

**Question:** 2  
**Topic:** Senators initiating committee inquiries and subsequent participation  
**Asked:** 8 February 2016

**CHAIR:** Before we go to questions—and I will start with the opposition—I would like to say that I share your sentiments and concerns about Senate inquiries. I wonder if you have any information, or whether you can provide it on notice, about senators who have supported the initiation of an inquiry—either sponsoring the inquiry or as a party to the motion—but who have then failed to participate in that inquiry?

**Dr Laing:** We do not have that information to hand. It would be quite difficult to extract, but we will have a look and see if there is anything that is—

**CHAIR:** It may be quite enlightening, no matter how difficult it is to extract.

**Senator McALLISTER:** Absolutely!

**Dr Laing:** It may be enlightening, but it is the Senate that makes decisions. One senator may put up a notice of motion for decision, but it is the Senate that makes the decision.

**CHAIR:** Indeed that is true, but the inquiry is initiated at the instigation of the people named in the reference. It has been my experience, on some inquiries that I have participated in, that sometimes the people who have initiated the reference do not even turn up to it. It beggars belief that a senator wants to initiate an inquiry and then does not participate in it. It is extraordinary. We have to pick up the load and you guys have to pick up the load as well.

**Dr Laing:** As I said, it is a matter for senators and the Senate, but we will see if we can retrieve anything enlightening.

**Answer:**

A table detailing inquiries referred on the initiative of individual senators since July 2014 is attached.

As foreshadowed at the hearing on 8 February, it is impossible to provide detailed information relating to the participation of individual senators once an inquiry has been referred. The minutes of private meetings held by committees which record attendance by senators are private documents held by each committee and cannot be disclosed under Standing Order 37(1) unless reported to the Senate or published by the committee. The tabled reports of each committee usually list the names of committee members and senators who participated in the particular inquiry, but do not detail the degree to which particular senators contributed to the inquiry.

Nonetheless, the table indicates whether senators who initiated inquiries were listed in the report as a member or substitute member of the committee, or as a participating member for the inquiry.

The table also shows where committees have not reported. In these cases, it is not possible to show whether the initiator was listed in the report. The large number of outstanding inquiries from 2014/15 is another indicator of pressures on committees' workload.

## References to Senate Committees, initiated by Senators, since July 2014

### Legislation Committees

Date	Committee name	Inquiry detail	Moved by	Reported
10.02.15	Environment and Communications	Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014 and the Telecommunications (Industry Levy) Amendment Bill 2014 (in the context of revisions to the Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency Agreement between Telstra and the Commonwealth)	Conroy, ALP *	Yes
18.03.15	Economics	Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No.1) 2015 and Customs Tariff (Anti-Dumping) Amendment Bill 2015	Xenophon, IND*	Yes
26.03.15	Finance and Public Administration	Proposed Parliament House security upgrade works	Xenophon, IND Ludwig, ALP*	Yes
12.05.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	International Aid (Promoting Gender Equality) Bill 2015 (as recommended in report by Legal & Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee 2.04.15)	Rhiannon, AG*	Yes
07.09.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Schedule 2 of the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (2015 Budget Measures) Bill 2015	Ronaldson, LP#	Yes

#(Minister, moved 2<sup>nd</sup> reading amendment effecting the reference)

### References Committees

Date	Committee name	Inquiry detail	Moved by	Reported
17.07.14	Community Affairs	Out-of-home care	Siewert, AG*	Yes
02.09.14	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Levies in the agricultural sector	Heffernan, LP*, Leyonhjelm, LDP*, and Reynolds, LP*	Yes
03.09.14	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Australia's transport energy resilience and sustainability	Madigan DLP*, Muir AMEP*, Xenophon IND*, Lambie PUP*, Bullock ALP*, Canavan NATS* & Heffernan LP*	Yes
04.09.14	Economics	Implications of financial advice reforms	Dastyari, ALP	Not yet reported
04.09.14	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Current and future arrangements for the marketing of Australian sugar	O'Sullivan NATS* and Williams NATS*	Yes

\*Listed in the report as a member, substitute member or participating member for the inquiry

