

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

Group 2

Program 1.3

Question No. 159

Senator McLucas asked the following question at the hearing on 18 November 2013:

1. During the election campaign, the Coalition promised to cut \$42 million from the Indigenous Legal Aid Policy Reform Programme which funds Aboriginal legal services across Australia. Mr Warren Mundine contradicted this on 18 September, saying it wouldn't be cut. Which is correct?
2. Given the Coalition Government's commitment to cut funding to Aboriginal legal aid by \$42 million:
 - a) How will the Government ensure that this does not lead to more indigenous people ending up in prison?
 - b) How is this consistent with a bipartisan commitment to developing a justice target to reduce indigenous incarceration rates?
3. I refer to an NITV news report on 19 November 2013 where the Attorney-General was reported as saying that it would be too expensive to find out what impact a funding cut to Indigenous legal services would have on growing Indigenous imprisonment rates.
 - a) How will the government measure the impact of these cuts on indigenous incarceration rates?
 - b) How will it use this data to inform the development and implementation of the justice target?

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

1. The Government has not yet finalised funding decisions for the Program.
2. Funding decisions will ensure that the delivery of frontline services to individuals is the priority for Indigenous legal services.

The Government will consider advice from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and elsewhere on ways to improve Indigenous community safety.

3. It is not expected that any savings found will impact Indigenous incarceration rates or the Government's consideration of whether a justice target would be an effective mechanism to drive change.