

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA

Question No. 131

Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 24 May 2007:

- a) Are you able to provide information on the number of self-represented litigants who have commenced proceedings for the years 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07?
- b) Is this trend exponential or incremental?
- c) Do you have specialist staff on the Registry (or elsewhere in the Court) who deal with self-represented litigants?
 - i) If so, give details.

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

- a) The following table illustrates the total number of finalised cases where the applicant, who commenced proceedings, was self represented. It is important to note that this is not a complete picture of the total number of self-represented litigants as it only provides information as to the applicant party and does not include the status of the respondent party in a family law matter.

Number of Applicant Parties without legal representation

Number of SRL Applicants*	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07 (to 31 May 2007)
SRL for entire case (for cases finalised in period)	3177	2718	2025	1319
SRL - At trial hearings	951	856	808	376

Source: Casetrack - as at 06/06/2007

Note: These figures relate to the Applicant party - they do not include the SRL status of the Respondent party.

- b) The figures illustrate that the total number of self-represented applicants may be decreasing. This may be an exponential decrease. This decrease however may be attributed to the Court's focus on hearing the more complex family law cases and the overall reduction in the number of cases in this jurisdiction.
- c) Client Service staff have been given training to assist them in providing appropriate procedural advice to self-represented litigants. Where possible, Family Law Registries offer a duty registrar service to assist self-represented litigants with Court processes and procedural advice. Additionally, the Court provides written material on the Family Court and Family Law Courts websites.