

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017

Federal Circuit Court of Australia

Question No. BE17-214

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

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Do you have any information around the number of complaints received around family consultants in the last year or so?

Dr Fenwick: We have a category in the annual report, which is 'Dispute resolution', which, as I understand it, relates primarily to Child Dispute Services. I have a figure of 45 complaints in the last financial year.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: How does that compare to previous financial years?

Dr Fenwick: If you'd like a more detailed breakdown, I'll have to provide that.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: On notice? That would be fantastic. Just remind me, how many family consultants are currently employed in the courts?

Dr Fenwick: In the region of 80. We do know, but—

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: Just not right now. Of the complaints that were received, were they 45 complaints about 45 individuals or would it be possible that there could be 45 complaints regarding 20 individuals?

Dr Fenwick: I would have to do some work on that. Then we can provide a bit more detail, if you'd like.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE: That would be good.

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

The figure of 45 provided at hearing was for the 2015-2016 financial year and did not include complaints pertaining to Family Court of Australia matters.

The total number of complaints about Family Consultants (for matters in the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia) for 2016-2017 was 53. Family Consultants provided a total of 8781 assessments in that year.

The following table provides information about the number of complaints about family consultants over the last four financial years. There is a possibility that a small number of complaints were recorded by both courts prior to July 2016 so these numbers are only approximate.

Year	Number of complaints
2016-17	53
2015-16	53
2014-15	46
2013-14	48

There were a total of 69 FTE budgeted family consultant positions in the 2016-2017 financial year.

The 53 complaints received in 2016-17 were in relation to 43 individual family consultants.