



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

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D17/57959

16 October 2017

Ms Ann Palmer
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Palmer

**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – 23 October 2017
Senate Committee Activity – Department of the Senate**

In accordance with the usual practice, I attach statistics about the operations of committees supported by the Senate Committee Office, which demonstrate continued high levels of committee activity in the 45th Parliament. I have also attached a page updating the information provided in response to question on notice No. 1 from the estimates round in February this year.

Yours sincerely

(Richard Pye)

Senate committee activity

SUMMARY AS AT 29 September 2017

Activity

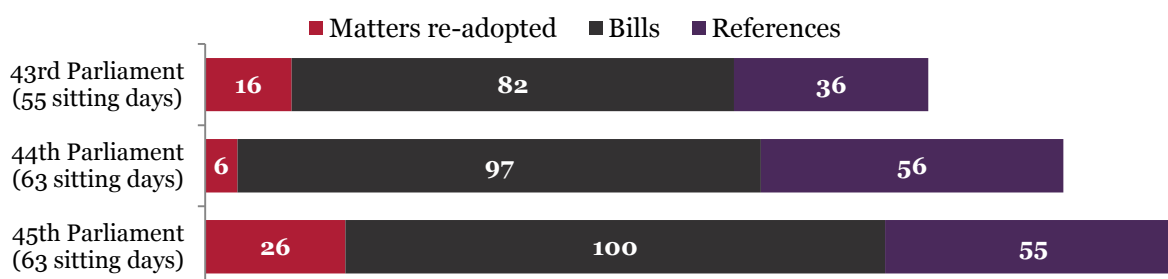
In the 45th Parliament, at 29 September 2017, there have been:

- 181 references (155 new references and 26 re-adopted from the 44th Parliament);
- 189 reports tabled;
- 316 hearings.

The following tables compare references and reports at the same point in previous parliaments, as well as a tally by financial year of references and hearings held.

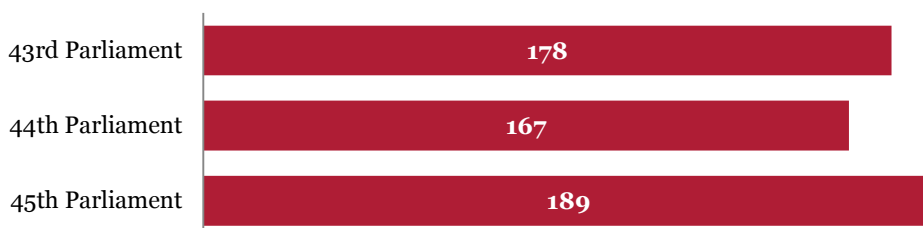
Number of references

Standing Committee references in the first 13.5 months of each Parliament



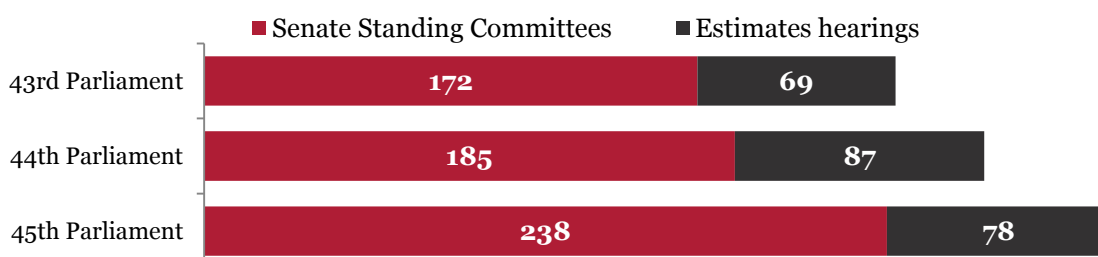
Reports

Standing Committee reports in the first 13.5 months of each Parliament



Hearings held

Standing Committee hearings held in the first 13.5 months of each Parliament



Additional indicators of activity:

- The department is currently supporting five select committees. Four select committees have completed their inquiries. During the 44th Parliament, the department supported 12 select committees (including one committee later re-established).
- At present, the department also supports six joint committees and one joint select committee yet to commence.

