

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

Group: 2

Program: 1.4

Question No. BE15/021

Senator Wright asked the following question at the hearing on 27 and 28 May 2015:

Senator WRIGHT: We are onto a different form of blood sport then. I have some questions in relation to the new National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services, which is the new model to determine Commonwealth allocation of funding to legal aid commissions, community legal centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services. While some information about the model is available, including that the model takes into account population and some service delivery cost factors, it is not detailed and does not indicate weightings. The full funding formula has not been publicly released. Will it be?

Ms Quinn: The details on the funding allocation model: initially, we distributed an abridged version just to inform states of how we had made the dissection of funding. We have since expanded that significantly and provided it, and it does include the weightings that were allocated to the factors that were in the model.

Senator WRIGHT: Is that publicly available?

Ms Quinn: We distributed it in the context of the negotiations with the states and territories on the national partnership agreement, but I believe most of them elected to send it on to the sectors. We have not published it but we have provided it as part of those negotiations. I do not think it would be a problem to provide it.

Senator WRIGHT: Thank you. If you could provide that, that would be very helpful. I know the government has a commitment to open government and I would have thought that was consistent with that. I would like to know—and I am hoping that what you are going to provide, and if it is not the case then maybe you can tell me—details, including factors and weightings of the funding assistance formulas that are used to calculate the amount of funding to be distributed to each state and territory in relation to legal aid commissions, community legal centres and ATSILS. Is it possible to say now what specific weighting will be assigned to each criteria and what, if any, reliance was placed upon actual service delivery?

Senator Brandis: As Ms Quinn said, we will release the formula to you, so you can read it for yourself.

Senator WRIGHT: I am interested in how quickly, because I am conscious that it takes effect very soon, and there are a lot of people that are really interested in talking to me about it. And I would like to—

Senator Brandis: It takes effect in 34 days time.

Senator WRIGHT: Yes, that is right. I am interested in how quickly it might be possible to get that?

Senator Brandis: We will make sure you get it fairly promptly.

Senator WRIGHT: Thank you.

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

See attached document entitled 'National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services 2015-20 – Funding Allocation'.

This document was provided by the Attorney-General's Department to the states and territories on 19 May 2015.