

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017

Federal Circuit Court of Australia

Question No. BE17-213

Senator Kakoschke-Moore asked the following question on 18 August 2017:

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Do you have in mind a number for how many family consultants will be employed as a result of this budget measure?

Dr Fenwick: The department might be able to assist. I know the budget figure was predicated on an assumption around an ideal number of staff. What we have done is conduct a national assessment of distribution of resources, and we're expecting to be able to implement a plan for recruitment that will meet the resourcing needs across the country.

Mr Moraitis: Our estimate, based on the forward estimates, is up to 17 appointments.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Up to 7, was that?

Mr Moraitis: Seventeen, additional.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: And the distribution of those 17 family consultants would be determined as a result of this national assessment regarding the distribution?

Dr Fenwick: That's correct, yes.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: When is that assessment due to be completed?

Dr Fenwick: We've developed a draft plan, which is under regular consultation with the executive. There'll be a degree of consultation with the judiciary around expectations around the availability of resources and the balancing of existing and new resources.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: All going well, when do you imagine the first new appointment will be made?

Dr Fenwick: I would imagine we'd be able to move relatively soon. We're conducting some further consultations with committees, in fact, next week.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Are you able to tell the committee a little about the findings you've discovered so far as a result of this assessment?

Dr Fenwick: It wasn't a review or assessment in the sense of—more of a cross-checking of current staff versus filing demands in different registries. It was really a statistical report, if you like, more than a review or evaluation.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: From that cross-checking, do you have an idea of how many family consultants might be appointed in South Australia?

Dr Fenwick: I think I will have to take that on notice. It's still relatively early days in terms of making any decisions at all.

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

Ongoing funding will be provided for 16 additional family consultants in the federal courts from the financial year 2018-19. In the financial year 2017-18, funding was

provided for 13.4 additional family consultants to account for a recruitment lag. A preliminary allocation exercise remains underway.

Additionally, ongoing funding will be provided for 1 additional family consultant in the Family Court of Western Australia, with funding for 0.8 being provided in the financial year 2017-18 to account for a recruitment lag.