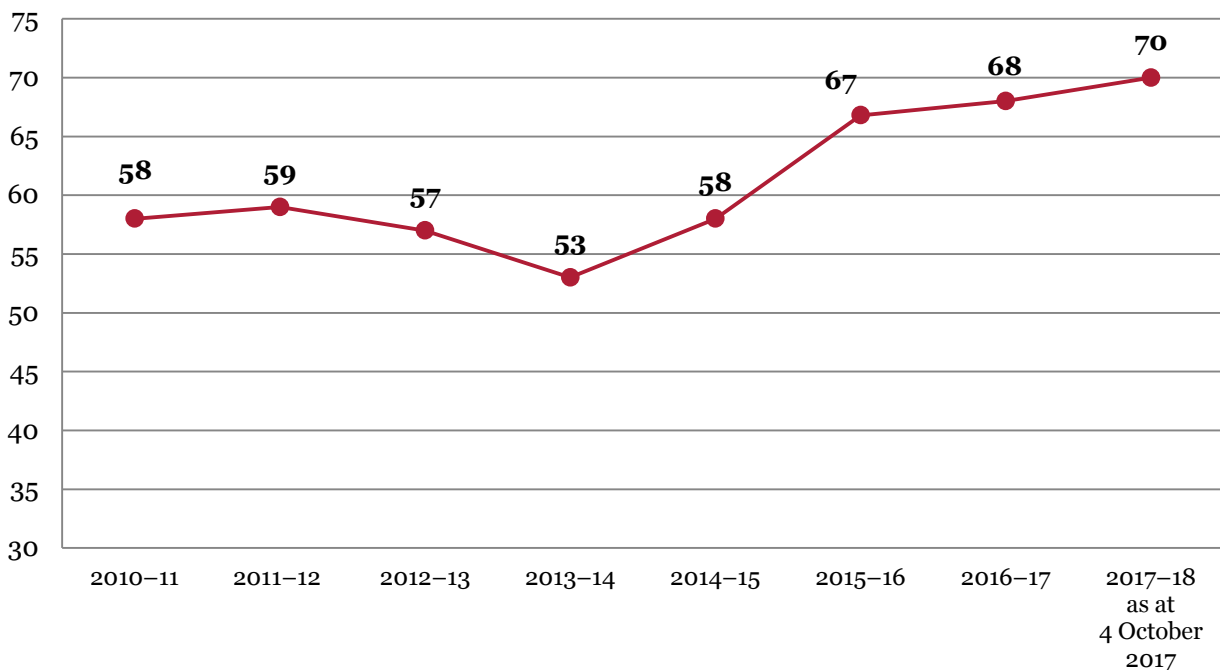
Staffing

Average staffing for 2017-18: At 4 October 2017 there were 70.4 Full Time Equivalent staff in the Committee Office, compared with an average FTE of 68.3 in 2016-17 (66.8 for 2015-16).

The following chart shows changes in average staffing levels over time.

Committee Office FTE

Average Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing levels, by financial year



Administration

Cost of running Senate committees: The current annual budget for the Committee Office is approximately \$9.1 million. This includes employee expenses of \$8.6 million and administrative expenses (including secretariat travel, accommodation and venues for hearings) of \$0.5 million.

In 2016–17, total operational costs for the Committee Office were \$10.6 million (including corporate overheads).

Summary comparison of committee costs by category (as at 31 August 2017)

