

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

Program: 1.4 Justice Services

Question No. SBE16/088

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

1. Moving forward from 1 July next year, Community Legal Centres (CLC's) in South Australia are facing a funding cut of over \$1 mill (over 26%) from 15-16 funding levels.

CLCs see over 14,000 people in South Australia each year and turn away tens of thousands more. This funding cut will have a devastating impact on centres in South Australia, which will be forced to reduce services. Where will the thousands of clients those centres see each year go and what is the Government doing to address this crisis?

2. There has been a recent review of community legal centres in South Australia conducted by Ernst & Young. The SA Government has endorsed the Report and is in the process of implementing its recommendations, which is likely to include a substantial reduction in the number of community legal centres in South Australia, although the current outcomes are unknown.

One of the proposals is to move to a centralised system, with the Legal Services Commission to provide a centralised triage role. Does the Commonwealth Government have a position on the South Australian Government's proposal to give CLC-specific funding to the Legal Services Commission?

3. Is the Government aware of the concerns raised by the SA CLC's regarding the practical implementation of the recommendations made by the report, especially the concerns regarding the centralisation of the system?
4. Has the Government undertaken any modelling in regards to this new system?

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

1. The Australian Government will provide over \$1.6 billion to legal assistance services between 2015-2020 to deliver vital front-line services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. In addition, it has provided \$45 million for front-line legal assistance services for victims of family violence.

This includes a combined total of \$96.458 million to the Legal Services Commission and community legal centres (CLCs) in South Australia over the five year National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services (NPA).

It is a matter for the South Australian Government to determine where available resources should be directed after undertaking evidence-based service planning processes.

Service planning supports a sustainable legal assistance sector by ensuring that services are directed where they are needed most and delivered in a coordinated and streamlined way.

2. Under the NPA, it is not possible for the Legal Services Commission of South Australia to receive Commonwealth CLC funding. However, the Legal Services Commission of South Australia receives State CLC funding, which we understand is how South Australia intend to fund the centralised triage role.
3. Yes.
4. No, the department has not undertaken modelling on South Australia's proposed system.