

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

**Output 1.1**

**Question No. 21**

**Senator Evans asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2005:**

The Contact Orders Program, while a successful pilot project, serviced a relatively small number of families and was extremely resource intensive.

(a) Please describe how the locations of the additional 15 new Programs funded in the 2005-06 Budget have been determined?

(b) Does the Department have a strategy to handle the vast numbers of families across Australia who could also benefit from accessing such a Program but cannot due to distance and availability?

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

(a) The Department provides advice to the Attorney-General on possible locations for new Contact Orders Programs, by a needs based planning process which takes account of information including:

- number of applications made to Family Courts for consent orders, interim orders, final supervised contact orders, contravention of parenting orders, and final orders
- ABS population statistics and projections
- population trends and access to existing services under the Contact Orders Program in each State relative to population size
- locations of complementary services such as children's contact services, Family Relationship Centres and Family Dispute Resolution Services
- proximity to a Family Court registry, and
- accessibility of the proposed Contact Orders Program to families in the surrounding region.

(b) Under the expansion of the family law system, as well as the establishment of 15 new services, the existing five Contact Orders Program services will receive significantly increased funds to enable them to provide expanded services to a greater number of clients. By the end of 2007 there will be 20 services available under the Contact Orders Program. Some services may offer outreach type services to enable greater access by more clients. The Department is also supporting other strategies such as the development and implementation of a training package. This will enable group work programs similar to those offered by services under the Contact Orders Program to be provided in some rural and regional areas of Australia.

Other Family Relationships Services Program services are also being expanded or established to meet the needs of clients who may benefit from mediation or counselling as well as specific services aimed at addressing family violence and parenting skills.