

COMPLEX ELECTRONIC

FOI CHARGES ESTIMATE TOOL - COMPLEX ELECTRONIC

(insert data in shaded boxes only)

GENERAL DATA ESTIMATE

(terms in red are explained on the notes sheet)

Hits returned to consider for relevance

in A4 pages

Percentage (approx) of hits which are relevant

Number of discrete relevant documents

Percentage (approx) of relevant pages to disclose in whole

Percentage (approx) of relevant pages requiring redaction

Percentage (approx) of content that is applicant's own personal information

Number of third parties to consult

PROCESS - search and retrieval

TIME per task

charge time:

COST @ \$15 per hr

Time required to execute searches - enter hours (including part hours eg 0.5)

Examining hits to identify relevant documents - enter minutes per 10 pages

Collating bundle of relevant documents - enter hours

Preparing schedules detailing all relevant documents (basic data entry eg doc no, date, description) - enter minutes per 10 documents

Search & Retrieval Subtotal

PROCESS - decision-making

TIME per task

charge time:

COST @ \$20 per hr

Examine relevant pages for decision making - enter minutes per page

Redacting pages that are partially disclosed - enter minutes per page

Consult third parties - enter average per third party in hours

Preparation and notification of decision

Writing statement of reasons - enter hours

Complete schedule by recording decision @ 4 documents per minute

Decision-making Subtotal (before deduction of 5 hours)

Decision-making Subtotal (after deduction of first 5 hours free for all)

ACCESS - view / inspect

TIME per task

charge time:

COST @ \$6.25 per 1/2 hr

Supervised inspection of documents - minutes per page

Supervised inspection of audio/visual material - insert total duration of material in minutes then add 30 mins set-up and pack-up time

Inspection/Viewing Subtotal

ACCESS - copy and post

PAGES

COST @ 10c a page

Photocopies of estimated released pages (including those with deletions) - set to 0 if providing electronically

Electronic media (eg USB drive, CD-ROM) and/or postage - insert estimated cost of materials

Access Subtotal

ESTIMATED TOTALS

NUMBER OF RELEASED PAGES

TIME (in hours)

TOTAL COST

Financial hardship/public interest discount (as %)

TOTAL COST (after discount)

MAXIMUM DEPOSIT

USING THIS TOOL

This tool assists in generating an estimate but should not be considered definitive or binding. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has emphasised the need for agencies to base estimates on a reasonable sampling of relevant documents to ensure that appropriate assumptions are used to generate estimates for charging purposes. Some IC review decisions suggest a sample of 10-20% would be 'reasonable'.

FOI CHARGES ESTIMATE TOOL - SIMPLE

(insert data in shaded boxes only)

GENERAL DATA ESTIMATE

(terms in red are explained on the notes sheet)

Pages (approx) of material in scope		in A4 pages
Number of discrete relevant documents		
Percentage (approx) of pages to disclose in whole		
Percentage (approx) of pages requiring redaction		
Percentage (approx) of content that is applicant's own personal information		
Number of third parties to consult		

PROCESS - search and retrieval	TIME per task	charge time:	COST @ \$15 per hr
Time required to execute searches - enter hours (including part hours eg 0.5)		0.00	\$0.00
Preparing schedules detailing all relevant documents (basic data entry eg doc no, date, description) - enter minutes per 10 documents		0.00	\$0.00
<i>Search & Retrieval Subtotal</i>		0.00	\$0.00

PROCESS - decision-making	TIME per task	charge time:	COST @ \$20 per hr
Examine relevant pages for decision making - enter minutes per page		0.00	\$0.00
Redacting pages that are partially disclosed - enter minutes per page		0.00	\$0.00
Consult third parties - enter average per third party in hours		0.00	\$0.00
Preparation and notification of decision			
Writing statement of reasons - enter hours		0.00	\$0.00
Complete schedule by recording decision @ 4 documents per minute		0	\$0.00
<i>Decision-making Subtotal (before deduction of 5 hours)</i>		0.00	\$0.00
<i>Decision-making Subtotal (after deduction of first 5 hours free for all)</i>		0.00	0

ACCESS - view / inspect	TIME per task	charge time:	COST @ \$6.25 per 1/2 hr
Supervised inspection of documents - minutes per page		0.00	0.00
Supervised inspection of audio/visual material - insert total duration of material in minutes then add 30 mins set-up and pack-up time		0.00	0.00
<i>Inspection/Viewing Subtotal</i>		0.00	\$0.00

ACCESS - copy and post	PAGES	COST @ 10c a page
Photocopies of estimated released pages (including those with deletions) - set to 0 if providing electronically	0	\$0.00
Electronic media (eg USB drive, CD-ROM) and/or postage - insert estimated cost of materials	0	
<i>Access Subtotal</i>		\$0.00

ESTIMATED TOTALS		
NUMBER OF RELEASED PAGES		0
TIME (in hours)		0.00
TOTAL COST		\$0.00
Financial hardship/public interest discount (as %)	0%	\$0.00
TOTAL COST (after discount)		\$0.00
MAXIMUM DEPOSIT		N/A

USING THIS TOOL

This tool assists in generating an estimate but should not be considered definitive or binding. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has emphasised the need for agencies to base estimates on a reasonable sampling of relevant documents to ensure that appropriate assumptions are used to generate estimates for charging purposes. Some IC review decisions suggest a sample of 10-20% would be 'reasonable'.