02.10.14	Economics	Digital currency	Dastyari, ALP*	Yes
02.10.14	Environment & Communications	Performance and management of electricity network companies	Milne, AG*	Yes
02.10.14	Economics	Corporate tax avoidance	Milne, AG	Not yet reported
28.10.14	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Potential use by the Australian Defence Force of unmanned air, maritime and land platforms	Gallacher, ALP*	Yes
30.10.14	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Aspects of road safety in Australia	Sterle, ALP	Not yet reported
30.10.14	Economics	Incentives to privatise state or territory assets & recycle the proceeds into new infrastructure	Dastyari, ALP* amended by Wish-Wilson, AG	Yes
24.11.14	Education and Employment	Operation, regulation and funding of private vocational education and training (VET) providers	Rhiannon, AG*	Yes
25.11.14	Economics	Future of Australia's automotive industry	Carr ALP*, Muir AMEP*, Xenophon IND*, Madigan IND*, Rice AG*	Yes
02.12.14	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Commonwealth's treaty-making process	Gallacher ALP* and Xenophon IND*	Yes
03.12.14	Community Affairs	Adequacy of existing residential care arrangements for young people with disabilities in Australia	Reynolds, LP*	Yes
03.12.14	Community Affairs	Availability of new, innovative and specialist cancer drugs	Xenophon, IND*	Yes
04.12.14	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Delivery and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid program in Papua New Guinea	Gallacher ALP	Not yet reported
04.12.14	Economics	Scale and incidence of insolvency in the Australian construction industry	Cameron, ALP*	Yes
04.12.14	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Airport and aviation security at Australian airports	Xenophon, IND	Not yet reported
11.02.15	Community Affairs	Violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings	Stewart, AG*	Yes
11.02.15	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Future role and contribution* of regional capitals to Australia	Wish-Wilson, AG	Not yet reported
11.02.15	Education and Employment	Higher education research and reform, including the principles of the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014	Carr, ALP*; Xenophon & Lambie, IND; Muir, AMEP; Rhiannon AG* and Lazarus, PUP	Yes

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12.02.15	Community Affairs	Impact on service quality, efficiency and sustainability of recent Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services	Siewert, AG*	Yes
02.03.15	Economics	Role, importance and overall performance of cooperative, mutual and member-owned firms in the Australian economy	Xenophon, IND and McKenzie, NATS	Not yet reported
04.03.15	Finance and Public Administration	Access to legal assistance services	Lines, ALP	Not yet reported
16.03.15	Environment and Communications	Stormwater resources in Australia	Xenophon, IND*	Yes
18.03.15	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Effect of market consolidation on the red meat processing sector	McKenzie, Williams, Canavan and O'Sullivan, NATS	Not yet reported
19.03.15	Finance and Public Administration	Commonwealth Indigenous Advancement Strategy tendering processes	Siewert AG and McLucas, ALP	Not yet reported
24.03.15	Environment and Communications	Regulation of the fin-fish aquaculture industry in Tasmania	Whish-Wilson, AG*	Yes
24.03.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Proposed China-Australia Free Trade Agreement	Wong, ALP*	Yes
24.03.15	Education and Employment	Impact of temporary work visa programs	Rice, AG and Cameron, ALP	Not yet reported
25.03.15	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Australian grape and wine industry	Ruston LP, Xenophon IND, McKenzie NATS, Whish-Wilson AG, Madigan IND	Not yet reported
25.03.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Mental health of the Australian Defence Force personnel returning from deployment	Whish-Wilson, AG	Not yet reported
13.05.15	Economics	Food certification schemes	Bernardi, LP*	Yes
16.06.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Handling of a letter sent by Mr Man Haron Monis to the Attorney-General	Collins, ALP*	Yes
16.06.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Impact of 2014 and 2015 budget decisions on the Arts	Ludlam, AG* and Collins, ALP*	Yes
17.06.15	Education and Employment	Students with disability in the school system	Carr, ALP and Lazarus, IND	Yes
18.06.15	Environment and Communications	Threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia and Australian waters	Whish-Wilson, AG	Not yet reported

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18.06.15	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Increasing use of so-called Flag of Convenience shipping in Australia	Sterle, ALP and Rice, AG	Not yet reported
22.06.15	Environment and Communications	Future of Australia's video game development industry	Ludlam, AG	Not yet reported
23.06.15	Economics	Economic impact of non-conforming building products on the Australian building and construction industry	Xenophon, IND, Madigan, IND & Lambie, IND	Not yet reported
24.06.15	Economics	Matters relating to credit card interest rates	Dastyari ALP*, Leyonhjelm LDP, Lambie IND, Lazarus IND, Madigan IND, Whish-Wilson AG, Xenophon IND*	Yes
24.06.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Payments by the Commonwealth of Australia in exchange for the turn back of asylum seeker boats	Hanson-Young AG	Not yet reported
24.06.15	Economics	Foreign bribery	Xenophon IND, Wang PUP	Not yet reported
25.06.15	Economics	Economic & social impact of measures introduced to restrict personal choice (inquiry termed personal choice & community impacts)	Leyonhjelm, LDP	Not yet reported
25.06.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Use of smoke alarms	Lazarus, IND	Not yet reported
13.08.15	Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport	Decision-making process for the Perth Freight Link project	Ludlam, AG and Sterle, ALP	Not yet reported
17.08.15	Economics	Economic security for women in retirement	McAllister ALP, Edwards LP, Waters AG	Not yet reported
20.08.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Capability of Defence's physical science and engineering (PSE) workforce	Gallacher, ALP	Not yet reported
20.08.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Australia's relationship with Mexico	Back, LP*	Yes
20.08.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	A popular vote, in the form of a plebiscite or referendum, on the matter of marriage in Australia	Rice, AG*	Yes
20.08.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Establishment of a national registration system for Australian paramedics	Lazarus, IND	Not yet reported
07.09.15	Environment and Communications	Environmental, social and economic impacts of large-capacity fishing vessels (supertrawlers) operating in Australia's marine jurisdiction	Urquhart, ALP and Brown, ALP	Not yet reported
12.10.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Regional processing centres	Hanson-Young, AG and Gallacher, ALP	Not yet reported

