

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

Sub program 1.2.1

Question No. 109

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 8 February 2010:

In relation to Government plans to increase the Australian Government Solicitor's influence through changing the Agency's relationship with the Attorney-General's Department:

- a. Other than the report released by the Attorney-General in January 2010, what other factors have prompted this decision? How does the Government propose ensuring a level playing field is maintained between the AGS and private firms under these proposed changes?
- b. How was the AGS consulted in relation to the Government's decision? Please provide details including a status report on current arrangements and proposed arrangements.

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

- a. No decision of the kind suggested in the question has been made.

The report of the Review of Commonwealth legal services procurement by Mr Tony Blunn AO and Ms Sibylle Krieger touches on aspects of the role and function of AGS and suggests that Government re-assess the place of AGS (p. 37 of the report). The report discusses AGS in the context of the growth of in-house practices and the idea of a dedicated full-service legal practice (p. 38), and in the context of enabling AGD to provide more guidance and assistance to agencies in relation to legal services (AGS being one source of the skills that AGD would require to perform this role) (p. 36). The Government is considering all aspects of the report.

- b. Refer to (a) above.