



Government Legal Department

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Our reference: BVFOI/397/15 re Sydney Emms

Freedom of Information Act 2000 Request

You asked for the following information from the Government Legal Department (“the Department”):

I would like to find out more information regarding who the claimant was and who is now administering the estate.

Are you at liberty to tell me who the claimant was, when it was claimed, and how much was involved?

Your request will be dealt with by the Bona Vacantia Division (“the Division”) under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Division holds all the information that you have requested.

The Division admitted a fully documented claim from an entitled relative on 22 December 2014 when the estate was removed from the list. The list is updated every working day and newly advertised estates appear at the top of the list. Any estates where the Bona Vacantia Division no longer has an interest, for example, when a claim to an estate has been admitted, are removed daily.

I am withholding information, how much the estate is worth, as it is exempt from disclosure under section 31(1)(a) of the Act. Section 31(1)(a) provides that information is exempt from disclosure if that disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. We believe that disclosure of the requested information to any member of the public would, or would be likely to, help enable the commission of fraud or other criminal activity. In applying the exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information.

There is a strong public interest in ensuring that the Division's activities are conducted in an open, transparent and honest way. However, disclosure of the exempt information could help enable the commission of fraud which would be likely to result in a loss to the public purse. There is a strong public interest in protecting the public purse and it is therefore considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption in section 31(1)(a) in this case outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

I have withheld certain information from the file, the details of the entitled relative, as it is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the Act. The information is exempt from disclosure because it constitutes the personal data of a living individual as defined in section 1(1) of the Data Protection Act 1998 and disclosure of the information would be in breach of the data protection principles set out in Schedule 1 of that Act. In particular, disclosure of the information would contravene the first data protection principle, which requires that personal data be processed fairly and lawfully.

I have withheld certain information from the file, details of the claimant and who is now administering , as it is exempt from disclosure under section 41 of the Act as the Division considers that the information was received in confidence, and that to reveal the information would constitute an actionable breach of the duty of confidence



In considering whether disclosure would be an actionable breach of confidence the Division has considered whether there is a public interest in disclosing the information that would outweigh the public interest in keeping the information confidential.

There is a strong public interest in keeping confidential information that has been disclosed in confidence, and in this case there is no specific reason in favour of disclosure of the information. Disclosure would not protect public safety, nor would it expose wrongdoing such as misfeasance, maladministration, negligence or other iniquity on the part of the Division. In this case the Division considers that the public interest in keeping the information confidential outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.