

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

**Output 1.3**

**Question No. 83**

**Senator Hanson-Young asked the following question at the hearing on 23 February 2009:**

Aside from the Senate committee hearing into the same-sex reforms, did the Government consult with the community, in particular the elderly same-sex community, or key community groups, about what could be done to minimise the stress that these changes could have on particular couples?

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

As part of the *Same-Sex: Same Entitlements* Inquiry, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission consulted widely, including holding public hearings and community forums. The Commission also received submissions from 680 organisation and individuals. The Commission's *Same-Sex: Same Entitlements* report made recommendations for the reform of Commonwealth laws including social security law.

In regard to the consultations following the Government's decision to introduce the reforms, the Government established a process to monitor the implementation of the reforms to ensure effective and orderly introduction. This included the establishment of an interdepartmental working group comprised of representatives from relevant Departments. This interdepartmental working group met with representatives of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community on 23 July 2008.

The Attorney-Generals' Department consulted with representatives of the LGBTI community at the Attorney-General's NGO Forum on Domestic Human Rights in June 2008. On 8 October 2008 the Commission organised a further meeting with representatives of the LGBTI community and relevant Government Departments to discuss the implementation of the reforms.

In addition, each portfolio was made responsible for the dissemination of information to their client groups. An inter-agency communications working group, comprised of representatives from relevant Departments, was also established. This working group has been consulting with LGBTI community representatives in order to identify the communication tools which are most effective in disseminating information to the community and to ensure that any communications strategies employed are done so in the most appropriate and targeted manner.