

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

Group: 2

Program 1.3

Question No. SBE14/069

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 11 December 2014:

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: There have been questions, I take it, in the past regarding Environmental Defenders Office officers. In the weeks between you arriving back to the Minerals Council on 14 November and the release of MYEFO on 7 December 2013, in the letter to the Minerals Council you referred to three reviews that were occurring into legal assistance, those being the Commission of Audit, the ACIL Allen national partnership agreement review and the Productivity Commission inquiry into access to justice arrangements. Did any of those three reviews report back to you regarding EDO funding before you finalised your position?

Mr Manning: Not before the finalisation of the decision, no. Ms Quinn will correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that the review of the NPA and the Productivity Commission report came out subsequent to that decision being made.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Let's be clear, then: the funding here was cancelled with no analysis, no review and no process other than the mining companies asking for it to be done.

Mr Manning: No, that is not what I said.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Did you have interim reports of those reviews?

Mr Manning: There was a draft report of the NPA review, I think.

Ms Quinn: We did have that. I will have to check, but I am not aware that it specifically referenced Environmental Defenders Office officers. I will need to check that.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Perhaps you could take that on notice.

Ms Quinn: Yes.

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

At the time of the decision to cease funding to Environmental Defenders' Offices, the department did have a draft of the review of the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services. That draft did not make any specific findings in relation to funding for Environmental Defenders' Offices.