

cern about Commonwealth legal aid expenditure reductions and policy refocusing. . .

The committee has recommended that the Government consider establishing a high level representative task force to advise Governments on the legal aid system and its place in Australia's justice system."

The Committee's public hearings are continuing.

Also on legal aid funding priorities, in answer to a Question Without Notice in the House of Representatives on 6 March 1997 from Mr Slipper expressing concern about funding of proceedings by non-citizens and non-residents challenging Government decisions to deny them entry into Australia, the Attorney-General said (Hansard, 6 March 1997 at p 2211):

"Citizenship is not a criterion in legal aid commission guidelines for assessing eligibility for legal aid. However, the question from the honourable member for Fisher . . . highlights some matters of considerable concern to the government in ensuring that legal aid dollars are appropriately spent.

...

The government has announced that from 1 July 1997 Commonwealth funds for legal aid will be applied to matters arising under Commonwealth law which include immigration matters. The Commonwealth will clearly articulate its priorities for legal aid funding when the new legal aid arrangements are implemented. I can assure the honourable member for Fisher that in the setting of these priorities full account will be taken of the concerns he has expressed."

Parliamentary Inquiry into Criminal Deportation

On 11 February 1997, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP, announced that he had

asked the Joint Standing Committee on Migration to undertake an inquiry into and report on the policies and practices relating to criminal deportation.

The terms of reference for the inquiry are

1. the adequacy of existing arrangements for dealing with permanent residents who are convicted of serious criminal offences and whose continued presence in Australia poses an unacceptable level of threat to the Australian community;
2. the appropriateness of existing arrangements for the review of deportation decisions;
3. the appropriateness of the current 10 year limit on liability for criminal deportation;
4. the extent to which effective procedures and liaison arrangements are in place between the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and State/Territory Governments for the timely identification and handling of all cases subject to the criminal deportation provisions;
5. the extent to which sufficient weight is given to the views of all relevant parties, including the criminals and the victim/s of the crime, and their relatives; and
6. the adequacy of existing arrangements for the removal of non-residents convicted of crimes.

The Committee sought submissions by 4 April 1997.

Parliamentary Inquiry into Competitive Tendering of Welfare Service Delivery

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs is conducting an inquiry into the desirability and feasibility of increased contracting out of welfare services delivery by all service providers, with specific reference to: