

Request for address list of members of university council

Legislation	Official Information Act 1982, 9(2)(a)
Agency	University
Ombudsman	Sir Brian Elwood
Case number(s)	W32811
Date	March 1995

Request for address list of members of university council—addresses withheld in reliance upon s 9(2)(a)—some members did not wish disclosure of private addresses—privacy accepted in those cases—public interest in members of the public being able to communicate directly with the elected members of the university council—public interest met by university undertaking to forward correspondence addressed to council members at the university

A special interest group requested an address list for the elected members of a university council. The university refused the request in reliance upon section 9(2)(a) of the OIA.

In the course of the review of this decision, the university consulted with council members to determine their views on the release of their addresses and established that a majority of members agreed to the release of the information requested but some council members did not agree. It was accepted that section 9(2)(a) provided good reason to withhold the ‘private’ addresses of the council members who did not consent to release, however, there was a clear public interest in members of the public, including special interest groups, being able to communicate directly with the elected members of the university council.

In considering how that public interest might best be met, it was not considered necessary for a ‘private’ address to be provided so long as a reliable ‘contact’ address was made available. After consultation with the Privacy Commissioner, it was concluded that the public interest could be satisfied by the university agreeing to the use of its address as a contact one for those members of council who did not agree to the release of their private address. The university

undertook to forward, without delay and unopened, any communications addressed to the members concerned.

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