

Chasing the records – and your tail

Frank Golding – April 2009

The table below summarises FOI and related requests for personal and family information. I have not included the details of

- many telephone conversations relating to my requests and seeking advice on what may be accessible and where
- email correspondence (with the odd exception) because these have usually been followed up by hard copy letters
- many searches – successful and unsuccessful - in official Births, Deaths and Marriages listings, which have cost me many hundreds of dollars
- searches in contemporary newspapers (some assisted by archivists), street directories, electoral rolls and other public records not subject to privacy laws. These have been time intensive.

The search for records

- has so far extended over more than 15 years from 1993 to 2009 and my family's story is not yet completed to my satisfaction
- entailed lengthy delays, sometimes in breach of government FOI rules
- involved applications to five State government agencies, three Commonwealth agencies and four private agencies - in addition to the public sources mentioned above.
- demonstrated that sometimes a repeated request or a 'left-field' request results in new information
- showed that considerable costs are involved and that agency fees vary and concessions are allowed inconsistently
- revealed that advice about alternative sources of personal or family information is not always offered.

Request Date	Agency & Purpose	Reply Date	Outcome
c Aug-Sept 1993	H&CS re access to my file & to brothers' files	30.9.93 30.9.93 (separate letter) 14.1.94	Explains s 33(1). Asked me to get brothers' written consent. Required application fee \$20 and for me to fill out a form. I could plead hardship. I paid. Apology for delay. Access to ward file. Suggested I contact Ballarat CAFS for more records.
7.4.94	Ballarat CAFS re access to my records	20.5.94	Paid application fee of \$40. Copy of my single page entry in Admissions Book. Advised me to contact H&CS for more.
19.5.94	Reminder re above	June 94	Considerable volume of files now made available.
2.6.94	Soldier Career Management Agency re father	30.6.94	Supplied all personal records and also referred me to Australian War Memorial for further information.
27.8.94	Victoria Police Re my father	28.9.94	Will supply records if I prove my father is dead and next-of-kin status.
11.10.94	Victoria Police Re my father	21.10.94	Older brother's agreement. Requested \$25.40 for release of documents - 2 pages. In 2002, trying again, I got 14 pages.

26.10.94	Victoria Police Re my father	15.11.94	Documents released.
1.9.94	H&CS re access to other files	2.9.94	Warned that delays could be expected. Asked me to narrow my request.
17.9.94	Ballarat CAFS re aunt's letter re me in my file	22.12.94	Required me to establish that aunt gives consent or that she is dead. I was unable to make contact . Request lapsed.
28.9.94	H&CS re review of FOI decision	3.10.94 19.9.94	Acknowledged receipt. Apologised for delay. Released 32 pages. Told me that 'certain information' not supplied under 2 33(1). Waived costs.
21.9.94	H&CS re further review of FOI decision	10.10.94	7 pages (out of 9) re my father were released. One page part released from my brother's file.
15.7.96	H&CS re other brother's files	None	No outcome. Working full-time & preparing for an overseas trip, I let the request lapse.
1.5.97	Australian Archives re grandfather's file	6.6.97	Australian Archives failed to find dossier for him. (Years later, in August 2005, an extensive dossier was discovered.) Cost \$25, then digitalised and available on-line free of charge.
17.4.01	Ballarat CAFS Re further file documents	30.5.01	Duplicated Admissions Book information (with some variations) and supplied some additional documents.
December 2000	Victoria Police Re father's records	23.1.01	14 pages of records released.
10.7.03	Ballarat CAFS re search of brother's file	14.8.03	2 further documents from brother's records related to me with some white-outs.

