



Decision to grant an extension of time under s 15AC of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

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|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Agency | Australian Federal Police |
| Applicant | Sean (Right to Know) |
| Date of decision | 14 January 2025 |
| OAIC reference number | RQ25/00107 |
| Agency reference number | LEX 3253 |

Decision

1. On 7 January 2025, the Australian Federal Police (the Agency) applied to the Information Commissioner under s 15AC(4) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act) for an extension of 14 days to 20 January 2025 to process Sean (Right to Know)'s (the Applicant) request of 23 October 2024 (the FOI request). This application was made on the basis that the processing period is insufficient to adequately deal with the FOI request.
2. As a delegate of the Information Commissioner, I am authorised to make decisions on applications for further time under s 15AC(5) of the FOI Act.
3. Under s 15AC(5) I have decided to grant the Agency further time to deal with the request to **20 January 2025**. My reasons are outlined below.

Background

4. A copy of the Agency's reasons for seeking an extension are included at **Attachment A**.

Reasons for decision

5. Subsection 15AC(5) of the FOI Act provides that I may allow further time that I consider appropriate for the agency or Minister to deal with the request.
6. In making my decision under s 15AC(5), I have considered the information provided by the Agency and the FOI Guidelines issued by the Information Commissioner under s 93A of the FOI Act, in particular paragraphs [3.150] – [3.157].
7. On the information before the OAIC, I am satisfied that the application for further time until **20 January 2025** is justified, for the following reasons:
 - Based on the Agency's submissions, I am satisfied that the request involves some challenges for the Agency, based on the sensitive nature of the documents

requested and difficulties incurred in obtaining timely responses from business areas.

- The further time sought by the Agency does not appear to be excessive in the circumstances.
- Granting this further time will also reinstate the Applicant's right to seek an internal review of the Agency's decision, and to extend the timeframe for the Applicant to apply for an IC review of the Agency's decision.

8. In granting this further time, I have also considered:

- The work already undertaken by the Agency to finalise the request.
- Steps taken by the Agency to first request a s 15AA agreement from the Applicant.

9. The new due date for the Agency's decision on the FOI request is now **20 January 2025**.

10. This further time granted under s 15AC of the FOI Act means that the deemed refusal is taken never to have applied if the Agency makes a decision on the request by **20 January 2025**. Such an extension can only be granted once and cannot be extended by a variation.

11. I note that the *Freedom of Information (Charges) Regulations 2019* provides if an applicant is not notified of a decision on a request within the statutory time limit (including any extension of time), the agency or Minister cannot impose a charge for providing access, even if the applicant was earlier notified that a charge was payable (regs 7(2), (3)). This further time granted under s 15AC of the FOI Act means that charges cannot be reimposed and any deposit the Applicant has paid should be refunded.

12. If the Agency does not provide the Applicant a decision by **20 January 2025**, or the Applicant disagrees with a decision from the Agency, it will be open to the Applicant to seek Information Commissioner review (IC review). Further information on [applying for IC review](#) is available on the OAIC [website](#). Any application for IC review would need to be made within 60 days of the Agency's decision or deemed decision.

13. For further information, the OAIC website provides a resource containing information on [applying for an extensions of time to process freedom of information requests](#).

14. This extension of time matter is now closed. Your review rights are set out below.

15. If you would like to discuss this matter, please contact our office by email at FOIDR@oaic.gov.au, quoting reference number RQ25/00107.

Yours sincerely

A De Ieso

Andriana De Ieso
Review Adviser
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

14 January 2025

The Agency's reasons for requesting an extension of time, as included in the extension of time request form.

Please provide a timeline setting out the work already completed in order to process this request. Where an extension of time has previously been granted, describe the work that was undertaken during that extended period. *

All relevant documents have been collated from AFP members, marked up and cleared by multiple FOI officers within AFP, as well as the AFP members who provided the documents. The marked up documents have also been reviewed and cleared by AFP business areas and foreign agencies that have an interest in the release of the documents. Most of this work was completed within the initial 30-day statutory timeframe. Since the applicant agreed to the section 15AA extension on 31 October 2024, AFP have been finalising the marked up documents, which are subject to considerable complexity, and seeking clearance from the relevant stakeholders. A week turnaround is usually attached to seeking clearance from an AFP member or business area. In this particular request, some of the members were difficult to reach as they were either on deployment overseas or on leave during the holiday period. The decision and final documents have been drafted and are in the process of being finalised.

What work is required to finalise the request? *

The decision and final documents are required to be reviewed and cleared by the AFP Executive before the decision is notified to the applicant. This entails around a week turnaround.

Please describe the scope and complexity of the request. Please provide the number of documents at issue and the number of folios, as well as any complexity in the nature of those document *

There were 60 folios of documents provided in relation to this request. This request is considered complex as it includes protected information, the AFP's interactions with foreign law enforcement agencies, and extensive police methodology that needs to be carefully assessed. This request relates to an international joint investigation among several law enforcement agencies against an online black market site. This is an extremely sensitive matter as disclosure of select information could pose irreversible threats to the AFP and its international partners. Therefore, this request is not necessarily voluminous, but it is rather complex due to its operational and international nature. Given the constant effort involved in processing this request, a further extension of time would allow the appropriate clearance and review to take place before a decision is notified to the applicant.



Review rights

If you disagree with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner's (OAIC) decision you can apply to the Federal Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit Court for a review of a decision of the Information Commissioner, if you think that a decision by the Information Commissioner to grant an extension of time is not legally correct. You can make this application under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977*.

The Court will not review the merits of your case, but it may refer the matter back to the Information Commissioner for further consideration if it finds the decision was wrong in law or the Information Commissioner's powers were not exercised properly.

An application for review must be made to the Court within 28 days of the OAIC sending the decision to you. You may wish to seek legal advice as the process can involve fees and costs. Please contact the Federal Court registry in your state or territory for more information or visit the Federal Court website at <http://www.fedcourt.gov.au/>.

Further information

Further information about how applications to extend the timeframe to process an FOI request are handled by the OAIC can be found published on our website:

For Applicants: [How to make an FOI request: Extensions of time](#)

For agencies and Ministers: [Guidance and advice: Extension of time for processing requests](#)

The OAIC has the power to investigate complaints about an agency's actions under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). This is a separate process from asking for an Information Commissioner review following a decision made under the FOI Act. Complaints usually focus on how an agency has handled your FOI request or complied with other obligations under the FOI Act, rather than the decision itself.

In some cases, the Information Commissioner's investigation of a complaint may lead to the agency addressing the issues that you have complained about. In other cases, the Information Commissioner may make suggestions or recommendations that the agency should implement. The Information Commissioner can only make non-binding recommendations as a result of a complaint. You and the agency will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

FOI complaints to the OAIC must be made in writing. Our preference is for you to use the [online FOI complaint form](#) if at all possible.

Further information about how to make a complaint can be found published on our website: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/your-freedom-of-information-rights/freedom-of-information-complaints/make-an-foi-complaint> .

Making a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman

If you believe you have been treated unfairly by the OAIC, you can make a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Ombudsman). The Ombudsman's services are free. The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about the administrative actions of Australian Government agencies to see if you have been treated unfairly.

If the Ombudsman finds your complaint is justified, the Ombudsman can recommend that the OAIC reconsider or change its action or decision or take any other action that the Ombudsman considers is appropriate. You can contact the Ombudsman's office for more information on 1300 362 072 or visit the Commonwealth Ombudsman's website at <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au> .