



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES



DPS Information Requests Policy

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Date of effect

1. This policy was approved by the Secretary on 16 October 2025.
2. This policy replaces all previous Department of Parliamentary Services (the department) policies and any other related strategies, local guidance or directions on this subject, unless otherwise specified in this policy.

Policy review mechanisms

3. This document will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier if required.

Intent of policy

4. This policy is designed to set out the department's approach to handling requests for access to documents, which would otherwise be governed by the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act).
5. This policy does not intend to limit the department's processes for handling requests for information from parliamentarians nor any other request that is, or would be, governed by an applicable Australian law other than the FOI Act.

Application

6. This policy applies to all requests for document(s) received by the department that would otherwise be governed by the FOI Act.

Policy statement

7. Parliamentary Departments are excluded from the application of the FOI Act under section 68A of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* (Cth). However, the department recognises the importance of transparency and public accountability, and supports the principle that administrative documents should be open to scrutiny. For this reason, the department will provide such documents when requested, subject to any claim of appropriate immunity or exemptions that would ordinarily apply under the FOI Act or as otherwise set out in this policy.

Document consultation and approval

8. As this policy is for an administrative access scheme reflecting a legislative scheme, no consultation on this document occurred.

Definitions

9. For the purpose of this policy:
 - a. **document** includes:

- i. any of, or any part of, the following thing:
 - 1. any paper or other material on which there is writing,
 - 2. a map, plan, drawing or photograph,
 - 3. any paper or other material on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them,
 - 4. any article or material from which sounds, images or writings are capable of being reproduced without the aid of any other article or device,
 - 5. any article on which information has been sorted or recorded, either mechanically or electronically, or
 - 6. any other record of information.
- ii. any copy, reproduction or duplicate of such a thing, or
- iii. any part of such a copy, reproduction or duplicate.

It does not include material maintained for reference purposes that is otherwise publicly available.

- b. **person** means a natural person or body corporate, such as a company or organisation.

Applications for access to documents

10. To make a valid request for access to document(s), applications must:

- a. be in writing.
- b. state that the request is for access to documents.
- c. provide enough information about the document(s) request so that the request can be processed, and
- d. provide a method by which the department can reply, for example, an email or postal address.

11. To request access to document(s) from the department, requests must be made either by post or by email.

12. The postal address is:

Director, DPS Legal Coordination Services
Department of Parliamentary Services
PO Box 2600
Canberra ACT 2600

13. The email address is dpsinforequests@aph.gov.au.

14. A request may be made by one person on behalf of another person, by an organisation on behalf of a client, or by a person as the agent or representative of a group of individuals or corporate bodies. However, exemptions may apply to the release of person information

where a request is made on behalf of an applicant, unless formal authorisation has been provided.

15. An applicant does not have to reside in Australia or be an Australian citizen to make a request for access to document(s).
16. All requests will be coordinated by the DPS Legal Services team which will manage requests and responses.
17. In general, requests will only be assessed with respect to whether any existing documents fall within the terms given by the applicant. However, the department may, at its absolute discretion, decide to create a new document in response to a valid request within the meaning of paragraphs 10 and 11 of this policy.

How we process requests

18. The department will aim to tell you within 14 calendar days that we have received your request. You may be asked to provide evidence of your identity with your application if you are seeking access to documents containing your personal information.
19. The department will endeavour to process the request within 30 calendar days of receipt of the request, unless third party consultation is required in which case the request should be finalised within 60 calendar days of receipt of the request.

Exempt documents

20. A decision to give a person access to a document is made on the assumption that the content of any document that is released is disclosed to the world at large. Accordingly, public access to documents held by the department is subject to certain limitations to ensure that information, including personal, classified or restricted information is properly protected.
21. A document may fall into any of the three groups below:
 - a. **Group 1** – Consistent with the FOI Act, documents which fall into the following categories are exempt documents and will not be released:
 - i. documents affecting national security, defence or international relations,
 - ii. Cabinet documents,
 - iii. documents affecting enforcement of law and protection of public safety, including the safety of visitors to and occupants of Parliament House,
 - iv. documents to which secrecy provisions in legislation apply,
 - v. documents subject to legal professional privilege,
 - vi. documents containing material obtained in confidence,
 - vii. documents whose disclosure would be in contempt of Parliament or in contempt of court including, for the avoidance of doubt, any documents subject to parliamentary privilege,
 - viii. Parliamentary Budget Office documents, or

- ix. documents disclosing trade secrets or commercially valuable information.
- b. **Group 2** – in addition, access will not be provided to documents which fall into the following categories:
 - i. documents relating to, or connected with, the work of the Senate or the House of Representatives,
 - ii. information, analysis and advice provided by the Parliamentary Librarian under section 38B(1)(a) of the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* (Cth),
 - iii. documents held by parliamentarians or their staff even if the information resides on facilities provided by the department,
 - iv. internal deliberative documents, including advice provided to the Presiding Officers by departmental employees, contractors, and office holders, or
 - v. documents that the department does not have authority to release (e.g. where Presiding Officer approval would be required prior to release).
- c. **Group 3** – the department may, at its absolute discretion, determine that access can be granted to documents which fall into the following categories:
 - i. documents relating to the financial or property interests of the Commonwealth,
 - ii. documents affecting certain operations of agencies,
 - iii. documents that if disclosed under this policy would result in the unreasonable disclosure of personal information about any person (including a deceased person), or
 - iv. documents that if disclosed under this policy would disclose information concerning a person in respect of his or her business or professional affairs or concerning the business, commercial or financial affairs of an organisation or undertaking.

