

The Vault: Wilma Wright, FOI and more

[author] [author_image timthumb='on']http://the-terrier.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/vault3.jpg[/author_image]Welcome to **The Vault** – this is where Bluestone will place all sorts of subscriber-access-only material, including information on local politics that **should be in the public domain**, but isn't. It is a place where you can also have a look behind the scenes of Bluestone, including our **Freedom of Information** applications, some email exchanges (where appropriate and when dealing with official spokespeople, not our private sources) and anything else we think you might find interesting. If you have something you would like to submit, please email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au[author_info][[/author_info][[/author]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] 0
[/dropcap]ne of the many things we do behind the scenes at *Bluestone Magazine* is lodge Freedom of Information applications with both the Warrnambool City Council – as the largest council, it is our main focus – and State Government.

The list below is some of those we have lodged in the past 18 months:



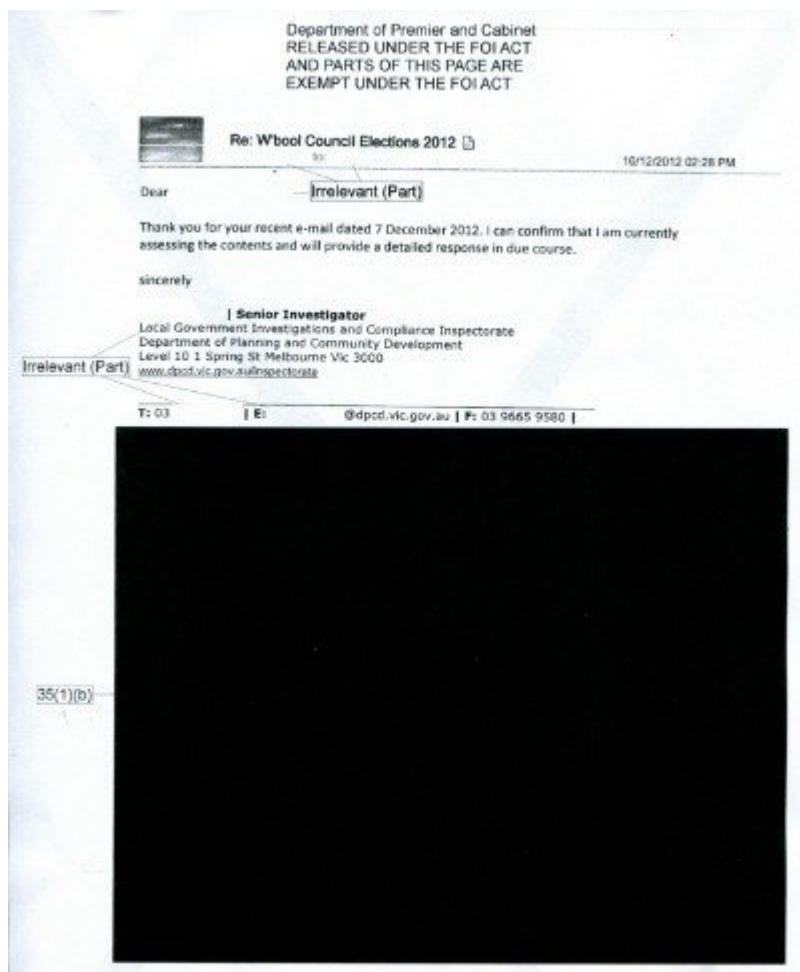
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[/dropcap]ot all of them are successful, by which we mean that the information we want is considered exempt under the FOI Act and is not released.

This happened with our application to the State Government for more [details on the investigation conducted into the 'Wilma Wright' letter writing scandal](#), in which the son of Warrnambool City Council chief executive officer **Bruce Anson** revealed he was the author of a series of letters penned to the local newspaper under the pseudonym Wilma Wright – letters which were disparaging of some councillors.



This application went all the way to the Freedom of Information Commissioner for review, resulting in 11 pages of “information” being released by the State Government.

I say “information” because it was useless. It was information that had already been made public, or was so redacted as to be unreadable. You can see two examples below.



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[dropcap]imilarly, our request for more information [into the State Government's investigation into Flagstaff Hill and the missing Loch Ard lead ingots](#), the damaged Loch Ard copper sheets and assorted other missing items including the bell from the *Newfield*, was also denied.

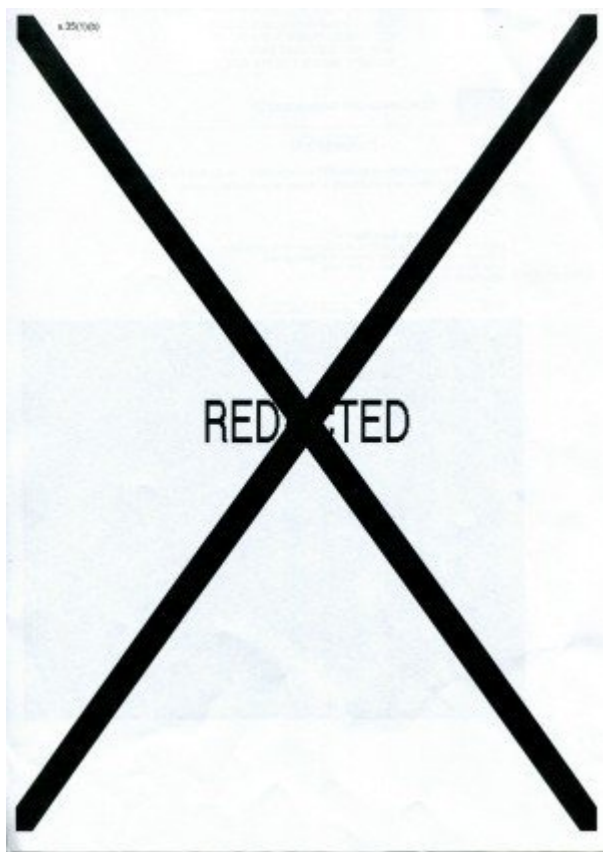
This doesn't mean the information isn't out there – it simply means that the law says we can't access it (and by default, neither can you).

We could keep challenging these rulings, but that takes a lot of time and money and we have to spend both wisely.

Instead, we focus on the successes and just keep moving.

Those successes include finding out more about the [controversial traders levy](#) proposed for Warrnambool, a breakdown of the costings of the council's Hidden Histories project and upgrade of Patloch Lane, and more details of the Warrnambool Council CEO's salary package.

We can tell you that Bluestone is the only media organisation in Warrnambool lodging FOI applications with the Warrnambool City Council.



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[/dropcap]n fact when we lodged our first one about 18 months ago, the friendly customer service staff were unsure what to do with it, or how much to charge, because they had not seen one before.

Now we are on a first-name basis with some of the helpful staff at the front counter.

We lodged another FOI which we will tell you more about in a couple of weeks. Once again, it has taken weeks to get information that is not forthcoming simply by asking.

Unfortunately accessing information now costs money, but the impact can be invaluable.

[box]If you would like to chip in to our FOI fund – it costs \$27 per application – let us know or simply make a donation at the link below.[/box]

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