

3. OVERVIEW OF AGENCY

3.1 Executive Summary

Cost of services and sources of funds

In 2014-15, the total cost of services delivered by Legal Aid WA was \$68.436 million, a decrease of \$1.806 million or 2.57 per cent on the 2013-14 total cost of \$70.242 million. The main sources of expenses were employee costs at \$31.600 million (a decrease of 1.00 per cent) and payments to private legal practitioners at \$17.881 million (a decrease of 16.51 per cent).

Legal Aid WA derives the majority of its funding through Commonwealth and State Government grants. In 2014-15, Commonwealth grants and contributions totalled \$21.204 million, an increase of \$25,000 or 0.12 per cent on the Commonwealth contribution for 2013-14. State Government funding for 2014-15 was \$40.335 million, an increase of \$2.185 million or 5.73 per cent on the previous year.

An operating deficit of \$1.6689 million was recorded for the 2014-15 financial year.

Outputs

In 2014-15, a total of 12,300 applications for grants of aid for State and Commonwealth matters were received by Legal Aid WA. This is a 12.51 per cent decrease in the number of applications for aid received in 2013-14. This change in applications received reflects a more rigorous pre-application review process which has been introduced by Legal Aid WA. Within the total number of applications, significant variations were recorded for Commonwealth family law – a decrease in applications of 20.44 per cent; State criminal law – a decrease in applications of 8.76 per cent, and State civil law – a decrease in applications of 30.98 per cent.

The grant rate for all matter types varied in 2014-15. For family law matters, the grant rate was 69 per cent of applications received, compared with 64 per cent for the previous year. The grant rate for criminal law matters was 76 per cent in 2014-15, down from the 79 per cent rate recorded for 2013-14. In civil law matters, a slight improvement was recorded, taking the grant rate to 52 per cent.

Demand for non-grant of aid services also varied throughout 2014-15, with the number of telephone information services down by 4.67 per cent; face to face information down by 9.57 per cent; minor assistance up by 1.26 per cent; duty lawyer services up by 7.27 per cent; dispute resolution conferencing down by 8.43 per cent; and legal advice – down by 4.94 per cent.