

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

Program 1.1

Question No. 75

Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2010:

How will the reduction from 3 hours of Family Dispute Resolution to one free hour of family dispute resolution at FRCs impact on separating parents:

- a. Is it anticipated there will be a drop in demand (ie, will some parents be more reluctant to come to FDR? Will more go to other FDR services instead of FRCs? Will more delay coming to FDR?
- b. Has there been any market testing or analysis of the impact?
- c. If demand at FRCs drops, will that be a good or bad outcome?
- d. What will the financial impact be on FRC providers?
- e. Has there been any consultation with FRC providers or academic researchers?

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

- a. It is not anticipated that there will be a drop in demand for FDR services. All clients will continue to receive the first hour of FDR at no cost. Those who earn less than \$50,000 or who receive Commonwealth health and social security benefits will continue to receive 3 hours free FDR. It is estimated that around 68% of clients accessing FDR at FRCs will continue to receive the same service, including 3 hours free FDR. Demand for FDR services has continued to grow in recent years and this is trend expected to continue.
- b. Consultations regarding this budget measure will be conducted with service providers over the next 12 months, and will not come into effect until 1 July 2011. Before deciding on the funding allocation for individual FRCs, the Government will have regard to the capacity of each FRC to recover funds through charging fees for FDR.
- c. It is not anticipated that demand for FRC services will decrease as a result of the Government decision.
- d. The measure is not expected to have a financial impact upon FRC providers as the reduction in funding is expected to be equal to or less than the amount they will be able to recoup in fees.
- e. See answer b. above.