

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

REPORT TO FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – MAY ESTIMATES 2009

TRENDS DURING THE 41ST AND 42ND PARLIAMENTS

The attached statistics and tables show trends in the activities of Senate committees during the 41st and 42nd parliaments. The Department has met the recent substantial increase in committee work referred by the Senate by:

- enlarging the budget allocation for committee work; and
- using a variety of staffing strategies.

These matters are described and the trends can be summarised as follows:

41st Parliament

During the 41st Parliament, there was a:

- Reduction in numbers of references to committees; and
- No select committees appointed after 1 July 2005.

As a consequence, with committees being less active, staff vacancies arising out of normal turnover were not filled. Committee activities were able to be supported with fewer staff, with staff gradually being reduced during the 40th and 41st Parliaments from 62 staff in 2003, to 53 staff by the end of the 41st Parliament in July 2008.

42nd Parliament

During the 42nd Parliament:

- There was an increase in the numbers of references to committees. The busiest committees with the most number of references have been Economics (maximum of 14 references at one time), Legal and Constitutional Affairs (maximum of 5 references at one time) and Community Affairs (maximum of 12 references at one time).
- This increase in activity is also reflected by the numbers of committee reports being tabled, with the Economics Committee tabling 30 reports and the Community Affairs Committee tabling 18 reports during 2008. In the first 5 months of 2009, the Economics Committee tabled 12 reports, the Community Affairs Committee tabled 8 and the Legal and Constitutional Committee tabled 14.
- There were more very short-term references (ie less than 2 weeks).
- The appointment of 8 select committees occurred within a 12 month period.

As a consequence of this increase in committee workload directed by the Senate, additional staff were recruited. As a result the committee staff level as at May 2009 has risen back to 62, comparable to the levels of staffing and committee activity experienced in 2003 – 04.

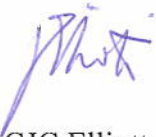
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The significant point is that although the staffing level is not greater now than it was in 2003-04, salary costs have risen significantly over the 6 years.

A variety of workload management strategies have been used in the Senate committee office to meet the significant increase in workload as follows:

- Committee staff have been asked to work (in some cases, significant amounts of) additional hours.
- Committee secretariats which are less busy frequently provide research, analysis and administrative assistance to committee secretariats with large numbers of references and those with very short reporting deadlines.
- Officers from other areas of the Department have undertaken additional duties to assist committee secretariats.
- The Department has secured secondments from other departments to assist with specific committee tasks.

It is clear that all of these strategies are short-term and rely on the goodwill of officers concerned.



