

Request for transcripts of post-Cabinet press conferences

Legislation	Official Information Act 1982, s 18(f)
Agency	Prime Minister
Ombudsman	Peter Boshier
Case number(s)	387188
Date	April 2016

Difficulty involved in finding and bringing together the requested transcripts - adverse impact on operation of the Office—s 18(f) applied

This was a request for three years' worth of transcripts of post-Cabinet press conferences. The requester complained to the Ombudsman when that request was refused on the grounds of substantial collation or research. The issue in this case turned on the difficulty involved in finding and bringing together the requested transcripts.

The Chief Ombudsman noted that there was no centralised system for storing the transcripts within the Prime Minister's Office at the time; that the request covered three years and approximately 100 transcripts; and that there was considerable uncertainty around who within the Prime Minister's Office would have received the transcripts, and if, where or how they may have stored them.

The Chief Ombudsman accepted that the time involved in trying to locate the transcripts would be substantial and that this would have an adverse impact on the operation of the Prime Minister's Office. The Office would have to divert staff from other responsibilities or employ extra staff to undertake an extensive search of the electronic and hard copy files of both past and present staff members. The Chief Ombudsman therefore found that it was open to the Prime Minister to refuse the request on grounds of substantial collation or research.

The Prime Minister now proactively releases the transcripts of post-Cabinet press conferences.

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