

Corporate Affairs

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Dear

FOI REQUEST - REFERENCE NUMBER 2015-007

I refer to your request for access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) in your letter of 12 January 2015, which I received by email on 17 February 2015. Specifically, you have sought access to the following documents:

"Documents ...relating to the payment to Australian politicians... since 1 January 2012. Specifically...documents that detail the cost incurred in relation to accessing the Australian politicians for interview, or appearances on shows like Q&A."

I am authorised by the Managing Director under section 23 of the FOI Act to make decisions in respect of requests made under that Act. Following is my decision in relation to your request.

Locating and identifying documents

I have taken reasonable steps to identify and locate all relevant documents. My search for these documents involved contacting people in the following positions who in turn consulted with other relevant managers and staff:

- Director, News
- Director, Television
- Director, Radio.

I requested that searches be conducted of all hard and soft copy records for documents which fall within the scope of your request. Please note that in requesting those searches, I have interpreted 'Australian politicians' in the context of your request to be people who were interviewed or appeared on ABC programs at the time that they were politicians (that is, not including retired or former politicians).

As a result of those searches, no documents were identified which are relevant to your request. Under s24A of the FOI Act, the ABC may refuse a request for access if all reasonable steps have been taken to find a document and the ABC is satisfied that the document does not exist. In the present

case, I consider that all reasonable steps have been taken to locate relevant documents. I am further satisfied that the requested documents do not exist and therefore access to them is refused pursuant to s24A of the FOI Act.

In relation to your request generally, I draw your attention to a Guidance Note (Chequebook Journalism/Paying for Interviews) issued 21 May 2014 under the *ABC Editorial Policies*. That Guidance Note states:

"The ABC does not, as a matter of principle, offer payments (whether cash or otherwise) or enter into financial competition with other media for access to news items or stories, a practice commonly known as 'chequebook journalism'."

You can read the Guidance Note on the ABC's website here: http://about.abc.net.au/reports-publications/guidance-note-chequebook-journalism-paying-for-interviews/

If you are dissatisfied with this decision you can apply for Internal or Information Commissioner (IC) Review. You do not have to apply for Internal Review before seeking IC Review. Information about your review rights is attached.

Yours sincerely

Judith Maude

Head, Corporate Governance