CJC Elliott
Clerk Assistant (Committees)
21 May 2009

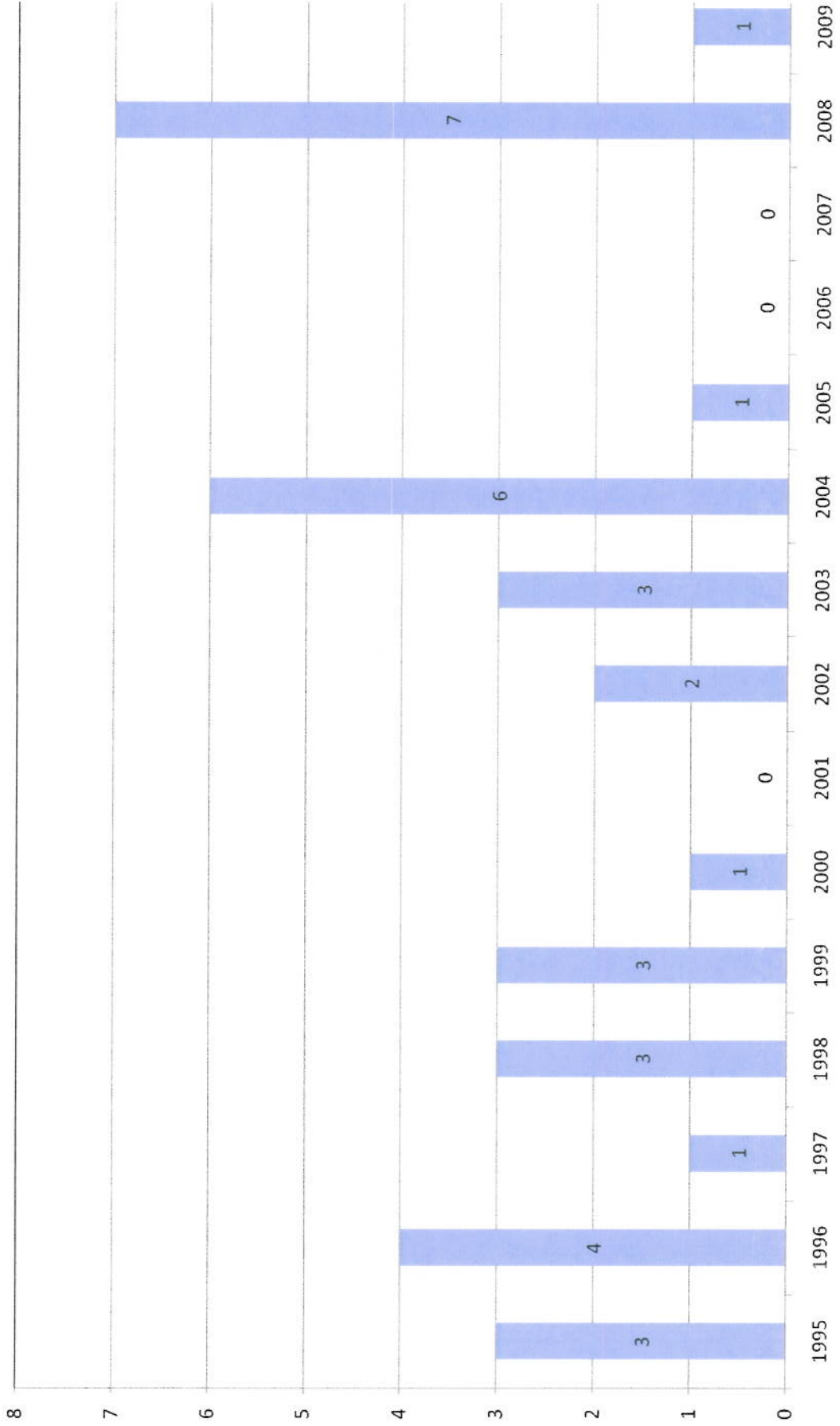
Senate Committees - Number of References 1995 to 2009



Senate Committee Hearings Held - 1995 to 2009
(as at 30/4/09)

