

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

**Group: Civil Justice and Legal Services**

**Program: 1.5**

**Question: BE14/033**

**Senator Singh asked the following question at the hearing on 26-29 May 2014:**

Senator SINGH: In April last year you were not the Attorney-General. I am asking whether you as minister—and that has been the last eight months—have visited an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service?

Senator Brandis: You have misunderstood me.

Senator SINGH: I am asking the questions! You need to answer the question, not put it in a phrase that suits you, because we all know that you have not visited one.

Senator Brandis: I will answer the question in my own words, but what I was telling you before was to add to my answer to your earlier question to give you the date on which I last visited the Caxton Legal Centre, which was 28 April 2013. You asked me for a date, and I could not give you a date. My assistant has very helpfully found the date, so I am just putting it on the record. Turning to the question you have lately asked, I will check my diary—I know my staff have—as to whether I have or have not. I will take that on notice.

Senator SINGH: You have no recollection of your physical presence in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service? There are only nine of them in the country. You are telling me you cannot recall whether in the last eight months you have been inside an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service?

Senator Brandis: I assumed from your question that meant to include meeting representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and that is why I said I will take your question on notice. In the last eight months, you will not be surprised to learn, I have had more than a dozen meetings a day on most days.

Senator SINGH: I can imagine. I have been a minister, so I do know what it is like.

Senator Brandis: And, therefore, I am taking it on notice. I know because I am told by my very reliable staff that Mr Lambie, Mr Brennan and others of my staff have met with people from Aboriginal legal services since the election. As to whether I have met with them, I will have to check.

Senator SINGH: Let us separate that out to whether you have actually been to—not met with in your office or elsewhere—one of the nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

Senator Brandis: I will take that on notice.

Senator SINGH: Okay. Chair, I will now hand over to Senator Paris.

Senator Brandis: No, I can give you some more information about your last question.

Senator SINGH: You are lucky you have got a good staffer there.

Senator Brandis: I have got excellent staff, I am proud to say.

Senator SINGH: Saving you—or trying!

Senator Brandis: No, they are just providing information, which is what they are there for. Mr Lambie and Mr Brennan met with Mr Cubillo, the Executive Officer of ATSILS, on 20 January this year. I myself remember meeting with Mr Cubillo; when that was, I could not tell you. But I will check.

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

The Minister has already provided an answer to the Senator's question.