

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

Output 1.7

Question No. 62

Senator Ludlam asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2008:

In response to the April 2008 Review of the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Programme, it is understood that new funding models are under consideration.

- a) Can you identify whether this review will look at funding models which:
 - i. increase the minimum base line funding;
 - ii. ensure that new funding goes to highest needs areas, and;
 - iii. evaluate ways to address areas with little or no services.
- b) When is it anticipated that this assessment will be complete?
- c) On what basis is a needs assessment being done?

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

- a) Development of a funding model for the distribution of funds was one of the terms of reference for the Review of the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program. The Review report, published in March 2008 (and available on the Department's internet site) recommended that any new funding model include the following three components:
 - minimum funding
 - needs-based funding, and
 - unmet needs funding.
- b) The Review report recommended that the proposed funding model should be provided to stakeholders for comment prior to consideration of its adoption as a Program funding model.

The Department is consulting stakeholders, including the National Association of Community Legal Centres and Legal Aid Commissions, in relation to the proposed funding model. Once those consultations are complete, the model will be provided to the Attorney-General for his consideration.

Decisions about funding for the Program and the implementation of a new funding model are matters for Government, to be decided in the Budget context.

- c) The Review report noted that, as part of the proposed funding model, a needs assessment should be made of the demographic, economic and geographic influences on the demand for and costs of providing services to the potential service population of each community legal service. In the course of developing a proposed model, the Department has drawn on census data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, including the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage. The objective is to provide a sound evidence-based framework for future enhancement of the Program.