

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

**Group: 2**

**Program: 1.5**

**Question: BE14/089**

**Senator Singh asked the following question at the hearing on 26-29 May 2014:**

1. Has the Attorney-General since taking office still not met with the head of any ATSIL or with the national Chairman or Executive Officer of NATSILS?
  - a. Has the Attorney-General's Office received any requests for such a meeting?
2. How did the Government reach the figure of \$13.34 million over 4 years in cuts, announced in MYEFO last year? Please provide a breakdown of when and in what programs these cuts will fall.
3. Does the Budget include any further cuts to Indigenous justice, beyond the \$13.34 million already ripped away in MYEFO?
4. According to government information, is there a trend of growth in the level of Indigenous incarceration? What impact does the Government anticipate cuts to ATSILS will have on this trend? How was this view formed?
5. How much of Commonwealth funding to ATSILS is spent on policy reform? How much on casework?
6. I refer to the Government's answer to questions on notice no. 129, 131 and 132 arising out of the last estimates session. The Government stated that the cuts to ATSILS funding 'implemented an election commitment'. What was that election commitment referred to? When was this commitment made, and in what forum?

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

1. The Attorney-General has done so.
2. A review of total funds across the program was completed which resulted in 4.45 percent (\$13.25m over four years) being estimated to represent policy reform.

Funding agreements under the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme are in place until 30 June 2015, and funding levels have not been reduced as part of MYEFO. Savings have been structured in a way to delay any impact of these reductions until 2015-16.

The \$13.25m reduction will come from the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme.

3. The 2014-15 Budget does not include any further cuts to the Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme.
4. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for Indigenous affairs, and matters relating to Indigenous incarceration should be directed to that agency.

Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services has been re-directed to front-line service delivery to maximise direct assistance to vulnerable people.

5. There is no separate allocation of funding for casework and advocacy.
6. The Commitment was made on 5 September 2013 in the costings table (Item 9.3) attached to the Media Release 'Final Update on Federal Coalition Election Policy Commitments'.