



OFFICE OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETARY
TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

16 December 2024

Via email: foi+request-12345-e22c42d2@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Trav,

Re: Application under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
Ref: FOI2024122

I refer to your email of 18 November 2024 in which you make a request under the Commonwealth *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act):

“I seek documents related to the costs associated with producing and distributing Humanitarian Overseas Service Medals (HOSM) to the members of the Australian contingent to the humanitarian relief operation of GE Infrastructure, Water & Process Technologies.

Specifically, I seek access to:

1. Invoices, receipts, purchase orders and documents of that nature, related to the manufacture, engraving, or procurement of the HOSMs awarded to Australian contingent to GE; 2. Records of administrative costs incurred for processing, approving, or distributing these medals, including correspondence with contractors or suppliers; 3. Any financial summaries or records detailing the costs associated with the production or distribution of these medals;

The request pertains exclusively to the administrative aspects of the HOSM process, including logistical and financial records. The request does not seek access to deliberations or decisions made by the Governor-General regarding the awarding of these medals.”

With your email of 22 November 2024 providing the further information regarding your request:

“I write to offer two key dates that may help orientate my request for information.

On 3 July 2010, the official performing the duties of Assistant Secretary, Honours, Symbols and Territories Branch, wrote to the Honours and Awards Secretariat. Invoking powers under delegation, the official recommended that the names listed on Schedule 07/2010 be presented to the Governor-General for approval. The Office of the Governor-General registered the correspondence on 4 August 2010.

On 22 June 2014, the official performing the duties of Assistant Secretary, Honours, Symbols and Territories Branch, wrote to the Honours and Awards Secretariat. Invoking powers under delegation, the official recommended that the names listed on Schedule 06/2014 be presented to the Governor-General for approval.”

I am the authorised decision maker under section 23 of the FOI Act and this letter sets out my decision on your request for access.

Material taken into account

In making my decision, I have had regard to the following:

- the terms of your request;
- advice from Agency officers with responsibility for matters relating to the documents to which you sought access;
- the relevant provisions of the FOI Act; and
- the Commonwealth’s guidelines on FOI.

Application of the FOI Act

The FOI Act has a limited application to the Official Secretary to the Governor-General. Section 6A provides that the Act does not apply to any request for access to a document of the Official Secretary unless the document relates to matters of an administrative nature. In *Kline v Official Secretary to the Governor General* [2013] HCA 52 the High Court said:

‘the exception of a class of document which relates to "matters of an administrative nature" connotes documents which concern the management and administration of office resources.’

Further, the High Court held the phrase does not apply to documents that relate to the discharge of the Governor-General's 'substantive powers and functions'.

24A - Requests may be refused if documents cannot be found, do not exist or have not been received

Document lost or non-existent

- (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.

Decision

The Office has been unable to identify any documents within the scope of your request.

Accordingly, I advise that I must reject your request under section 24A of the FOI Act on the basis that the document(s) sought cannot be found, do not exist or have not been received.

Information provided outside the Office's FOI obligations

Your request sought to ascertain the costs associated with producing and distributing Humanitarian Overseas Service Medals (HOSM) to the members of the Australian contingent to the humanitarian relief operation of GE Infrastructure, Water & Process Technologies. When these medals were approved for distribution to members of this organisation an individual order was not made for the purchase of the HOSM medal and clasp 'Indian Ocean'. The physical medals would have been taken from existing stock maintained by the Office, which had been ordered several years prior; for the 'Indian Ocean' clasp, this was approved and ordered approximately 15 years ago. Records relating to these purchases are retained for a set period only in accordance with standard record management practices for financial documents, however noting that these purchase orders would have covered stock for many awards, it would not have been possible to determine which was linked to the specific medals granted to these particular recipients.

It is not the practice of the Office to separately track the administrative costs for processing, approving or distributing medals.

To attempt to provide information that resolves your query, we provide the following estimate of cost for purchase of the medal with a clasp, and approximate cost for sending to an address within Australia. Please note that these figures are based on a best estimate should they be purchased today.

Approximate cost for HOSM	\$35
Approximate cost for HOSM clasp	\$6
Postage	\$20
TOTAL (estimate)	\$61

Review rights

You are entitled to seek review of this decision. Your rights are set out at Attachment A to this letter.

Yours sincerely



Jeff Barnes

Deputy Official Secretary to the Governor-General

ATTACHMENT A — INFORMATION ON RIGHTS OF REVIEW

1. APPLICATION FOR INTERNAL REVIEW OF DECISION

You can request internal review within 30 days of you receiving this decision. An internal review will be conducted by a different officer from the original decision-maker.

No particular form is required but it would assist the decision-maker if you could set out in the application the grounds on which you consider that the decision should be reviewed. Applications for internal review can be made:

- via email to FOIcontactofficer@gg.gov.au
- by mail to The Official Secretary to the Governor-General, Government House, CANBERRA ACT 2600

If you choose to seek an internal review, you will afterward have a right to apply for Information Commissioner review (IC review) of the internal review decision.

OR

2. INFORMATION COMMISSIONER REVIEW OR COMPLAINT

You also have the right to seek IC review of this decision. For FOI applicants, an application for IC review must be made in writing within 60 days of the decision. For third parties who object to disclosure of their information, an application for IC review must be made in writing within 30 days of the decision.

If you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your FOI request, you can lodge a complaint with the OAIC. However, the OAIC suggests that complaints are made to the agency in the first instance.

The complaint should be in writing and set out the reasons for why you are dissatisfied with the way your request was processed. It should also identify this office as the agency about which you are complaining. The OAIC recommend that complaints be made via the FOI Complaint Form available on the OAIC website.

You can make an IC review application or make an FOI complaint in one of the following ways:

- online at <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/reviews-and-complaints/>
- via email to foidr@oaic.gov.au
- by mail to GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2001, or
- by fax to 02 9284 9666.

More information about the Information Commissioner reviews and complaints is available at its website: www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/foi-review-process.