

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

Group: 2

Program: 1.3

Question: BE14/067

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

1. Both the Australian Law Council and the Chief Justice of the Family Court, have expressed serious concerns about the impacts of the \$15 million cut to legal aid funding. Is the Department aware of any modelling showing the impact of these cuts on women and families subject to violence?
2. Does the Department have a record of the number of victims or alleged victims of domestic or family violence who are self-represented?
3. Do these individuals comprise a greater percentage of self-represented litigants than the population in general?
4. Does the Department know whether self-representation is discouraging women from seeking relief through the Family Court system?
5. By not resolving matters thru the Family Court, what options do women have open to them?
6. Does the Department have any information about the length of waiting periods women and children in violent situations are subject to in waiting to have their matters settled by the court?

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

1. No.
2. The data the department has access to from the courts is not disaggregated to a level that enables the department to answer this question.
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4. The data the department has access to from the courts is not disaggregated to a level that enables the department to answer this question.
5. The Government funds a range of services to assist separating and separated families. Family Relationship Centres, in particular, are a central entry point to the family law system and other support services that provide information, referral and support for families, including women and families subject to violence. The Centres also provide access to family dispute resolution, including for cases involving family violence, where the practitioner has assessed that it is safe for family dispute resolution to commence.

The Family Relationship Advice Line, a national telephone service, provides information, referral and support, in addition to simple legal advice through the Legal Advice Service.

6. The data the department has access to from the courts is not disaggregated to a level that enables the department to answer this question.