

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

Program: Australian Human Rights Commission

Question No. AE17/054

Senator Pratt asked the following question at the hearing on 28 February 2017:

In estimates hearings last year, you noted concerns about the impacts of a series of funding cuts to the Commission's budget under the Abbott and Turnbull Governments.

1. Could you please update this Committee on the impact of the Government's cuts on the Commission's ability to meet its caseload at present?
2. How have these cuts impacted on the Commission's ability to meet its statutory obligations, and what are the implications of this?
3. Have these cuts impacted on the Commission's ability to take on new projects?
4. What are the benefits of the Commission's scrutiny role, and have the funding cuts impacted on the Commission's ability to engage in scrutiny?
5. In your submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Freedom of Speech, dated 9 December 2016, you made the following recommendation for the alleviation of budget constraints currently imposed on the Commission by this Government:

Recommendation 4

The Commission recommends that the following particular steps are taken to alleviate the recent budget constraints that have had a disproportionate impact on the Commission in comparison to other similar agencies:

- a) reverse the cuts announced in the 2014-15 MYEFO of \$1.7 million for 2016-17 and \$1.6 million for 2017-18;
- b) restore in future budget processes the funding removed in the 2014-15 Budget for the 7th full time Commissioner (who has been appointed since early 2014); and
- c) include in future budget processes equivalent funding for the 8th full time Commissioner (who has been appointed since mid-2016).

Is there anything you would like to tell this Committee about how, if this recommendation was followed, the Commission would be able to better fulfil its obligations?

The answers to the honourable senator's questions are as follows:

Funding of the AHRC is a decision for Government. The Commission strives to work within the resourcing decisions of government.