



Australian Government
**Department of Industry,
Science and Resources**

Our ref: 76271

Glenn Hamiltonshire

By email: foi+request-12503-162f437d@righttoknow.org.au

Dear Glenn

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) – Notice of Decision

I refer to your 8 December 2024 request, to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (**the department**), to seek access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)* (**FOI Act**) to:

“I request access to the Style Guides/Brand Guides/Writing Guides currently used for the Geoscience Australia.”

Background

On 8 December 2024, the department received your FOI request.

On 13 December 2024, you agreed to a 30-day extension under section 15AA of the FOI Act for the processing of your FOI request.

Decision

I am an authorised decision maker under subsection 23(1) of the FOI Act.

I have decided not to impose any charges for the processing of your request.

I am satisfied all reasonable searches have been undertaken for documents relevant to your request and one document has been identified as relevant to your request. The document is described in the Schedule of Documents at **Attachment A**.

I have decided to:

- grant access to one (1) document in part.

I have found that the requested documents contain material which is exempt under:

- section 47E(d) of the FOI Act, as disclosure would have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of an agency.

I have also found that the requested document contains material which has been deleted under section 22 of the FOI Act, as the document contains material that is irrelevant to your request.

The reasons for my decision are set out below, as required by section 26 of the FOI Act, in Part A of the Annexure.

Review Rights

If you are dissatisfied with this decision, your review rights are set out in Part B of the Annexure.

Yours sincerely



Charlie Middleton
A/g General Manager
Enabling Services Branch
Corporate Division
Geoscience Australia

28 January 2025

Enclosures

Annexure (Part A – Statement of Reasons and Part B – Review Rights)
Attachment A – Schedule of Documents

Annexure
Part A – Reasons for Decision (section 26 FOI Act)
Request: Glenn Hamiltonshire – 8 December 2024 (FOI 76271)
Decision Maker: Charlie Middleton, A/g General Manager Enabling Services Branch, Geoscience
Australia

1. Evidence/Material on which my findings were based.

1.1 In reaching my decision, I relied on the following information and documentary evidence:

- the FOI Act.
- the documents subject to the request.
- your correspondence setting out the particulars of your request.
- advice from departmental officers as to the nature of the documents; and
- the Guidelines issued by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner under section 93A of the FOI Act (**FOI Guidelines**).

2. Section 22 – Deletion of irrelevant material

2.1 Under section 22 of the FOI Act, the department may edit documents to delete material reasonably expected to be considered irrelevant to the scope of your request.

2.2 As per your correspondence of 13 January 2025, you excluded personal information such as names and other personal identifying information from your request. Accordingly, this information has been deleted under section 22 of the FOI Act.

3. Section 47E(d) – The Conduct of the Operations of an Agency

3.1 Subsection 47E(d) of the FOI Act permits an agency to conditionally exempt material in a document in circumstances where:

... its disclosure under this Act would, or could reasonably be expected to, do any of the following:

(d) have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of an agency

3.2 The relevant document contains an email address for the department's internal use which is not widely publicised or designed for external use.

3.3 The department has established channels of communication for members of the public, which have been put in place to ensure the effective management of communication. Such channels include dedicated and externally published positional mailboxes for specific divisions within the department. These have been established to ensure correspondence is directed to the correct business area and actioned efficiently by the department ensuring quality of service.

3.4 The department also has internal inboxes, which are not publicly shared, to manage the workflow of each division. If internal mailbox details were to be made publicly available, this would have a substantial adverse effect on the proper and efficient conduct of the operations of the department for the following reasons:

- these are not in the public domain and are intended to be used to facilitate confidential and prompt communications within the department.

- Communication received and directed could be mishandled, lost, duplicated or double-handled on account of it not being directed to the most appropriate business area through the publicly available communication channels.
- from time to time, email addresses are deleted or changed due to operational requirements, and if a member of the public sends communication to such an address, there is a risk the communication would not be actioned or experience significant delays in our response. This may result in services not being administered correctly, or at all.

3.5 On that basis, I am satisfied that the internal inbox as defined at the schedule is conditionally exempt because their disclosure would or could reasonably be expected to prejudice the effectiveness of procedures or methods that the department uses to communicate with external stakeholders. For these reasons, I have decided that certain materials identified in the Schedule are conditionally exempt under section 47E(d) of the FOI Act.

3.6 A conditionally exempt document can only be exempt from release if access to the document would be contrary to the public interest (section 11A (5)). My considerations of the public interest are set out below.

