

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

Sub Program 1.1.1

Question No. 122

Senator Ludlam asked the following question at the hearing on 27 May 2009:

In February 2009 the Attorney-General announced the establishment of an Access to Justice Taskforce. According to press releases we know its recommendations will be based on a strategic evaluation of 'what works, what doesn't, and why?' Can you please provide additional information regarding the taskforce; its terms of reference, who is participating, what its budget might be, how it will relate to/interact with the Senate Inquiry into Access to Justice, and when will it report?

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

The Access to Justice Taskforce was established within the Attorney-General's Department in January 2009. The Taskforce does not have specific terms of reference. The Attorney-General indicated in a speech to the Commercial Bar Association of Victoria on 10 June 2009 that its role is to develop a more strategic approach and to make recommendations on ways to improve access to justice for all Australians.

The Taskforce consists of Departmental officers focusing on these issues. It is being funded from existing resources. The Taskforce will be making recommendations to the Attorney-General in the second half of this year. Public release of the Taskforce's report and recommendations will be a matter for the Government.

On 5 February 2009 the Senate referred a range of matters relating to Australia's judicial system and access to justice to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Subsequently this reference was withdrawn and replaced by two separate inquiries, 'Australia's Judicial System and the Role of Judges' and 'Access to Justice'. On 20 May 2009, the Department made submissions to both inquiries. In those submissions the Department indicated that it would be willing to provide further assistance to the Committee if required.