

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Group 2

Output 1.1

Question No. 167

Senator Boyce asked the following questions in writing following the hearing on 23 May 2012:

Last year, Women With Disabilities Australia sent a formal communication dated June 22, 2011 to four of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs regarding the non-therapeutic, forced sterilisation of girls and women with disabilities in Australia.

All complaints are documented in a report which goes to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Special Rapporteurs also write to the country where the complaint originated from and they wrote to the Australian Government on July 18 2011.

The Australian Government on 12 August and again on 30 September said it would respond after consideration of the complaints.

a) It is now approximately 10 months since the Australian Government received correspondence on the forced sterilisation of girls. Would the department please look into why there has been such a lengthy delay in responding to the Special Rapporteurs' letter?

b) When can Women With Disabilities Australia expect to receive a reply?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

a) The Special Rapporteurs had initially requested a response within 60 days of their letter (sent 18 July 2011). Additional time was taken to allow consultation with the States and Territories and to allow a thorough response to be prepared. The Special Rapporteurs were notified of a revised response date and the Australian Government provided its response to the request on 16 December 2011.

b) The Attorney-General's Department is unable to advise when Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) should expect to receive a reply from the Special Rapporteurs. This question is best directed to the Special Rapporteurs.

The Department is not aware of any correspondence to the Attorney-General or the Department from Women With Disabilities Australia that relates to WWDA's communication to the Special Rapporteurs. The Attorney-General and former Attorney-General have responded to correspondence from WWDA regarding sterilisation of women and girls with disabilities in June 2012 and May 2011 respectively.