

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

Sub Program 1.1.2

Question No. 125

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

Submissions to the Senate Inquiry on Access to Justice indicate that the financial crisis is resulting in increased pressure on Community Legal Centre (CLC) services. The Law Council of Australia goes so far as to state that the justice system is facing an impending crisis over the coming six to 12 months as a result of the increased strain on legal aid services arising from the financial crisis. The Law Council said that an additional \$165 million minimum was needed to get through this period. I understand that in May there has been some one off payments made to CLCs.

- a) How many CLCs missed out on the recent dispersal of one-off payments in May?
- b) What were the criteria on the CLCs that received the one-off payment in May?

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

- a) In 2009-10, the Australian Government will provide \$23.55 million direct to 128 community legal centres across Australia under the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program. In May 2009, in order to ensure optimal outcomes for clients are achieved, a \$4 million one-off additional allocation was provided to certain CLCs to address priority areas of need. Of the 128 CLCs currently funded under the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program, 47 received one-off additional funding, 81 CLCs did not receive one-off funding in this round.
- b) The distribution was directed to:
 - relevant statewide and semi-statewide services such as welfare rights, women's legal services and services targeting young people to primarily target family law matters, mortgage, tenancy and debt stress
 - CLCs providing services to areas that were particularly large, or which had few/no alternate legal assistance service providers
 - continuation of particular projects/program, for example, family law duty lawyer services
 - piloting additional family law duty lawyer services, and
 - assistance with relocation costs.

In addition to those CLCs which did receive funding, the National Environmental Defenders Network and the National Welfare Rights network received one-off funding to pursue nationally focused projects.