

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

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Question No. 63

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

In relation to community legal centres:

- a) regarding the makeup of State and Federal funding for community legal centres, has there been a declining Federal contribution as compared to the States, at the same time there has been an increased demand on these services
- b) regarding the arbitrary distinctions created when the Commonwealth will only pay for commonwealth law matters, and States pick up costs for State matters, will there be a review of this Federal State break down, and
- c) are you aware of the comparison between Australia and the rest of the OECD regarding spending per capita on the provision of legal aid? Can you provide a comparison?

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

a) The Commonwealth has not decreased its contribution to the Community Legal Services Program. Some States have significantly increased funding to community legal centres within their jurisdiction. In 2008–09, the States have allocated \$26.3 million in funding for community legal centres and their state peak bodies, with the Commonwealth contributing \$25.9 million to the Community Legal Services Program.

The Government announced additional one-off funding of \$10 million in 2007-08 for the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program to assist Commonwealth funded community legal centres to manage the increasing demand for their services. A range of support projects was also funded.

- b) Funding for community legal centres is not restricted to Commonwealth law matters. This funding policy only applies to Commonwealth funding of legal aid.
- c) The Department is aware that from time to time comparisons are made between Australia's and other countries' respective expenditure per capita on legal aid. Collecting the information on differences between other countries' legal systems and legal assistance programs would require a significant diversion of resources.