Not found	DHS re further access	13.8.03 22.8.03	Asked to fill out a registration form. I returned it on 18.8.03. Acknowledged application. Indicated that former Ward Service now a "part of Adoption & Family Records Service.
29.8.03	Department of Justice (DJ) re inquest of uncle & criminal trial brief of father	10.9.03	Justice advised not appropriate under FOI & referred me to PROV, Coronial Services and Office of Public Prosecutions
29.8.03	DJ re (i) inquest of uncle and (ii) father	10.9.03	
8.9.03	Office of Public Prosecutions (OPP) re father	7.9.04	Application fee \$20 paid 15.10.03 2 page summary document, letter saying proper search too complex.
8.10.03	OPP re father	13.10.03	Acknowledged request. Advised fees \$20 per hour retrieval + 20 cents a page for copying.
8.10.03	DHS re search of 2nd brother's records	8.1.04	Produced 15 full pages and 9 part pages (out of a total of 89 pasges).
15.10.03	OPP re father	1.11.03	Acknowledged receipt of \$20 fee. Referred me to relevant FOI officer.
14.11.03	OPP re father		Follow up letter dated 1.1.03 to named FOI Officer.
6.9.04	OPP re father - reminder		
8.9.05	Department of Defence re grandfather	14.11.05 & 17.5.07	Requiring proof of next-of-kin status re honours.
April 2005	Public Records Office Vic	3 days later	Inquests relating to my uncle Frank, Grandmother and Step Grandfather.

17.5.06	Ballarat CAFS re aunt Joyce	15.6.06	Admission book entry released together with 2 brief hand-written notes. Joyce died while an inmate aged 12. Copy of her birth certificate supplied later. Fee \$40 paid.
4.6.06	National Archives of Australia	3.7.06	Not able to help with war service medals.
23.8.06	Supreme Court re g'parents divorce	23.8.06	Asking again for information already supplied and requesting fee for search of records. Paid \$44.10
13.12.06	DHS re my aunt Jean	21.12.06	Acknowledged request. Said I was in the queue. Email 13.12.06 advising it would take 3 months to process as FOI request has increased almosy 5-fold since Vic apology. Fee of \$21.50.
2.11.06	Supreme Court re g'parents		Providing more information to help find the file.
14.11.05	Anglicare Victoria re Andrew Kerr Memorial Home	16.3.06 21.3.06	Acknowledged request. CD of photos of the Home + some historical print material.
31.12.06	Supreme Court re grandparents	17.1.07	I asked for request to be expedited. Reply gave some daunting procedural advice.
19.1.07	Registrar Magistrates Court Ballarat re reference # of g'parents' divorce	22.1.07	One-line letter stating the Supreme Court reference number.
3.2.07	St Peter's Church Ballarat Re Baptism Certificate aunt Jean	5.3.07	Copy of Baptism record aunt Jean Fee for search of Baptism Registry \$25 sent 16.3.07
8.2.07	County Court Vic re Adoption of my aunt Jean	27.4.07	Acknowledged application and described need for a counsellor's report.

22.6.07 Interview DHS	DHS re my aunt Jean	27.6.07	Following interview, advised I write to County Court. Reimbursed \$21.50 I had paid earlier in fees.
3.7.07	County Court re changing my request re aunt Jean (dated 8.2.07)	30.8.07	Order made by J. Shelton enabling access to certain information.
	From DHS re County Court Order	14.9.07	Basic information about aunt Jean pursuant to Court Order.
	From Supreme Court of Vic re Order g'parents' records	10.12.07	Order made by J Harper enabling access to file.
26.1.09	DHS re ward records aunts - Minnie & Joyce	4.2.09	Acknowledged application & described processes
	From DHS re above	12.2.09	Requesting ID and proof of my relationship to my aunts.
18.2.09	From DHS re above		I supplied ID information required.
	From DHS re above	10.3.09	Warned that high volume of demand of FOI requests, my request would be delayed.
	From DHS re above	20.3.09	Released 9 pages wardship record and 1 page of adoption record for Minnie. She too was an inmate of the Ballarat Orphanage. Nothing found for Joyce (died aged 12 in the Ballarat Orphanage).
24.3.09	Good Shepherd Archives re Minnie	NA	
25.3.09	Ballarat CAFS re records of aunt Minnie	NA	This is a follow-up to the hitherto unknown fact that yet another of my family was an inmate of the Ballarat Orphanage, my own alma mater.

