

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

**Group: 2**

**Program: 1.3**

**Question No. AE15/085**

**Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 27 March 2015:**

Senator WRIGHT: Was there any funding cut in the budget last year that would have flown to the community legal centres in Australia?

Mr Manning: Last year's budget? No. The only cuts for community legal centres were in the 2013 MYEFO.

Senator WRIGHT: Okay. That is what I wanted to check. Was any of \$15 million supplementary funding that has been cut possibly going to flow from legal aid commissions through to community legal centres? Was that a possibility?

Mr Manning: I do not have the details. It is a possibility. Sometimes legal aid commissions contract community legal centres to do certain things for them, so that is a possibility.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Could you provide us on notice with the details of the guidelines for the use of those funds so that we have some sense both of what the intention was for the supplementary funding and what behavioural impact might have occurred when they were told that they now only had half of it.

Mr Manning: Certainly.

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

Supplementary funding was provided under the Legal Aid Collaboration Funding Guidelines. The Guidelines detailed key components of the funding which were to seek to support strategic collaboration between service providers and encourage legal assistance providers to implement collaborative models of service delivery, initially with each other and also more broadly. Funding was to be used for a range of possible activities including to:

- implement successful pilots
- extend cooperative arrangements between services
- target specific client groups such as Indigenous people and culturally and linguistically diverse clients
- prioritise service delivery in the areas of family law/child protection, employment law, consumer credit, welfare rights (and related legal issues linked to the risk of homelessness), and/or
- improve services to regional and remote areas.

Funding agreements were established between the Commonwealth and legal aid commissions, based on proposals made by each commission and assessed under the Guidelines. In line with the intention of the Guidelines, some activities included collaboration with community legal centres. Following the savings measure in the 2014-15 Federal Budget these agreements were varied, as proposed by each commission, about the activities to be undertaken within the reduced funding levels.