

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
FAMILY COURT/FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT

Question No. 15

Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on May 29 2013:

Senator BRANDIS: What proportion of the judge days of the Family Court judges is spent on circuit work?

Mr R Foster: I would have to take that on notice. The Family Court now lists in major regional centres. It sits in Cairns, obviously. It sits in Darwin where it does not have a permanent presence. It does not regularly circuit to rural and regional Australia, that is largely now a matter for the Federal Circuit Court, but it is the policy of the court that if there is a matter that requires the attention of a justice then the Chief Justice would make a judge available to sit in a rural or regional area.

Senator BRANDIS: That was what I was wondering about. How regularly does that happen?

Mr R Foster: It happens, I know it happens reasonably frequently in Dubbo. Off the top of my head I do not really have that detail in my mind. It does not happen as much as it used to, but primarily that work is picked up by the Federal Circuit Court.

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

The proportion of judge days is 4.4% for the financial year to date period (1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013).