

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

Group: 2

Program: 1.3

Question No. AE15/113

Senator Wright asked the following written question from the 24 February and 27 March 2015 hearings:

On 30 March 2015 ABC's Four Corners program highlighted payday lending and the extensive lobbying efforts of the industry to secure favourable regulation. Community legal centres are prominent in defending the victims of this industry, however, due to Commonwealth funding restrictions, these centres are unable to advocate to stem the tide of victims coming through their doors.

Please explain the policy basis for the prohibition on the use of Commonwealth funding by community legal centres for advocacy that is directly related to their front line legal services.

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

The Government's policy intent in relation to advocacy activities is reflected in the following amendment to the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on Legal Assistance Services, which took effect on 1 July 2014:

'Commonwealth funding must not be used for the purposes of lobbying government or elected representatives, or to engage in public campaigns. Lobbying does not include where a legal aid commission makes a submission to a government or parliamentary body to provide factual information and/or advice with a focus on systemic issues affecting access to justice.'