

FOI SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL CHECKLIST

This checklist will assist decision makers and FOI action officers to identify, locate and collect all documents held within the Department which are relevant to a FOI request being processed. The Checklist will also assist the FOI Unit in processing a FOI request and calculating charges (if any).

Please complete and sign the Checklist, and provide it to the FOI Unit.

What is a document?

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* defines a document as:

(a) any of, or any part of any of, the following things:

- i. any paper or other material on which there is writing;
- ii. a map, plan, drawing or photograph;
- iii. any paper or other material on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them;
- iv. any article or material from which sounds, images or writings are capable of being reproduced with or without the aid of any other article or device;
- v. any article on which information has been stored or recorded, either mechanically or electronically;
- vi. any other record of information.

(b) any copy, reproduction or duplicate of such a thing; or

(c) any part of such a copy, reproduction or duplicate; but does not include:

- i. material maintained for reference purposes that is otherwise publically available; or
- ii. Cabinet notebooks.

What does this mean?

Subject to the exclusion for reference material and Cabinet notebooks, virtually any physical or electronic medium from which information can be extracted is considered a document for FOI purposes. This includes not only paper and electronic files, but also emails (in electronic and hard copy form, whether personal or business in nature), post-it notes, notepads, diaries and calendars (whether electronic or hard copy), instant and text messages and sound or vision recordings. If in doubt, please consult the [Health Intranet](#) and the FOI Unit.

How to approach the search task

- Read and consider each part of the FOI request, identifying and understanding the information within the documents that the applicant is seeking.
- Where there is ambiguity about a term or about any part of the request, the FOI Unit can assist in contacting the applicant for clarification (on behalf of the Decision Maker).
- Complete the Search Checklist and Certification below. While officers should use their judgment in undertaking the search task, be aware that the Department may have to provide sufficient evidence during external review of FOI decisions that support a thorough search having been undertaken.

Contact

The FOI Unit can further assist with search parameters, identification of documents and request scope. The FOI Unit can be contacted by email: FOI@health.gov.au or via phone: (02) 6289 1666.

SEARCH CHECKLIST [FOI XXX]

I have requested that all relevant areas in the Department undertake a search for documents

Division/Branch Search

I have searched the following locations for documents relevant to the FOI request:

E-mails, including individual and group email accounts

Trim Files and paper files held in my Division/Branch

Paper files relating to my Division/Branch held in Records Management

Electronic documents on shared and personal drives, including USB, Floppy Disks, CDs and other devices

Department Databases

Safe

Personal folders, notebooks, calendars & diaries of relevant officers

Other (specify, for example MIRACLS, PDMS, SAP, FOFMS)

ESTIMATED TIME SPENT PROCESSING FOI REQUEST

Date	Name	Section/Branch	Total Time Taken

SEARCH CERTIFICATION

I have located document/s that may be relevant to the request and forwarded these to the Action Officer or FOI Unit (if filled in by Action Officer)

Despite a thorough and diligent search, I have been unable to locate any documents relevant to the terms of the FOI request.

Note: Where documents do not exist or cannot be located, the efforts and extent of the search for the documents should be recorded in a signed and dated file note and saved in the relevant FOI request TRIM file.

I am satisfied that I have undertaken a thorough search for documents relevant to this request and that all reasonable steps have been taken to identify relevant documents and provide them to the decision-maker.

Signature: Date:

Name: Position: