

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

Sub Program 1.1.2

Question No. 166

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 27 May 2009:

Where are the Environmental Defenders Offices, how many staff (and what level) work in each? What is their current work program and total cost to the budget? Are costs above or below budget? Please provide details.

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

There is a network of nine Environmental Defenders Offices (EDOs) funded under the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program. They are located in each State and Territory capital city and in Cairns, Queensland.

EDOs are independent, community based organisations governed by a board or management committee. It is the responsibility of each to determine staffing numbers and levels in accordance with work priorities and available budgets. EDOs are specialist organisations which undertake public interest environmental law work and legal casework. EDOs improve understanding of, and raise awareness about environmental laws through community education. EDOs work with governments to enhance environmental laws. EDOs provide access to justice for those in regional, rural and remote Australia affected by environmental issues and work with Indigenous Australians on environmental law issues. EDOs may assist community and conservation groups and individuals.

In 2008-09, the combined allocation is \$754,000. A further one-off allocation of \$20,000 per EDO was provided at the end of 2007-08 to assist organisations to meet demand on services. EDOs provide services within their funding allocations.