January 2017 edition

NOTES TO FOI CHARGES CALCULATOR

Term	Explanation
Hits returned	Initial searching usually returns more documents than are relevant to a request. For example, an electronic search using keywords will often return false positive results. Similarly, a hard copy file with a relevant title will often contain documents not caught by the terms of the request. A 'hit' is a page that needs to be manually assessed for relevance, even if ultimately be ruled outside of scope. For audio/visual material you can convert time to pages - a suggested conversion is 3 mins of material = 1 A4 page equivalent. In some instances, the pages of a 'hit' may be an estimate (for example, where lengthy email chains are involved or other document where a page count is not immediately identifiable).
In A4 pages	To estimate the volume it is necessary to take a common denominator. This tool uses A4 page equivalency. It may be necessary to sample some hits to derive an average document size
Relevant	This is the number of pages remaining after reviewing the hits and removing irrelevant pages. These are the pages that the decision-maker will need to consider in terms of release or exemption.
Documents	For some purposes (ie scheduling) the number of documents is relevant. This is regardless of the length of the document.
Redaction	The process of blocking out parts of a document using redacting software or a manual process.
Own personal information	An agency may not charge a person for accessing personal information about themselves. Where a request seeks access in part to the applicant's personal information and in part to other information, it is permissible to charge for the balance of the request. The tool calculates the total cost of processing the request and then deducts the percentage of personal information from the total.
Third parties	The <i>Freedom of Information (Charges) Regulations</i> allow agencies to charge for the time spent 'in consultation with any person or body'. Where third parties, including other Commonwealth agencies, are consulted on a request the agency may charge this as part of its decision-making time. Time taken to consult with a third party will be context-specific. It includes time taken to prepare correspondence for the third party and time taken in discussion with the third party. As a general guide, allow up to 2 hours for a typical consultation with a non-government third party. Government third parties typically require less assistance to understand the FOI Act and so may require less time depending on the circumstances.
Inspection	Under the charges regulations, inspection time is for each half hour or part thereof. The tool rounds up to the nearest half hour for inspection time.
Discount	The OAIC Guidelines explain the circumstances in which a charge might be discounted for financial hardship or public interest reasons. Agencies have a broad discretion to reduce/waive charges for other reasons, as well as a discretion not to impose a charge at all.



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

FOI Reference:
File No:
MONTH 2022

Mr/Ms
By email to:

Dear Mr/Ms

Re. Freedom of Information Request

I refer to your current request for access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) to:

“terms of request”.

Preliminary searches for documents relevant to your request have been completed.

I am an officer authorised under section 23 of the FOI Act to make decisions on the charge for processing your request. I have decided that charges are payable based on the number of relevant pages, processing time and time taken by the decision maker (once appointed) to assess your request (noting that the first five hours are free of charge). Our preliminary assessment of the charges due is **\$xx**.

Please note that at this stage in the FOI process, no decision has been made as to whether the information you seek will be released or exempt under the FOI Act. My decision at this stage relates only to the processing charges.

Under section 29 of the FOI Act, you now have 30 days within which to:

- agree to pay the charge;
- contend that the charge has been wrongly assessed, or should be reduced or not imposed; or
- withdraw your request.

Select an alternative text:

[If total charge exceeds \$100]. Should you agree to pay the charge, the *Freedom of Information (Fees & Charges) Regulations* requires that you pay a deposit of 25 per cent of the total charge before processing commences. I have calculated the required deposit for your request to be **\$0.00**.

If you choose to pay only the deposit amount at this stage, you will be required to pay the remainder of the charge prior to the release of any documents.

Your payment method options are outlined in the attachment.

Or

[If the total charge is under \$100] Should you agree to pay the charge, the *Freedom of Information (Fees & Charges) Regulations* requires that you pay a deposit of **\$20.00** before processing commences.

If you choose to pay only the deposit amount at this stage, you will be required to pay the remainder of the charge prior to the release of any documents

Your payment method options are outlined in the attachment.

Or

[If total charge is under \$20] Should you agree to pay the charge, the *Freedom of Information (Fees & Charges) Regulations* requires that you pay the full amount of **\$00.00** before processing commences.

Your payment method options are outlined in the attachment.

Contend the charge

Should you contend that the charge has been wrongly assessed, or should be reduced or not imposed, you may apply for the Department to waive or reduce the charge. The Department will take into account whether:

- the payment of the fee or a part of the fee would cause you financial hardship; and
- the giving of access to documents relevant to your request is in the general public interest or in the interest of a substantial section of the public.

A departmental decision-maker will take into account any considerations you put forward, and will make a decision on whether the charge should be imposed, and in what amount.

Processing period or withdrawal of request

Section 31 of the FOI Act provides that the 30-day processing period to assess your request is put on hold until we receive your payment of the deposit/payment in full of the charges, or we decide not to impose a charge. Should you withdraw your request at this stage, no charge will be imposed.

If we do not receive your response to this letter within 30 days of its receipt, I will consider that you no longer wish to continue with your request, and I will deem it withdrawn.

Narrow scope of request

Finally, you may elect to narrow the scope of your request, which may reduce the applicable charge.

Should you have any queries, or wish to discuss revising the terms of your request, please contact me by email at foi@dfat.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Director
Freedom of Information and Privacy Law Section



Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Please cross out whichever is not applicable:

- **Payment of Charges:** Deposit / In Full
- **Payment by:** Credit Card / Direct Debit / Cheque or Money Order

For the sum of \$_____ as detailed in the FOI Estimate of Charges letter dated _____ (FOI Ref: LEXxxxx)

Credit Card

Name _____
 Address _____

I authorise the National Cashier of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to debit my

☐ VISA ☐ MASTER CARD

- - - Expiry: ____/____

Name appearing on card: _____

Signature: _____

Direct Debit

Account Name: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
 BSB No.: 092-009
 Account No.: 110329

Please include your surname and **FOI Ref: LEXxxxx** in the reference field.

Cheque/Money Order

Make payable to: 'The National Cashier – DFAT'
 Send to: Director, FOI Section
 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
 R. G. Casey Building
 John McEwen Crescent
 Barton ACT 0221