

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

Output 1.1

Question No. 20

Senator Crossin asked the following question at the hearing on 31 October 2006:

- (a) Of the people that have accessed Family Relationship Centres (FRCs) to-date, how many are (i) 'new' clients who have not used a relationship service previously; and (ii) existing clients already accessing a government funded service?
- (b) Is the government measuring the displacement effect of people accessing FRCs instead of existing family relationships services – particularly those services delivering family dispute resolution that are unable to match the 3 hours of free mediation offered only through FRCs?
- (c) Have client numbers dropped at these other services?
- (d) What is the average waiting time for appointments for clients who approach FRCs directly (by phone or visiting centres)?
- (e) What is the average waiting time for appointments for clients who are referred to FRCs through the Family Relationship Advice Line?

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

- (a) The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) is changing over to a new data management system to collect and analyse data relating to the Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP), including data relating to Family Relationship Centres. When it is fully operational, FaCSIA and AGD will be able to analyse data on whether clients have previously used a service. Until the new system is fully operational, Centres are collecting presenting needs data but it is not able to be analysed electronically.
- (b) As the Centres have been operational for just under 6 months, it is too early to reach any conclusions as to the impact of Family Relationship Centres or other family law reforms on other services. This issue will be monitored by the Department as part of its ongoing evaluation of the Centres.
- (c) Information on client numbers in other services will be available once the new data collection system is fully operational.
- (d) and (e) This information is not available at this time. However, the issue of waiting times generally will be monitored by the Department as part of its ongoing evaluation of the Centres.