

Charge for supply of information about self-reported convictions of teachers

Legislation	Official Information Act 1982, s 15(1A)
Agency	Teachers Council
Ombudsman	David McGee
Case number(s)	179387
Date	June 2010

Charge reduced on review—decision to charge news media requester not unreasonable.

The Teachers' Council charged \$3,277.12 to supply a member of the news media with the following details of instances where teachers had self-reported convictions:

- the gender of the teacher;
- the date on which the Council received the report of conviction;
- the registration status of the teacher at the time the report was received;
- the current registration status of the teacher;
- the details of the conviction(s) and sentence;
- a copy of the information provided by the teacher; and
- a copy of the summary of facts and sentencing notes.

The requester complained to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman accepted the request would take approximately 11 hours processing time. With the first hour free, this amounted to a charge of \$760. This was based on an estimated 20 minutes per file to locate, extract and collate the requested information from 29 relevant files. The Ombudsman then considered whether the \$760 charge ought to be remitted in the public interest.

The Ombudsman acknowledged the public interest in transparency and accountability of Teachers' Council processes. He also acknowledged that *'the media serves the function of informing the public on matters of public interest'*. However, *'this does not mean that all its sources must be available at no charge'*.

The Ombudsman accepted that the staff time required to process this request would have a significant impact on the conduct of the Teachers' Council's business, and that it would have to engage additional staff in order to complete the work involved. He was not persuaded that the public interest in release was such that remission of the charge was warranted.

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