In accordance with the relevant departmental policies and procedures, employees may apply for access to their own personnel file or authorise a third party to access their file.

Decision makers

22. For the purpose of this policy, decision makers regarding the release or non-release of documents in response to information requests are:
- a. the Secretary,
 - b. the Deputy Secretary,
 - c. the Parliamentary Librarian,
 - d. SES Band 2 level officers in the relevant business area, or
 - e. SES Band 1 level officers in the relevant business area.

23. While information requests will generally be given to the decision maker in the relevant business area, in assigning requests, regard will be given to the need for the decision maker to be free of both real and apparent bias.
24. The department may also disclose the name of the decision maker appointed in accordance with paragraphs 22 and 23 of this policy if requested by the applicant. However, this will only be actioned where it is relevant to the request, and no work health and safety risks are identified with respect to the disclosure of this information.

Identifying, locating, and collating documents

25. If the decision maker is satisfied that the work involved in processing the request would substantially and unreasonably divert departmental resources, if reasonable to do so, the applicant will be given the opportunity to narrow the scope of the request so it can be actioned without unduly diverting resources.
26. Poor record keeping or an inefficient filing system will not of themselves provide grounds for a claim that identifying or locating documents would be a substantial and unreasonable diversion of resources. Nor will the fact that a large number of documents lie within the scope of a request be determinative if the documents could be easily identified, collated and assessed.

Making a decision

27. Decision makers may obtain assistance from other employees and consult with third parties, and take advice, submissions and recommendations into account, but they remain responsible for reaching an independent decision and exercising any discretion.
28. In response to a request, a decision maker may decide to:
 - a. allow access to all documents as requested,
 - b. allow access to information, but in a different format to that requested,
 - c. refuse to allow access to all requested documents, as an exemption applies,
 - d. refuse to allow access to certain documents as an exemption applies to those documents, and allow access to the remainder, which may include the redaction of information, or
 - e. subject to paragraphs 25 and 26 of this policy, refuse access if satisfied that the work involved in processing the request would substantially and unreasonably divert the department's resources.

Reasons for decision

29. For transparency and accountability, if access to documents is withheld, either in whole or in part, the decision maker should notify the applicant of the reasons for their decision.

Internal review

30. Persons who are denied access to documents in whole or in part or affected third parties may apply for internal review of the decision. For the purpose of this policy, the internal reviewers are:
 - a. the Secretary,
 - b. the Deputy Secretary,
 - c. the Parliamentary Librarian, or
 - d. SES Band 2 level officers.
31. An application for internal review of a decision must be made in writing within 30 calendar days of being notified of the original decision.
32. To make an application for internal review of the decision to deny access, the application must:
 - a. be in writing,
 - b. state that it is a request for internal review of a decision to refuse access, and provide the following details about the decision:
 - i. the matter reference number in the subject line of the response; and
 - ii. the date of the decision.
 - c. why the applicant thinks the department should make a different decision, and
 - d. provide a method by which the department can reply, for example, an email or postal address.
33. A request for internal review can be made either by post or by email.
34. The postal address is:

Director, DPS Legal Coordination Services
Department of Parliamentary Services
PO Box 2600
Canberra ACT 2600
35. The email address is dpsinforequests@aph.gov.au.
36. Upon receipt of an application for internal review, DPS Legal Services will arrange for one of the officers above, who was not involved in the original decision, to review the decision.
37. The internal review officer may rely on record searches or third-party consultation undertaken by the original decision maker or may cause the same work to be undertaken again.
38. Internal review is not available if the original decision was made by the Secretary.
39. A person who remains unhappy with a decision following an internal review process should seek independent advice about any further review options that may be available to them.
40. The department may also disclose the name of the internal review officer appointed in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 36 of this policy if requested by the applicant. However,

this will only be actioned where it is relevant to the request, and no work health and safety risks are identified with respect to the disclosure of this information.

Timeframes

41. All requests for information will be acknowledged within 14 calendar days of receipt of the request. The department will endeavour to process the request within 30 calendar days of receipt of the request, unless third party consultation is required (in which the case the request should be finalised within 60 calendar days).
42. An application for internal review of a decision (under clauses 30-35 of this policy) must be made in writing (see paragraph 32 of this policy) within 30 calendar days of being notified of the original decision.
43. The department will endeavour to determine a request for internal review of a decision within 30 calendar days of receipt of the request.
44. If the timeframe falls on a weekend or on a public holiday in the Australian Capital Territory, then the next business day will be the determinative date.