ACT Government
Education

File Ref: FILE2026/15413

[redacted]

Email: [redacted]

Dear [redacted]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) REQUEST

I refer to your application under section 30 of the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (the FOI Act), received by the Education Directorate (the Directorate) on 24 August 2026, in which you sought access to:

> *Records from the period 22/08/2021 to 21/08/2026 mentioning or exploring any potentially negative effects or risks for students from the use within schools of personal devices including laptops, Chromebooks, tablets and smartphones.*

I am an Information Officer appointed by the Director-General under section 18 of the FOI Act to deal with access applications made under Part 5 of the FOI Act.

In accordance with section 40 of the FOI Act, the Directorate was required to provide a decision on your access application within 30 working days of receipt, being 6 October 2026.

On 6 October 2026, we sought a five working day extension of the processing period to 13 October 2026. Thank you for agreeing to this extension.

Decision on access

Searches were completed for relevant records and four records were identified that fall within the scope of your request.

I have included as Attachment A to this decision the schedule of relevant records. This provides a description of each record that falls within the scope of your request and the access decision for each of those records.

In summary, my decision is:

- full access to two records, and
- partial access to two records with deletions applied.

The records released to you are provided as Attachment B to this letter.

My access decisions are detailed further in the following statement of reasons.

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

- the FOI Act, particularly sections 16, 17, 35 and 50, and schedules 1 and 2,
- the content of the records that fall within the scope of your request,
- the *Human Rights Act 2004,*
- the *Information Privacy Act 2014,*
- the FOI Guidelines issued under section 66 of the FOI Act by the Ombudsman.

Reasons for decision
I have considered the records that are relevant to your request in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

Section 6(a) of the FOI Act provides for a right of access to government information unless access would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest. Contrary to the public interest information is defined at section 16 of the FOI Act as information that is taken to be contrary to the public interest to disclose under Schedule 1; or the disclosure of which would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest under the test set out in section 17.

Section 50 of the FOI Act provides for records to be partially released with deletions applied where they contain contrary to the public interest information that can be removed, which enables the remainder of the record to be released. This provision has been applied where appropriate.

Information taken to be contrary to the public interest to disclose
None of the records contain information that is taken to be contrary to the public interest to disclose.

Information, the disclosure of which would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest
The public interest test requires the identification of factors favouring disclosure and non-disclosure, the balancing of those factors, and a decision whether, on balance, disclosure of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

I have decided that the factors favouring disclosure, as listed at Schedule 2.1 of the FOI Act, are that disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to:

- promote open discussion of public affairs and enhance the government's accountability (Schedule 2, 2.1(a)(i)), and
- contribute to positive and informed debate on important issues or matters of public interest (Schedule2, 2.1(a)(ii))

The use of personal electronic devices in schools, including consideration of potential impacts on student learning, wellbeing and safety, is a matter of considerable public interest. Disclosure of the information would assist public understanding of these issues and the Directorate's consideration of them. Therefore, I give strong weight to the factors favouring disclosure.

I have decided that the applicable factor favouring non-disclosure, as listed at Schedule 2.2 of the FOI Act, is that disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to prejudice the protection of an individual's right to privacy or any other right under the *Human Rights Act 2004* (Schedule 2, 2.2(a)(ii)).

The consideration of the right to privacy of individuals and their right to have their personal information protected activates provisions of the *Human Rights Act 2004* and the *Information Privacy Act 2014.* Section 12(a) of the Human Rights Act provides that everyone has the right '*not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence interfered with unlawfully or arbitrarily*'. Ombudsman review decisions addressing this matter have stated that this "can essentially be viewed as the right of an individual to preserve their personal sphere from interference by others". In addition, the Territory Privacy Principles contained in the *Information Privacy Act 2014*, set out the expectation that, in ordinary circumstances, individuals are required to give consent before their personal information, which includes information that could lead to them being identified, is disclosed. Consequently, I have decided that the right to privacy of individuals in relation to their personal information as a factor favouring non-disclosure has significant weight.

I have considered the factors favouring disclosure and the factor favouring non-disclosure.

As the factor favouring non-disclosure has been given significant weight and the factors favouring disclosure having strong weight, information within the records has been redacted where it has been deemed contrary to the public interest to disclose.

In addition, information that is outside of the scope of your request has been deleted.

Charges

Processing charges are not applicable for this request because the number of pages involved does not exceed the threshold of 50 set at section 104(4) of the FOI Act.

Online publishing – disclosure log

Under section 28 of the FOI Act, the Directorate maintains an online record of access applications called a disclosure log. Information about your request, my decision and records released to you in response to your access application will be published in the Directorate's disclosure log between three and 10 working days after a decision on access has been provided to you. Your personal information will not be published.

You may view the Directorate's disclosure log at www.act.gov.au/open/foi-disclosure-logs/education-foi-disclosure-logs.

Review of decision

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 FOI Act within 20 working days from the day my decision is provided to you, 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

Email: actfoi@ombudsman.gov.au

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) review

Under section 84 of the FOI 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
Allara House, 15 Constitution Ave
GPO Box 370
Canberra City ACT 2601

Telephone: (02) 6207 1740
http://www.acat.act.gov.au/

If you have any questions concerning the Directorate's processing of your request, please contact the Directorate's FOI team on 02 6205 0720 or email EducationFOI@act.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Novi Lewis
Information Officer

8 October 2026