

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

Program: 1.4 Justice Services

Question No. BE16/009

Senator Gallagher asked the following question at the hearing on 5 May 2016:

Senator GALLAGHER: In terms of this year's budget, the reductions that have come as a result of the national partnership agreement have not been reversed. So there is nowhere in the budget where the 12.5 and the 4.1 have been addressed?

Ms Quinn: No, there was no budget item on those matters.

Senator GALLAGHER: Were they forecast in last year's budget?

Ms Quinn: Yes. There has been no change in the forward estimates.

Senator GALLAGHER: Okay. Has the department had any meetings with the community legal centres about what this might mean for their delivery of service?

Ms Quinn: We meet with community legal centres often, as you could imagine. The national partnership agreement makes our relationship more directly with the states and territories, but an aspect of the new part national partnership agreement is a requirement for the states to lead a process of service planning. That is about having all the providers, not just the ones funded under the national agreement but also the Indigenous providers and any ancillary providers, brought together to discuss the most efficient and effective way to distribute the funds they do have. They are also required to do that with an evidence base. We play a role in that process and participate in those meetings but also ensure that the states are doing that as thoroughly as we need them to. They are all progressing quite well on that front. That would be my main answer on that. But, yes, we do meet separately with peak bodies of the community legal sector and also individual CLC stakeholders quite regularly.

Senator GALLAGHER: Are you aware if the Attorney-General has met with the community legal centres to discuss these reductions in funding?

Senator Scullion: I will have to take that on notice. I am not aware specifically whether the Attorney himself has met with particular legal services.

Ms Quinn: I can indicate—I could you could not give the specifics off the top of my head—that the Attorney has visited quite a few of the community legal centres in the last couple of months, and legal aid as well.

Senator GALLAGHER: Personally met with them?

Ms Quinn: Yes. They have also met with representatives of his office. I think we should take on notice the specifics, but to give you that assurance I am certainly aware that that has happened.

Senator GALLAGHER: I am not sure how many questions on notice will be able to be turned around in the time.

Ms Quinn: It should be a quick answer.

Senator GALLAGHER: That would be useful.

Senator Scullion: I am quite sure officers are listening. It is a matter of technical detail and I just wanted to be sure. I am quite sure somebody can provide that to us as we are going through this process.

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

As at 30 November 2016, the Attorney-General had visited and met with staff from the following legal assistance services:

- 8 March 2016, Legal Services Commission of South Australia.
- 11 April 2016, Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre at Edith Cowan University in Perth (accompanied by the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash).
- 11 May 2016, North Queensland Women's Legal Service
- 13 May 2016, Women's Legal Service Queensland (accompanied by the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash)
- 14 July 2016, North Queensland Women's Legal Service
- 8 October 2016, Caxton Legal Centre (40th anniversary dinner)
- 12 October 2016, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
- 13 October 2016, The National Association of Community Legal Centres
- 28 October 2016, Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- 16 November 2016, Eastern Community Legal Centre
- 24 November 2016, National Legal Aid
- 25 November 2016, Women's Legal Centre ACT