

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
FEDERAL MAGISTRATES COURT

Question No. 67

Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

Is the number of circuit sittings expected to increase or decrease for the financial year 2012-13?
Please provide the number of relevant increase or decrease.

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

The Federal Magistrates Court continually reviews its circuit commitments to ensure resource-efficient and effective services to rural and regional Australia. The Court considers the locations, costs and frequency of circuits, as well as the number of sitting days required in each location to ensure that the right balance was struck in providing a quality service to regional communities within the finite and limited resources of the Court.

As part of the circuit review, the Court utilises communication technologies such as telephone and video links to minimise costs and inconvenience to litigants that may arise from travelling to the nearest Family Law Registry.

In 2011-12 the Federal Magistrates Court circuited to 33 locations (including Dandenong) across Australia and sat for approximately 145 weeks (excluding Dandenong) in these locations. The workload in Dandenong is such that in 2011-12 approximately 2.5 federal magistrates were allocated to this location. This equates to approximately 85 weeks sitting time in Dandenong.

The Court believes that the circuit arrangements currently in place are adequate and does not intend on increasing or decreasing the number of circuits in 2012-13 financial year.

Annexure A:

CIRCUIT LOCATIONS

Albury

Alice Springs

Armidale

Ballarat

Bendigo

Broken Hill

Bundaberg

Burne

Castlemaine

Cobram

Coffs Harbour

Dandenong

Dubbo

Geelong

Hervey Bay

Ipswich

Lismore

Mackay

Maroochydore

Mildura

Moe

Mount Gambier

Orange

Port Macquarie

Rockhamton

Shepparton

Southport

Tamworth

Toowoomba

Wagga Wagga

Warrnambool

Wauchope

Wollongong