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Christine McDonald
Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms McDonald,

Inquiry into Australia's environment: Response to Questions on Notice

Thank you for inviting representatives of EDOs of Australia to present to the Committee on 21 April 2015. We welcomed the opportunity to discuss our work and the impact of funding cuts on our services.

During the course of the hearing, I undertook to provide information on the following questions:

- Current number of staff employed across the EDO network
- Percentage of funding lost as a result of Commonwealth government cuts

A response to these questions is set out in the attached table. In total, EDOs across Australia currently employ 20 full time legal staff and 17 non-legal and support staff. These numbers are likely to decrease significantly in the next 12 months as the impact of funding cuts lead to office closures and reduced services.

The funding received by each office fluctuates markedly from year to year, due to project-based funding, one-off philanthropic grants and the variable success of fundraising efforts and income from services. Recurrent funding has been the only secure basis for forward planning and stable, long-term service delivery. In the absence of a stable funding source, offices are required to dedicate considerable time and resources in order to generate income, often at the expense of direct service delivery.

For consistency, the figures in the attached table represent the percentage of recurrent funding provided to each office by the Commonwealth government as at 30 June 2013. Figures from this period represent the standard Commonwealth government contribution to EDOs over approximately 18 years, rather than the short-lived injection of funding authorised by former Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus QC MP, received from 1 July – 17 December 2013.

Based on the 2012-2013 figures, Commonwealth funding represented between 5% and 100% of funding for EDOs across Australia. The loss of this funding continues to have a significant impact, particularly on those offices for which it represented the principal funding source.

We trust this addresses the questions taken on notice at the hearing. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Jess Feehely
Convenor, EDOs of Australia

Table 1: Information regarding EDO offices across Australia

Office	No. legal staff (current)	No. other staff ¹ (current)	% of funding from Commonwealth Govt (2012-2013)
Queensland	6 FT 1 PT	2 FT 3 PT	100% ²
North Queensland	-	1 PT	75%
New South Wales	10 FT 5 PT	5 FT 3 PT	5.2% ³
ACT	1 PT	1 PT	56%
Tasmania	1 FT 1 PT	1 PT	73% ⁴
South Australia	2PT	1 PT	80%
Northern Territory	1 FT	-	85%
Western Australia	1 FT 1 PT	1 FT	45%
^{1.} includes admin, management and finance, IT, fundraising, communications, education and scientific officers ^{2.} State government funding to EDO Qld ceased in 2012. ^{3.} In 2012-2013, the Public Purpose Fund provided \$1.62M annually to EDO NSW. This has since been reduced by 55%, and funds are not expected to continue beyond 2016. ^{4.} In 2013, EDO Tasmania received, for the first time, a grant from the Solicitors Guarantee Fund, to be used over two years. Prior to 2012-2013, Commonwealth government funding had typically comprised 90% of annual recurrent funding.			