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09.11.15	Education and Employment	Creation of a national long service standard and the portability of long service and other entitlements	Rice AG, Lines ALP and Madigan, IND	Not yet reported
12.11.15	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Revenge porn	Bilyk, ALP	Not yet reported
12.11.15	Community Affairs	Lyme-like illness in Australia	Madigan, Lazarus, Lambie Xenophon IND; Wang PUP; Leyonhjelm LDP; Day FF; Muir AMEP; McKenzie NATS	Not yet reported
24.11.15	Economics	Development of the bauxite resources near Aurukun in Cape York	Canavan NATS, Macdonald and Lindgren LP	Not yet reported
25.11.15	Economics	Inconsistencies and inadequacies of current criminal, civil and administrative penalties for corporate and financial misconduct or white-collar crime	Whish-Wilson, AG	Not yet reported
25.11.15	Finance and Public Administration	Gender inequality and domestic violence	Waters, AG	Not yet reported
25.11.15	Economics	Examination of the foreign investment review framework	Conroy ALP, Xenophon, Lambie, Lazarus IND, Whish-Wilson AG	Not yet reported
26.11.15	Economics	Future sustainability of Australia's steel industry and its supply chain	Carr ALP, Rhiannon AG, Xenophon, Madigan, Lazarus and Lambie IND	Not yet reported
30.11.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Contamination by PFOS and PFOA at Defence and other facilities and use of firefighting foams containing PFOS and PFOA	Conroy ALP and Rhiannon AG*	04.02.2016 (Part 1). 30.04.2016 (Part 2 – not yet reported)
01.12.15	Community Affairs	Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce	Siewert AG and Polley ALP	Not yet reported
02.12.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Operations of Defence Housing Australia	Conroy ALP	Not yet reported
02.12.15	Environment and Communications	Australian children accessing pornography on the Internet	Bullock ALP, Back LP	Not yet reported
02.12.15	Community Affairs	Indefinite detention of people with cognitive and psychiatric impairment in Australia	Siewert AG	Not yet reported
02.12.15	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade	Planned acquisition of the F-35 Lightning II (Joint Strike Fighter)	Whish-Wilson AG	Not yet reported

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02.02.16	Finance and Public Administration	Commonwealth procurement procedures – paper procurement	Carr ALP, Muir AMEP, Madigan and Xenophon IND, Rice AG	Not yet reported
02.02.16	Environment and Communications	Use of bumblebee population in Tasmania for commercial pollination	Urquhart ALP	Not yet reported
02.02.16	Community Affairs	Medical complaints process in Australia	Xenophon and Madigan, IND	Not yet reported
02.02.16	Economics	Carbon risk disclosure	Whish-Wilson, AG	Not yet reported
03.02.16	Legal and Constitutional Affairs	Alcohol-fuelled violence	Lazarus, IND	Not yet reported
04.02.16	Economics	Causes and consequences of the collapse of listed retailers in Australia	Xenophon, IND	Not yet reported

### Joint and Select Committees

Date	Committee name	Inquiry detail	Moved by	Reported
23.09.14	Australia Fund Establishment (Joint Select)	The establishment of a fund to support rural and manufacturing industries	Lazarus, PUP*	Yes
30.09.14	Certain Aspects of Queensland Government Administration Related to Commonwealth Government Affairs (Select)	(a) the amount of Commonwealth funds allocated or paid to the State of Queensland since 26 March 2012	Lazarus, PUP*	Yes
24.11.14	Wind Turbines (Select)	Application of regulatory governance and economic impact of wind turbines	Leyonhjelm LDP*, Madigan IND*, Day FFP*, Xenophon IND* and Back, LP*	Yes
26.03.15	Recent Allegations relating to Conditions and Circumstances at the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru (Select)	Inquire into the responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government in connection with the management and operation of the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru	Gallagher, ALP* and Hanson-Young, AG*	Yes

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24.06.15	Murray-Darling Basin Plan (Select)	Inquire into positive and negative impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and associated Commonwealth programs on regional communities	Day FFP, Wang PUP, Leyonhjelm LDP, Heffernan LP, Lambie IND, Muir AMEP, Madigan IND	Not yet reported
10.08.15	Recent Allegations relating to Conditions and Circumstances at the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru (Select) <i>Reappointed</i>	Inquire into the responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government in connection with the management and operation of the Regional Processing Centre in Nauru	Gallacher, ALP*	Yes
12.11.15	Unconventional Gas Mining (Select)	Adequacy of Australia's legislative, regulatory and policy framework for unconventional gas mining including coal seam gas (CSG) and shale gas mining	Lazarus, IND	Not yet reported
04.02.16	School Funding Investment (Select)	Effect of reduced Commonwealth funding for state and territory provided schools	Dastyari, ALP	Not yet reported

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