

# Freedom of Information guide for welfare recipients

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You are entitled to access records held about you by government entities and related records under Freedom of Information laws, including records held by (un)employment services providers. This can be useful if you want to understand decisions made about you including when your payment was put on hold or cancelled.

This document is designed to assist people who have had to do compulsory activities (known as “mutual” obligations) in relation to their Centrelink payment. If you haven’t had to do compulsory activities but would like to access your Centrelink records, you can use the ‘Services Australia’ template below and remove irrelevant text.

You will need to submit two or three requests to ensure you receive all your records. Regardless of which (un)employment service you’ve been in, **you will need to submit a request to Services Australia**. Then, you will **also submit a request to the relevant department based on the programs you have been in**. This could be Workforce Australia / jobactive or Disability Employment Services / Inclusive Employment Australia. If you have been in more than one program you can request your records for each of them.

You do not need to submit multiple requests if you have had more than one job agency. You can just list them all in the same request.

If you have any questions about using these templates, making your Freedom of Information request, or what to do if your request is not granted, contact [help@welfarecopwatch.org](mailto:help@welfarecopwatch.org) to reach people at the [Antipoverty Centre](#) who have experience dealing with this process. You can also get in touch with us if you want help understanding what your records mean after you receive them.

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# Email templates

## FOI request: Workforce Australia / jobactive

Send an email to [FOI@dewr.gov.au](mailto:FOI@dewr.gov.au), saying something like the following:

"Hi there,

This is a request for my personal information under the Freedom of Information act 1982. My name is **[Insert your name]** and my JobSeeker ID is **[Insert your ID number]**.

I request:

*All documentation, notes, emails, as well as text messages on company phones held by **[Insert job agency name, including all job agencies you want records for]** about me*

*All **[Insert job agency name/s]** ESS Web Records of appointments for me, excluding notifications of appointments previously sent to me*

*All **[Insert job agency name/s]** ESS Web Record of Compliance actions taken against me*

*All documentation, including emails and internal investigation notes, in relation to any complaints I've made against **[Insert job agency name/s]**."*

## FOI request: Disability Employment Services / Inclusive Employment Australia

Send an email to [FOI@DSS.gov.au](mailto:FOI@DSS.gov.au), saying something like the following:

"Hi there,

This is a request for my personal information under the Freedom of Information act 1982. My name is **[Insert your name]** and my JobSeeker ID is **[Insert your ID number]**.

I request:

*All documentation, notes, emails, as well as text messages on company phones held by **[Insert job agency name, including all job agencies you want records for]** about me*

*All **[Insert job agency name/s]** ESS Web Records of appointments for me, excluding notifications of appointments previously sent to me*

*All **[Insert job agency name/s]** ESS Web Record of Compliance actions taken against me*

*All documentation, including emails and internal investigation notes, in relation to any complaints I've made against **[Insert job agency name/s]**."*

## FOI request: Services Australia

**Because Services Australia hold different information, when administrating unfair and unlawful punishments, it's also important to FOI your Centrelink notes. To do this:**

Send an email to [freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au](mailto:freedomofinformation@servicesaustralia.gov.au), saying something like the following:

"Hi there,

This is a request for my personal information under the Freedom of Information act 1982. My name is **[Insert your name]** and my CRN is **[insert your CRN here]**.

I request:

*All records and correspondence relating to compliance action either taken against me by Centrelink or approved by them in relation to the Targeted Compliance Framework.*

*All records and correspondence related to any complaints I've made*

*All records and correspondence related to exemptions as well as health and personal issues I've raised*

*All phone records of my interactions with Centrelink from **[insert time period]***

I consent to exclude personal details about your staff (such as their names), in accordance with section 22(1) of the FOI Act."

*\*If it's helpful for your records, you could also ask them to throw in all Job Capacity Assessment reports, Employment Services Assessment reports, and correspondence with Centrelink social workers over any time period as well.*

## What to expect

After you've made your request:

- The FOI team will confirm via email that they've received your request, and ask you to clarify any further information they may require. They will also ask you to nominate how you would like to receive your request and further correspondence from them (the easiest thing to do is just tell them to send everything to you via the same email address).
- You are *meant* to get your FOI request back within 30 days of them receiving it, but this almost never happens. It's very likely that they will ask you for permission to extend the deadline beyond a month. It's annoying, but the easiest thing is just to agree and tell them that you're happy to wait.

- They may also ask for permission to consult “third parties” (e.g. job agencies) to gather your information. You can also confirm that you’re happy for them to request your info from them.

If you are confused at all by the process, or anything an FOI Department tells you, please get in touch with our FOI officer who is very happy to help: [jeremy@antipovertycentre.org](mailto:jeremy@antipovertycentre.org)