

# David Koch

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Letter to the Editor

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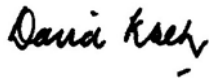
### Changes to FOI Act

I write in relation to proposed changes to Victoria's Freedom of Information Act. Under the pretext of 'enhancing' FOI, these changes will rip away existing rights of Victorians to access basic government information.

The FOI Amendment Bill, presently before State Parliament, is a thinly disguised attempt to restrict FOI access and impose additional impediments and delays when processing requests. The changes include removal of Part 2 publishing requirements from the current Act and creation of a '*Vexatious Applicants*' regime for those who make repeated applications or requests relating to the same matter or different matters that simply annoy or irritate government ministers or their departments. Such applicants will be deemed to be vexatious until cleared by VCAT. This new clause is targeted specifically to discourage genuine requests and has wide reaching and arbitrary powers to declare anyone a vexatious applicant if they put in more than one FOI request that "*has the effect of*" interfering with the operations of government.

In addition, Deputy Premier Rob Hull's attempt to extend the already generous 45 days allowed for government agencies to respond to FOI requests should be seen for what it really is, another tool for frustrating access to information about government decisions. This is yet a further example of Brumby's Secret State where information is hidden from Victorians.

Yours sincerely



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