



22 July 2024

Our reference: LEX 80283

Ben Fairless  
(Right to Know)

Only by email: [foi+request-11565-e504bb83@righttoknow.org.au](mailto:foi+request-11565-e504bb83@righttoknow.org.au)

Dear Ben Fairless

**Decision on your Freedom of Information Request**

I refer to your request, received by Services Australia (the Agency) on 25 June 2024 for access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) to the following documents:

Websites have something called a "robots.txt" file that helps search engines work out what they should be indexing and what they shouldn't be.

The Operational information portal's robots.txt file (located at <https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Foperational.servicesaustralia.gov.au%2Frobots.txt&data=05%7C02%7Cfreedomofinformation%40servicesaustralia.gov.au%7C78db3ab04e5e458ca2b308dc99afd951%7C627250e63e294861a084aad68ccfccc%7C0%7C0%7C638554227887460280%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=oiOZG5fvRuNFDxwtPNtCxfABUyJuxWozu6UUaVnkziE%3D&reserved=0>) has the below information at the top:

+++++++  
# robots.txt for

<https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Foperational.humanservices.gov.au%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cfreedomofinformation%40servicesaustralia.gov.au%7C78db3ab04e5e458ca2b308dc99afd951%7C627250e63e294861a084aad68ccfccc%7C0%7C0%7C638554227887471588%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vWpP5jXMs%2Bybd9ev%2BVRHbWlmz6hmMA4j2EVYCWCB3LE%3D&reserved=0> # only allow Funnelback for on-site search # all other external search engines are blocked ++++++

I seek the documents that informed the decision to "block all external search engines" on the Operational information portal. Please treat this request administratively if possible. Otherwise consider it a formal FOI request.

**My decision**

I have decided to refuse your request for access 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 cannot be located.

The reasons for my decision, including the relevant sections of the FOI Act, are set out in **Attachment A**.

**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 the Agency, 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 [freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au](mailto:freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Cherie  
Authorised FOI Decision Maker  
Freedom of Information Team  
FOI and Reviews Branch | Legal Services Division  
Services Australia



## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

### **What you requested**

Websites have something called a "robots.txt" file that helps search engines work out what they should be indexing and what they shouldn't be.

The Operational information portal's robots.txt file (located at <https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Foperational.servicesaustralia.gov.au%2Frobots.txt&data=05%7C02%7Cfreedomofinformation%40servicesaustralia.gov.au%7C78db3ab04e5e458ca2b308dc99afd951%7C627250e63e294861a084aad68ccfcccc%7C0%7C0%7C638554227887460280%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbgZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=oiOZG5fvRuNFDxwtPNtCxfABUyJuxWozu6UUaVnkziE%3D&reserved=0>) has the below information at the top:

```
+++++++  
# robots.txt for
```

```
https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Foperational.humanservices.gov.au%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cfreedomofinformation%40servicesaustralia.gov.au%7C78db3ab04e5e458ca2b308dc99afd951%7C627250e63e294861a084aad68ccfcccc%7C0%7C0%7C638554227887471588%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbgZsb3d8eyJWljoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vWpP5jXMs%2Bybd9ev%2BVRHbWImz6hmMA4j2EVCWCB3LE%3D&reserved=0 # only allow Funnelback for on-site search # all other external search engines are blocked ++++++
```

I seek the documents that informed the decision to "block all external search engines" on the Operational information portal. Please treat this request administratively if possible. Otherwise consider it a formal FOI request.

On 27 June 2024, the agency acknowledged your FOI request and sought your consent to for a 30 day extension of time to process your request. You consented to the extension by return email on 1 July 2024.

### **What I took into account**

In reaching my decision I took into account:

- your request dated 25 June 2024
- searches undertaken to locate the requested documents
- consultations with Agency officers about:
  - the nature of the requested documents
  - the Agency'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.

The Staff Processing and Enterprise Systems Division and the Service Delivery Optimisation Division conducted searches of the Agency's electronic files. These Divisions did not identify any documents that informed the decision to block all external search engines from searching the Operational Information Portal.

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 documents, and
2. the documents cannot be located.

## **Additional Information**

Whilst no documents were located in scope of this request, the relevant business area of the Agency has provided the following information:

The Operational Information Portal was created in 2015 and outlines how our staff determine and deliver health, social and welfare payments and services on behalf of the Australian Government. It is made available to the public in line with Information Publication Scheme requirements via links on the [servicesaustralia.gov.au](http://servicesaustralia.gov.au) website.

The Operational Information Portal search functionality provides a targeted search of the information contained within the portal.



**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 the Agency, 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 Agency 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 or by email to [freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au](mailto:freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au)

**Note:** 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 the Agency 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:** 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 'FOI Review Form' is available at [Information Commissioner Review Application form](#)
- If you have one, you should include with your application a copy of the Agency's decision on your FOI request
- Include your contact details
- Set out your reasons for objecting to the Agency'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)

Smart Form: [FOI Complaint Form](#)

***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.