

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

Program: 1.5 Family Relationships

Question No. SBE16/089

Senator Kakoschke-Moore asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2016:

1. In the 2015 Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence it was recommended that the Commonwealth government co-ordinate consistent training for, and evaluation of, family consultants who write family reports for the Family Court. Are you able to provide the committee with the type of training that has been provided to family consultants, and the number of family consultants who have received this training?
 - a. If no training has been provided, who has been charged with writing those training guidelines, or developing that training?
2. The Inquiry also recommended the evaluation of Family Report writers as the report highlighted a need for consistency among Family Report Writers. Has this recommendation been actioned? What evaluations has the government planned?
3. The 2015 Senate Inquiry also recommended the training of all judicial officers who preside over family violence matters. Are you able to provide the committee with the type of training that has been provided, and the number of judicial officers this training has been provided to?

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

1. The training of family report writers is a matter for the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia.
2. Consistent with the independence of the Judiciary from the Executive, the courts are each responsible for their own operation and management. This includes the training and evaluation of family consultants.
3. The Attorney-General's Department has commissioned the development of the National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book. The Bench Book is a national comprehensive, online, educational resource for judicial officers to improve understanding of family violence, and promote best practice and consistency in judicial decision making in cases involving family violence. It includes guidelines for courtroom management; information about the dynamics of domestic and family violence; information about referrals for those affected by family violence and perpetrators; and other matters relevant for judicial officers to consider.

The Bench Book covers civil and criminal matters, and Commonwealth and State/Territory matters.

The Attorney-General's Department is also undertaking work to support development of training for judicial officers presiding over family violence matters. This training will be based on, and build on, the National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book. The training is expected to commence in 2017.