

Request for numbers of staff with criminal convictions

Legislation	Official Information Act 1982, s 18(f)
Agency	Department of Corrections
Ombudsman	John Belgrave
Case number(s)	175036
Date	March 2007

Request involved manual search of over 4,500 files and 2000 hours—refusal under s 18(f) justified

The Department of Corrections refused a request for the number of corrections officers who had disclosed criminal convictions and the requester complained to the Ombudsman. The Department explained that there was no centralised index or database of employees with criminal convictions. Finding the information would require a manual search of over 4,500 personal and disciplinary files, located at head and regional offices. It was estimated that it would take over 2,000 hours to find and collate the requested information. This would impose ‘a measurably heavier workload on the department’s HR division’, which already had ‘a heavy workload in meeting the department’s requirements for recruitment, collective bargaining, remuneration reviews, individual contracts, reviews of public prisons and head office, and the management of change generally’. The Ombudsman concluded that ‘netting the information [sought] would appear to involve costs to the department that would seem to be unreasonable’ and refusal under section 18(f) of the OIA was therefore justified.

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