business Area: Information Law

Contact Officer: Louis <sup>s 47F</sup>

Scope of searches required: *'...According to the Hansard transcript (p.15) of Secretary Frame's testimony before the FADaT Senate Estimates Committee on Wednesday 15 November 2023 Secretary Frame, in response to a question from Senator Lambie, said about the DVA/UniSA MATES program (although still suspended since mid-year) that "There is a consent that has been in place for the program to operate it as it has for 18 years".*

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.

## PART 1 - Search & Retrieval

**Notes:** A thorough search for all relevant documents in the possession of the Department must be undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The definition of document in the FOI Act is very broad and covers a wide range of material as set out below:

*A decision-maker must obtain proof that a reasonable search has been undertaken. These records may be used to respond to further enquiries on searches or internal or external review applications. It is not necessary to search all locations listed below, only those that are reasonably likely to hold relevant documents.*

Location to search	Yes/No/Not applicable
Filing cabinets, safes, desk drawers, bookshelves and cupboards	N/A
Records Management and archives	Yes
Personal folders and diaries	N/A
CDs and DVDs	N/A
Personal and shared email inboxes	Yes
Microsoft Teams and Skype messages	N/A
Text messages and voicemail messages	N/A
Intranet or other website-based collaboration systems	Yes
Shared computer drives	Yes
PDMS	N/A
Other databases	N/A
Contracted service providers	N/A

Please detail any other searches undertaken:

- Content manager search for "MATES consent"
- Information.Law inbox search for "MATES consent"
- Privacy.Enquiries inbox search for "MATES consent"
- Intranet search for "MATES consent"
- R Drive search for "MATES consent"

Outcome
<input type="checkbox"/> Documents potentially in scope - see document schedule at <b><u>Attachment B</u></b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Documents do not exist or cannot be found after reasonable searches

- 
- any of, or any part of, the following things:
    - any paper or other material on which there is writing;
    - a map, plan, drawing or photograph;
    - any paper or other material on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them;
    - any article or material from which sounds, images or writings are capable of being reproduced with or without the aid of any other article or device;
    - any article on which information has been stored or recorded, either mechanically or electronically;
    - any other record of information; or
  - any copy, reproduction or duplicate of such a thing; or
  - any part of such a copy, reproduction or duplicate

The definition does **not** include material maintained for reference purposes that is otherwise publicly available or Cabinet notebooks.

If your searches produced no documents, please provide an explanation:

**PART 2 - Search Results and Document Details**

**Notes:** For this part staff are only required to indicate/or estimate the extent of potentially sensitive information or material within the documents deemed to be relevant. These estimates may be used for determining whether to charge an applicant or whether a practical refusal reason exists. Please do your best to undertake a sampling of at least 10% of the overall material to form the estimates below. If you believe the indicated volume of documents would constitute a substantial and unreasonable diversion of resources tick the 'have not been' option below. The Information Access Section will be in contact with you (or your nominated contact) to discuss.

Potentially Relevant Search Results	Estimated Quantities
Number of documents <sup>2</sup>	N/A
Total number of pages within the scope of the request <sup>3</sup> (if unsure use a conservative estimate such as 2 per document)	
Percentage of pages which are sensitive in their entirety or which contain sensitive material	%
Total number of third parties to be consulted <sup>4</sup>	

Are there sensitivities?

YES

NO

Page number	Document description	Description of sensitivity or concern

The following is an estimate of time spent retrieving and collating the documents indicated above.

<sup>2</sup>If there is a large volume of documents, please provide an estimate. You must include material you think may be exempt in this estimate. Do not include exact duplicates but note that any annotations on a document that is otherwise identical to another document will result in it being treated as a separate document.

<sup>3</sup> Note: 1 page that is double sided = 2 pages

<sup>4</sup> A third party is any individual, business, organisation or State department, agency or body whose information is contained in the documents and whose views may need to be sought as to possible release of their information under the FOI request. Note that other Commonwealth agencies are specifically excluded from this definition. Where consultation with a third party is required the FOI Team will undertake such consultation.



Classification	Number of hours spent searching for documents
SES	
APS 6 to EL2	2 hours
APS 1 to APS 5	

### PART 3 - Further Comments and Sign-off

**Notes:** This part provides a space for you to provide more detailed information including any concerns you have about the potential harm/adverse impact that may result if the documents are released and whether consultation with any third parties may be required.

The FOI decision will be made by an independent decision maker in the Information Access Section who is authorised under section 23(1) of the FOI Act. Business areas are requested to use this form to confirm that relevant stakeholders (including the decision maker and the Media team) are aware of any sensitivities relating to the decision or documents for release. A copy of the FOI decision can be provided to on request.

Additional Comments:

Note: We understand the 'No docs' would be consistent with responses provided to FOI applicants in relation to a request for their personal information.

A more detailed response to FOI applicants requesting a copy of the consent under development pending substantive AGS advice

[Responsible line area to complete]

**Contact Officer Sign-Off**

I, Louis Parry of the Information Law section, certify the information provided in parts 1, 2 and 3 of this document is appropriate and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ L. s 47F \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**SES Sign-Off**

I, Ally Foat, Assistant Secretary of the Corporate Legal Branch certify the information provided in parts 1, 2 and 3 of this document is appropriate and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that I may be required to appear and give evidence before the Australian Information Commissioner or the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in relation to the searches for documents undertaken. I also confirm that I:

- have reviewed the terms of the FOI request;
- am satisfied with the searches undertaken by Information Law to identify all relevant documents related to the business of the branch;
- have provided all sensitivities/comments regarding release under the FOI Act to the Information Access Section; and
- informed my Chief Counsel of the decision (where appropriate).

\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature*

s 47F

*Date 06/03/2024*

**Instructions:**

Once signed, scan and email to s 47E along with the relevant documents (unless you have indicated otherwise in Part 2). Please also provide a soft copy of Attachment B. If you have any queries or concerns regarding this form please contact the Information Access Section.

**Notes:** This part provides a space for you to schedule the documents you have identified as part of your searches.

All documents in their original format are to be provided to the Information Access Section, who will then make an assessment of their release under the FOI Act.

They will also apply redactions to any material considered exempt from release under the FOI Act.

**Schedule of potentially relevant documents - line area conducting searches to complete**

Document reference #	Date of document	Document description <i>e.g. Policy &amp; Admin file, Email from DVA to Services Australia, etc.</i>	Number of Pages	Sensitivities identified above Yes / No	Trim Container Number (If applicable)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
etc					