

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

Group 2

Output 1.5

Question No. 186

Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 23 May 2012:

I note that \$23.9m will be cut from law and justice programs, including over \$8m from the expensive cases component within the Indigenous Legal Aid and Policy Reform program and early intervention grant component within the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Program, both of which are national programs.

- a) Can you tell me how many people make access these programs?
- b) How many of those are not in the NT?
- c) Will the cut of these budgets affect those presently accessing the programs?
- d) Will the cut of these budgets affect the capacity of these programs?
- e) What is the anticipated impact of the cuts?
- f) Will it mean people are turned away from these services?

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

a)

In 2011-12, the Expensive Indigenous Case Fund (EICF) was accessed by five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS): Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service for one client, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT for funding of Public Defenders to assist approximately 20 clients, Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia in relation to 23 clients, and North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service regarding nine and seven clients respectively.

In 2011-12, Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP) funding was allocated to seven service providers. For July-December 2011, Bravehearts Inc, Relationships Australia WA and Gurehlgam Corporation presented family violence/personal safety sessions to approximately 53 schools. The Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation, Tangentyere Council, Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Victoria and YMCA Top End facilitated community legal education sessions involving family violence issues for approximately 380 persons.

b)

In 2011-12, 44 clients not in the Northern Territory received EICF assistance.

In July-December 2011, five EIP service providers outside the Northern Territory provided community legal education to approximately 53 schools and approximately 222 workshop participants. Figures for the January-June 2012 will not be available until September 2012.

c)-f)

Both ATSILS and EIP service providers were aware that EICF and EIP were funded on an annual basis with ongoing funding subject to available appropriation.

Overall, the impact of reduced funding is not expected to be great. Current cases funded under EICF will continue until the completion of the matters. ATSILS may decide to utilise base funding to assist with meeting the costs of expensive cases or may refer these clients to other legal assistance providers such as legal aid commissions. In June 2012, additional one-off funding of \$215,000 was also made available to three ATSILS to assist with meeting the expensive case costs. In addition, individuals may seek pro bono assistance or, for Commonwealth matters, apply for funding under the Department's Commonwealth Public Interest and Test Cases scheme or disbursement scheme.

In relation to the EIP, existing Family Violence Prevention Legal Services may use base funding to provide early intervention services. The three non-Family Violence Prevention Legal Service organisations funded to provide EIP services may have access to alternative funding sources such as State government funding.