

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Question No. 14**

**Senator Stott-Despoja asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:**

The first 15 Family Relationship Centres are expected to start operating in July 2006.

a) What reasons are there for not allowing sufficient time to evaluate the operation of these first 15 centres before the further 50 centres open?

b) The later centres are anticipated to start 25 July 2007 and the final 25 in July 2008. This would not seem to allow sufficient time for evaluation. Will the Department evaluate the first 15 centres before making recommendations about the remaining 50 centres opening?

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

(a) and (b) The first 15 Family Relationship Centres are not pilots. They are the first stage of a three year roll-out of 65 centres. To await formal evaluation before establishing the remaining 50 centres would significantly delay the roll-out and would have flow-on effects to the timing of other parts of the reforms such as the introduction of compulsory dispute resolution.

However, collection of information on the operation of the first 15 centres will commence from the time they open in mid 2006 and will feed into preparations for the roll-out of the next 25 the following year. By the time the final 25 are rolled out in mid 2008, considerable information will have been obtained about the operation of the first 15 and second 25 centres.