Standing, select and joint committees, 2014–15 to 2017–18*				
Expenses	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18*
Executive and additional support†				
Staff costs	800,436	1,219,392	1,083,458	2,151,455
Administrative costs	24,360	57,059	12,050	39,743
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>824,796</i>	<i>1,276,451</i>	<i>1,095,509</i>	<i>2,191,198</i>
Standing				
Staff costs	4,406,759	5,199,215	5,527,061	4,926,175
Administrative costs	444,773	484,019	299,711	305,372
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>4,851,532</i>	<i>5,683,234</i>	<i>5,826,773</i>	<i>5,231,547</i>
Joint Statutory				
Staff costs	882,953	1,019,048	791,776	940,459
Administrative costs	92,300	112,212	40,009	53,789
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>975,253</i>	<i>1,131,260</i>	<i>831,785</i>	<i>994,247</i>
Select				
Staff costs	549,334	744,230	374,160	182,112
Administrative costs	72,953	96,803	49,947	50,574
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>622,287</i>	<i>841,033</i>	<i>424,106</i>	<i>232,686</i>
Joint Standing/Select				
Staff costs	217,860	719	383,515	630,873
Administrative costs	50,209	3,007	40,706	46,615
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>268,069</i>	<i>3,726</i>	<i>424,221</i>	<i>677,488</i>
Total program expense	7,541,937	8,935,704	8,602,393	9,327,167

†Executive and additional support comprises Clerk Assistant and Senior Clerk's offices and, from 2015–16, includes additional staff engaged to provide 'surge capacity' to meet peaks in demand. In 2017–18 that represents 11 staff.

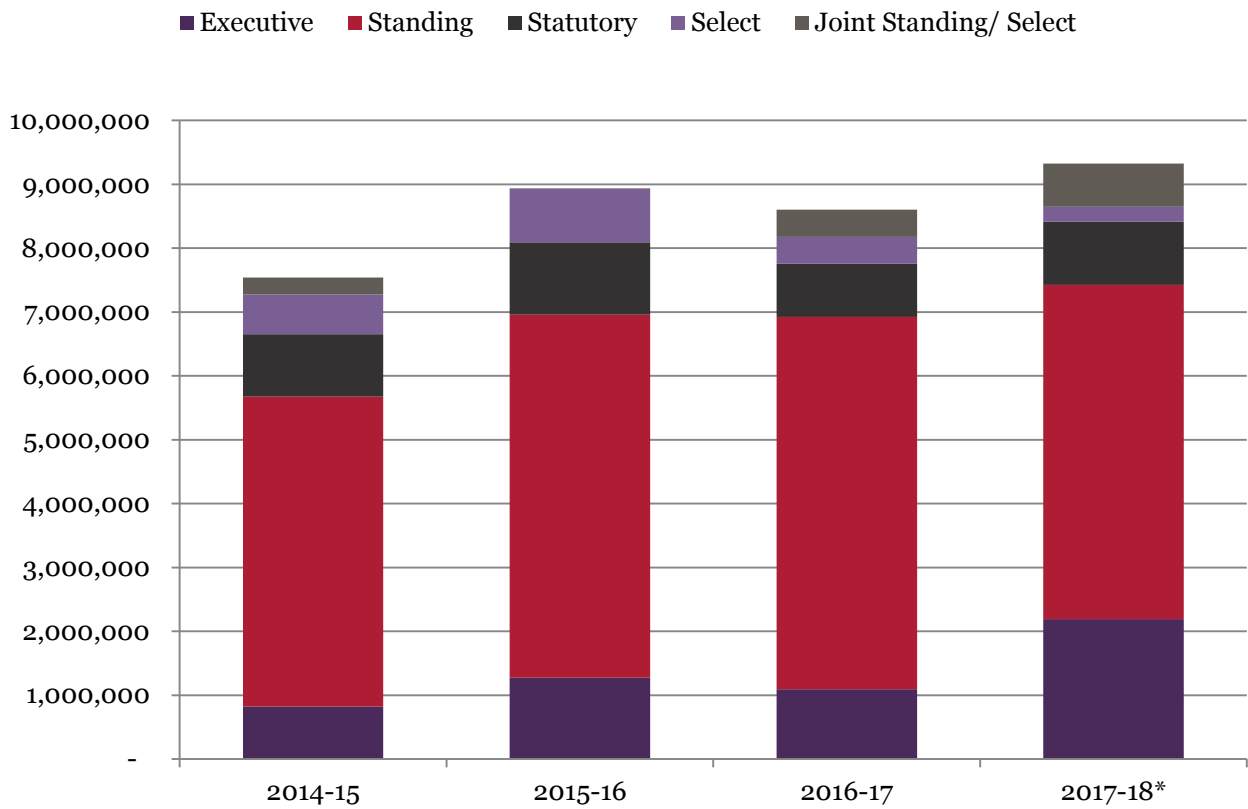
*Estimated costs for 2017–18 are indicative. They are based on average monthly expenditure for July and August only.

