

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

Group 2

Output 1.5

Question No. 125

Senator Scullion asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2012:

The Federal Government plans to spend well over \$8 billion over the next 10 years addressing Indigenous health, education, employment disadvantage in Closing the Gap and Stronger Futures, justice outcomes have been largely omitted from these initiatives. What long term commitments is the Government making to address Indigenous disadvantage in justice?

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

Justice Specific Closing the Gap Targets

At the 21-22 July 2011 meeting of the Standing Council on Law and Justice (SCLJ), Ministers agreed to:

“ask First Ministers to refer to COAG the possible adoption of justice specific Indigenous closing the gap targets, acknowledging that in many instances their relative occurrence are due to variable factors outside the justice system.”

The SCLJ referred the matter to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) as the appropriate body to decide on the inclusion of further targets. COAG has referred this item to the Working Group on Indigenous Reform for inclusion on its work program.

Stronger Futures Package

Under the Stronger Futures package, the Australian Government is providing a \$619 million funding boost over the next 10 years to support increased community safety in the Northern Territory Indigenous communities. This includes maintaining community night patrol services across 80 Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

The Australian Government is also extending additional legal assistance and services, ensuring greater access to advice, support, referral and representation for those who need it. Funding will support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Women's Legal Services and the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, in addition to funding already provided under the Indigenous Legal Aid and Policy Reform Program.

Safe Communities Strategy

The Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs are continuing to lead discussions with State and Territory Governments to develop a national Indigenous Safe Communities Strategy under the COAG Closing the Gap Safe Communities building block.

Ongoing Programs

The Attorney-General's Department is also responsible for the following programs that promote community safety:

- Indigenous Justice Program (which funds projects to reduce Indigenous Australians' contact with the criminal justice system)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Program
- Indigenous Family Violence Prevent Legal Services Program
- Community Legal Centres, and
- Family Relationship Centres.