4. Public Interest Test

4.1 I have decided that the relevant document is partially conditionally exempt under Division 3 of Part IV of the FOI Act. As required by subsection 11B (5) of the Act, where a document is conditionally exempt, access must be given unless disclosure would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest.

4.2 To determine whether access would be contrary to the public interest, the decision maker must weigh up both factors for and against disclosure. Per section 26(1) (aa), the decision maker must include in their reasons the public interest factors taken into account in making the decision.

Factors favouring disclosure.

4.3 In weighing up the public interest factors both in favour and against disclosure, I have considered the factors favouring access set out in subsection 11B (3) of the FOI Act and the further factors and guidance material set out in the FOI Guidelines.

4.4 I have therefore considered the following factors which may favour disclosure, including the extent to which disclosure would:

- promote the objects of the Act, and
- Provide transparency on internal Departmental processes.

Irrelevant factors

4.5 Further, I have not considered matters which subsection 11B (4) of the FOI Act state are irrelevant considerations.

Factors against disclosure

4.6 The FOI Act does not provide specific factors weighing against disclosure and the factors will depend on the circumstances. Identifying the specific harm in the applicable conditional exemption is not sufficient to conclude that disclosure would be contrary to public interest. Therefore, I have given consideration to the following factors as provided by Part 6 of the FOI Guidelines where access could reasonably be expected to:

- Prejudice the management function of an agency.

- Impede the effective and efficient management of external communications by providing multiple communication streams that would likely hinder the department's response times, and
- prejudice to the future supply of information received by the department.

4.7 I am satisfied that these factors outweigh the limited public benefit that would flow through the disclosure of the information, and that giving access to the information at this time would therefore be contrary to the public interest.

4.8 I have therefore decided that the relevant document contains material which is exempt pursuant to section 47E(d) of the FOI Act.

5. Publication

5.1 Section 11C of the FOI Act requires agencies to publish documents released through an FOI request on our website within 10 working days of release, except in certain circumstances including when the documents contain personal or business information that would be unreasonable to publish.

5.2 The documents being released to you do not contain any personal or business information that would be unreasonable to publish. As a result, they will be published on our disclosure log within 10 working days of the documents being released to you.

Part B – Review Rights

Application for Internal Review

Section 54 of the FOI Act gives you the option to apply for a departmental internal review of my decision. If you make an application for internal review, it will be conducted by an officer of the department (other than me) appointed by the Secretary of the department to conduct a review and make a completely fresh decision on the merits of the case.

Application for a review of the decision must be made within 30 days after the day of receipt of this letter, or within 15 days of receipt of the documents to which this decision relates (whichever is the longer period). You do not have to pay any fees or processing charges for an internal review, except for charges if further searches are conducted and additional documents are identified as relevant and if the decision maker chooses to impose a charge. While a specific form is not required, it will assist the decision maker if your application specifies the grounds on which you consider the decision should be reviewed.

Application for a review of a decision should be addressed to:

FOI Coordinator
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
GPO Box 2013
CANBERRA ACT 2601

or by email to: FOI@industry.gov.au.

Review by the Australian Information Commissioner

If any decision on internal review were not satisfactory to you, section 54L of the FOI Act gives you the right to apply for review of my decision by the Information Commissioner.

An application for review by the Information Commissioner may be made regardless of whether the decision was the subject of a departmental internal review. An application for review by the Information Commissioner must be made within 60 days of receipt of this notice. There is no fee for review by the Information Commissioner.

You must apply in writing, and you can lodge your application in one of the following ways:

Online: www.oaic.gov.au
Post: GPO Box 5288, Sydney NSW 2001
Fax: +61 2 6123 5145
Email: foidr@oaic.gov.au

An application form is available on the website at www.oaic.gov.au. Your application should include a copy of this notice and your contact details. You should also set out why you are objecting to the decision.

Complaints to the Australian Information Commissioner

You may make a complaint 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. The Australian Information Commissioner will make a completely independent investigation of your complaint. A complaint to the Australian Information Commissioner must be made in writing and can be lodged online using the Information Commissioner Complaint Application form on the Australian Information Commissioner's website at www.oaic.gov.au.

**Request for Access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth)
Department of Industry, Science and Resources
FOI Applicant: Glenn Hamiltonshire – LEX 76271
SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS**

Doc No	Description of document	Decision	Reasons
1.	Geoscience Australia Style Guide	Partial release	Section 22 irrelevant matter and Section 47E(d) operations of an agency.

