

ABORIGINAL LEGAL**3AID****Tuesday, 14th November 2006**

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Police, representing the Treasurer, a question about state government funding for Aboriginal Legal Aid.

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement provides a number of services to indigenous communities in this state, including legal aid, and the low income support program and the Aboriginal visitors scheme. The ALRM is fully funded by the federal government for the provision of legal aid to Aboriginal clients. However, this funding has remained mostly static for the past 10 years, experiencing only a 2 per cent increase. This is because federal funding is regarded as supplementary to what the state government should be providing. In real terms the funding for Aboriginal legal aid has fallen over 30 per cent in that period, whereas funding for mainstream legal aid has received an increase of 116 per cent.

The state funds the mainstream service on an approximate 50:50 basis with the federal government. The state government has also exempted mainstream legal aid from court filing and transcript fees but does not apply the same concessions to ALRM. In addition, ALRM is charged the emergency services levy while the Legal Services Commission is not charged this levy. Prior to the release of the 2006-07 state budget, the state government confirmed through the Treasurer that it would consider the ALRM's budget submission. However, there has been no state funding allocated to ALRM. As a result of inadequate funding, ALRM has relocated its Ceduna solicitor to Port Augusta and is now considering not servicing some courts. My questions to the Treasurer are:

1. Given that the government provides funding for programs servicing the indigenous community in areas such as health and housing, is there a reason that it does not fund Aboriginal legal aid programs?
2. Will the state government provide funding for the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, considering that it primarily deals with state law matters?
3. Will the state government exempt court filing and transcript fees for clients of ALRM, given that the clients of mainstream legal aid receive this concession?