

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Public Hearing – 20 August 2020 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Question 12

Question reference number: SQ20-000567

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 01 September 2020

Question:

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you. Obviously, I will continue to pursue that issue. I have a small set of questions about specialist social service legal centres and community legal centres that specialise in work around social security matters. Are you considering increased capacity for the peak services that access ongoing core funding to enable them to provide the level of service that they are being asked to provide by the community?

Ms Campbell: Are you talking about Welfare Rights?

Senator SIEWERT: They are now called Economic Justice Australia.

Ms Campbell: We're just looking to see whether we can find someone who is tracking this. Otherwise, we might be best to take it on notice.

Mr Bennett: I think for this one we will take it on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Okay. Have you looked at the documents the sector has been developing around the increased need for services when you are considering support for services?

Mr Bennett: Our relationship with Economic Justice is more in the policy space than in the provision of support for legal services. The reason I said I would take it on notice is that I'd have to go back to the funding arrangement to look at what it covers.

Ms Campbell: I know that we do provide funding. We'll take that on notice and see what representations we received with regard to that.

Senator SIEWERT: If you could take it on notice, that would be fantastic. But I would also like to know the level of demand that you've seen in on those services. That would be appreciated as well.

Ms Campbell: Yes, we'll take that on notice.

Answer:

The department does not fund Economic Justice Australia for specialist social service legal centres and community legal centres. The department has a standing funding arrangement with Economic Justice Australia for the provision of evidence and advice about the department's programs, policies and initiatives. The current funding agreement is for \$250,000 annually for the three year period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021, under the Families and Communities Services Improvement (FCSI) Activity.