Staff costs – the salaries of Senate staff working within the secretariat. These staffing costs are based on estimates of time allocated by departmental staff and are a guide only.

Administrative costs – includes advertising inquiries, refreshments at hearings, hire of hearing venues, flights and aircraft charters to attend hearings, printing etc.

Total expenditure

Committee Office



* Estimated final costs based on data as at 31 August 2017

Comparative statistics

Inquiries supported by the Senate Committee Office as at 29 September 2017

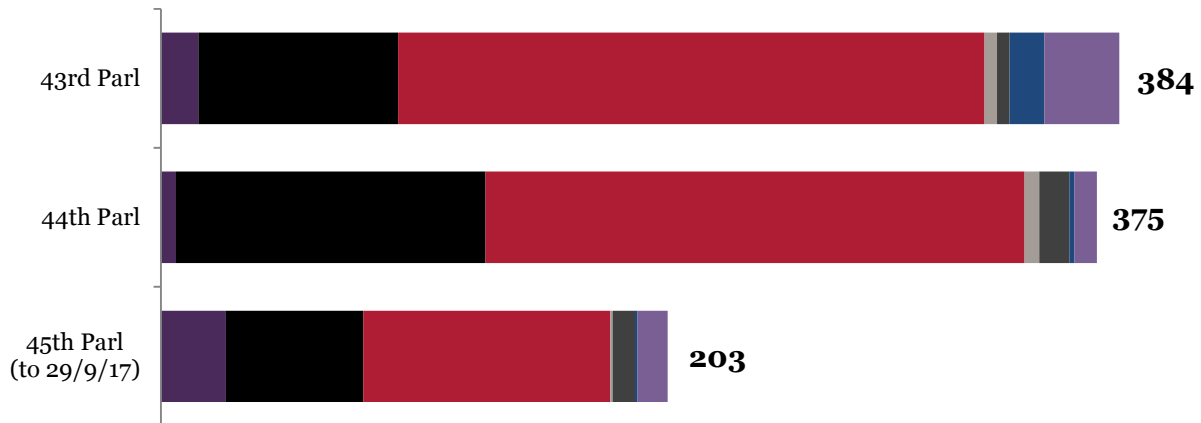
The following table and charts break down legislation, references and select committees inquiries for the last three parliaments. For the sake of completeness, joint committees supported by the Senate Department are also included.

Table 1: Number of inquiries

	43rd Parl	44th Parl	45th Parl (to 29/9/17)
Refs Ctee inquiries readopted ¹	15	6	26
New Refs Ctee inquiries	80	124	55
Bill inquiries ²	235	216	99
Other Leg Ctee inquiries ³	5	6	1
Select Ctee inquiries	5	12	9
Joint Select Ctee inquiries ⁴	14	2	1
Joint Ctee inquiries ⁵	30	9	12
Total	384	375	203

1. References which lapsed in the previous parliament and were readopted
2. Includes one bill considered by a references committee in the 43rd Parliament
3. For instance, inquiries into the performance of agencies
4. NB: the number of inquiries, not the number of committees. In particular the Joint Select Committee on Gambling in the 43rd Parliament considered 10 separate inquiries
5. This is the number of joint committee inquiries administered by the Senate department.

Chart 1: Number of inquiries (actual)



	43rd Parl	44th Parl	45th Parl (to 29/9/17)
Time (in weeks)	149	130	43

As an indicator of the level of committee activity, the following chart averages the number of inquiries referred over the duration of each parliament. For instance, there were fewer references in the 44th Parliament than the 43rd, however, the 44th Parliament was 19 weeks (4 and a half months) shorter in duration so the level of activity over time was higher. Similarly, the figures for the 45th Parliament cover just over 12 months, to end of September 2017, but as can be seen the rate at which matters have been referred is higher than in the previous two parliaments.

Chart 2: Number of inquiries (pro rata)

