

[REDACTED]
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Dear [REDACTED],

DECISION ON YOUR ACCESS APPLICATION

I refer to your application under section 30 of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (FOI Act), received by ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) on **Wednesday 26 April 2023**.

This application requested access to:

The age and gender of the 61 historical covid deaths that were added in the 13-19 of February 2023 report:

https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2183425/Weekly-Public-Epi-week-ending-19-February-2023_FINAL.pdf.

I am an Information Officer appointed by the Director-General of ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) under section 18 of the FOI Act to deal with access applications made under Part 5 of the Act. ACTHD was required to provide a decision on your access application by **Wednesday 24 May 2023**.

I have identified one document holding the information within scope of your access application.

Decisions

I have decided to grant full access to one document.

My access decisions are detailed further in the following statement of reasons and the document released to you are provided as Attachment A to this letter.

In reaching my access decision, I have taken the following into account:

- The FOI Act;
- The contents of the documents that fall within the scope of your request; and
- The *Human Rights Act 2004*.

Charges

Processing charges are not applicable to this request.

Disclosure Log

Under section 28 of the FOI Act, ACTHD maintains an online record of access applications called a disclosure log. The scope of your access application, my decision and documents released to you will be published in the disclosure log not less than three days but not more than 10 days after the date of this decision. Your personal contact details will not be published.

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/freedom-information/disclosure-log>.

Ombudsman review

My decision on your access request is a reviewable decision as identified in Schedule 3 of the FOI Act. You have the right to seek Ombudsman review of this outcome under section 73 of the Act within 20 working days from the day that my decision is published in ACT Health's disclosure log, or a longer period allowed by the Ombudsman.

If you wish to request a review of my decision you may write to the Ombudsman at:

The ACT Ombudsman
GPO Box 442
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Via email: ACTFOI@ombudsman.gov.au
Website: ombudsman.act.gov.au

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) review

Under section 84 of the Act, if a decision is made under section 82(1) on an Ombudsman review, you may apply to the ACAT for review of the Ombudsman decision. Further information may be obtained from the ACAT at:

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal
Level 4, 1 Moore St
GPO Box 370
Canberra City ACT 2601
Telephone: (02) 6207 1740
<http://www.acat.act.gov.au/>

Further assistance

Should you have any queries in relation to your request, please do not hesitate to contact the FOI Coordinator on (02) 5124 9831 or email HealthFOI@act.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,



Vanessa Dal Molin
Executive Branch Manager
COVID-19 Policy & Support
ACT Health Directorate

9 May 2023

17 February 2023

Audit of COVID-19 related death data in the ACT

- ACT Health undertook a review of COVID-19 related deaths in the ACT. It compared all COVID-19 deaths reported to the ACT Births Deaths and Marriages Registry (BDM) with COVID-19 cases reported to ACT Health over the course of the pandemic (since March 2020).
- The audit identified 61 COVID-19 deaths where the certifying doctor listed COVID-19 on the person's death certificate but had not been reported to ACT Health.
- As of 17 February 2023, with the inclusion of the 61 COVID-19 deaths plus the 6 deaths to be reported this week, the ACT's total lives lost figure is 224 (since March 2020 until the end of the current reporting period).
- A COVID-19-related death is defined as a death in a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case where the certifying doctor has listed COVID-19 on the person's death certificate.
- Up to the end of 2022, COVID-19-related deaths were reported to ACT Health from a number of sources, including from public and private hospitals, from Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs), and from the ACT Coroner's Court.
- The following provides a summary of the additional deaths:
 - All 61 deaths occurred in 2022.
 - The highest number of deaths were in the months of June and July (12 deaths in each month respectively) which coincided with a peak in COVID-19 cases reported to ACT Health.
 - The age range was from 68 to 102 years (median age 86 years), and 60% were male.
 - 59% (36/61) of the deaths occurred at Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs), 18% (11/61) died at home, 16% (10/61) in ACT Public Hospitals and 7% (4/61) at a Palliative Care Facility.
 - None of the deceased cases identified as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander.
 - Of the 36 unreported deaths in residents of RACFs, 75% (27/36) of these have been linked to COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in 2022 across 21 facilities.
- The resource intensive and manual nature of the reporting process is the likely main reason for deaths being under-reported, with hospitals and RACFs having to identify potential COVID-19-related deaths and manage death certificates to determine if the death is reportable.
- To ensure COVID-19-related death numbers are as accurate as possible into the future, BDM data will be used as the primary source of COVID-19-related deaths in the ACT.