

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

**Program:** 1.4 Justice Services

**Question No. BE16/012**

**Senator McKim asked the following question at the hearing on 5 May 2016:**

Senator McKIM: That is okay. I acknowledge that this is not PM&C here right now. I just wanted to ask about the cuts to CLCs. CLCs are facing funding cuts of about 30 per cent—in 2017-18, about a \$12.1 million cut on my advice, as well as an additional \$11.6 million in 2018-19 and \$11.1 million in 2019-20. Given that you have acknowledged that a significant proportion of the \$100 million for family violence will be provided to legal assistance, presumably that will only go to CLCs that provide family violence related services, so where does this leave CLCs that do not do family violence work, acknowledging that most of them do? There are some that do not, and presumably will not receive any part of that \$100 million. Does that just simply leave them languishing, contrary, I might add, to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission?

Senator Scullion: Clearly these initiatives, whether it is the women's safety package or the family violence package, are actually tied to ameliorating the challenges in those particular areas. So they are quite targeted funds. As you indicate, the vast majority of community legal services actually deal with family violence and women's safety issues respectively. I am not aware of the levels of details of those community legal centres that would not deal with those matters, but presumably they would focus on their general target clientele, if it does not fall within that, which surprises me. It is an area where I would have thought there would have been a very small number of them. I certainly, in my time, have not been aware of those who say, 'We're not dealing with domestic violence,' or, 'We're not dealing with women's safety issues'. These are targeted, and they are very much targeted at assisting a community where the provision of legal assistance is essential. I would have thought that, because these are targeted, these are going to those areas of need, and I am not aware of any Community Legal Centres that would not provide those levels of service.

Senator McKIM: Yes. Minister, the budget contains a significant amount, to use your word—

Senator Scullion: Over 50 per cent.

Senator McKIM: of over 50 per cent—well, perhaps not over 50 per cent of the total budget, but a significant amount—of unspent funds, and there is funding in the contingency as well, as you would expect. Are you aware of any intent to use any part of that funding to reverse cuts to the CLCs and actually fund them in line with the Productivity Commission recommendations?

Senator Scullion: No. I am not aware, but that may not mean that the government is not aware, so I will take that particular element of the question on notice.

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

On 12 May 2016, the Attorney-General, the Minister for Women and the Minister for Social Services announced that \$30 million of the \$100 million for initiatives to support the Third Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* will be allocated to legal assistance and family law services.