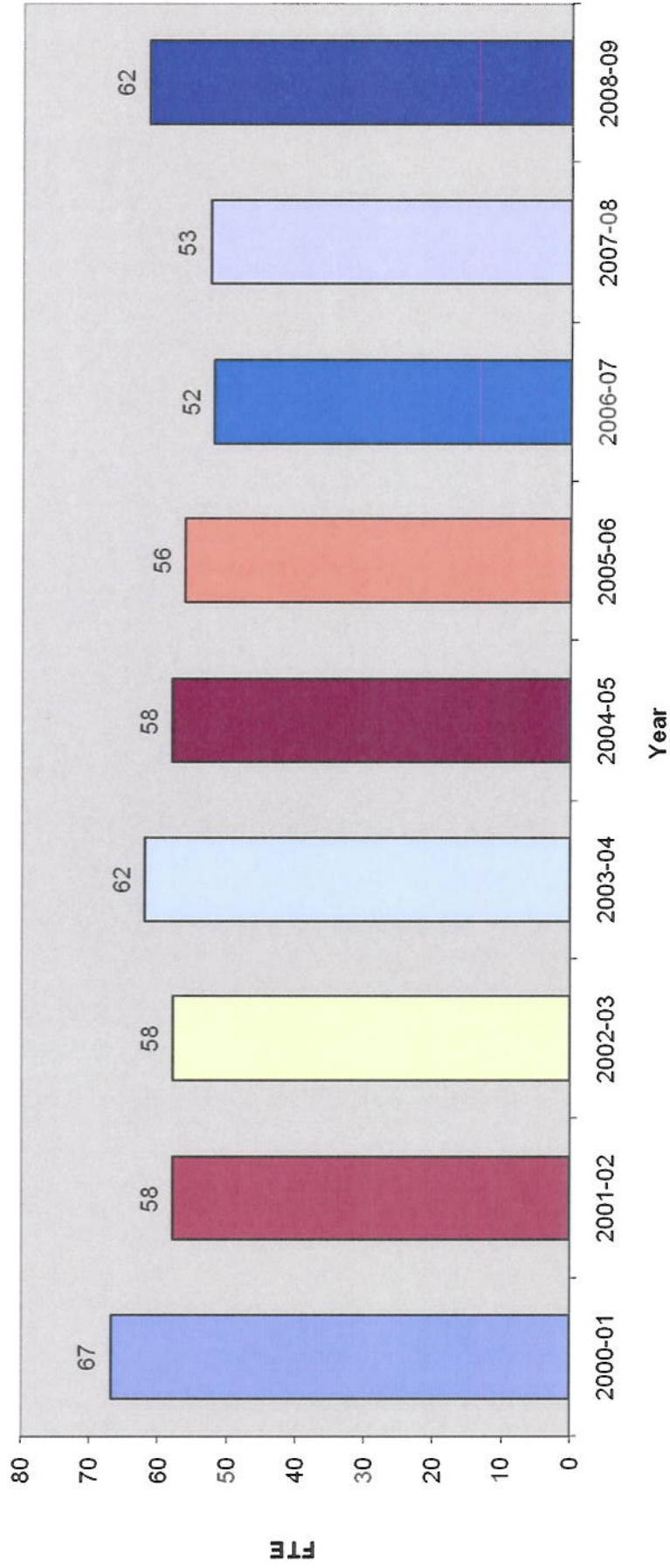


Senate Select Committees Appointed - 1995 to 2009

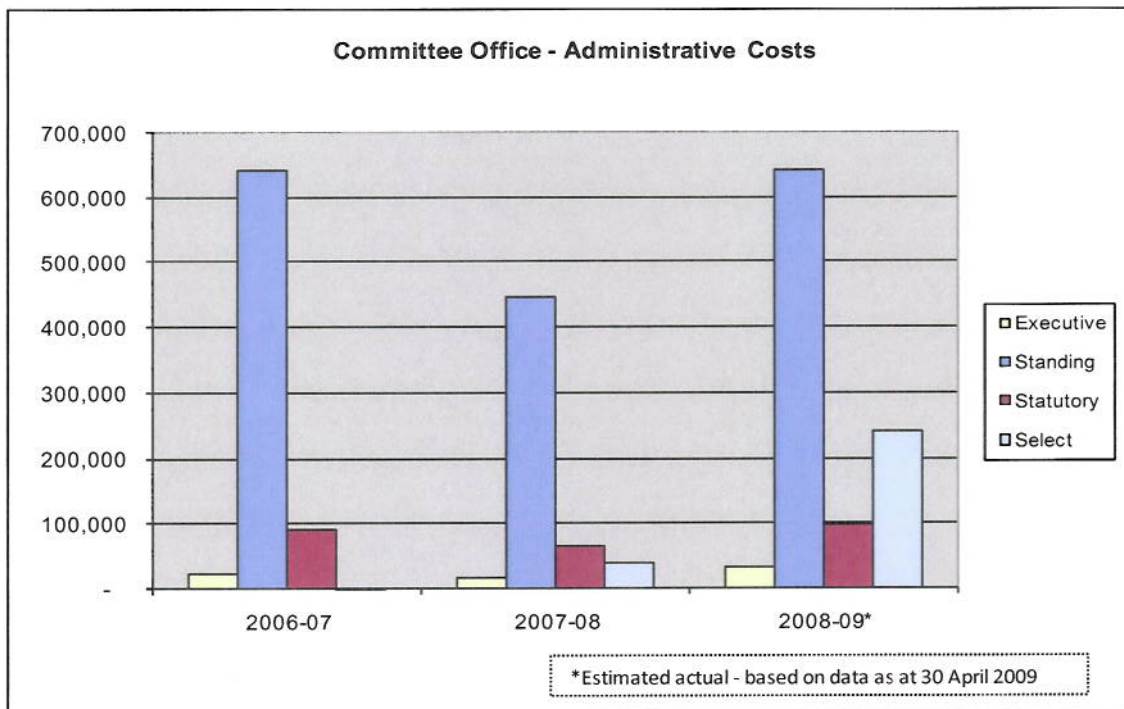
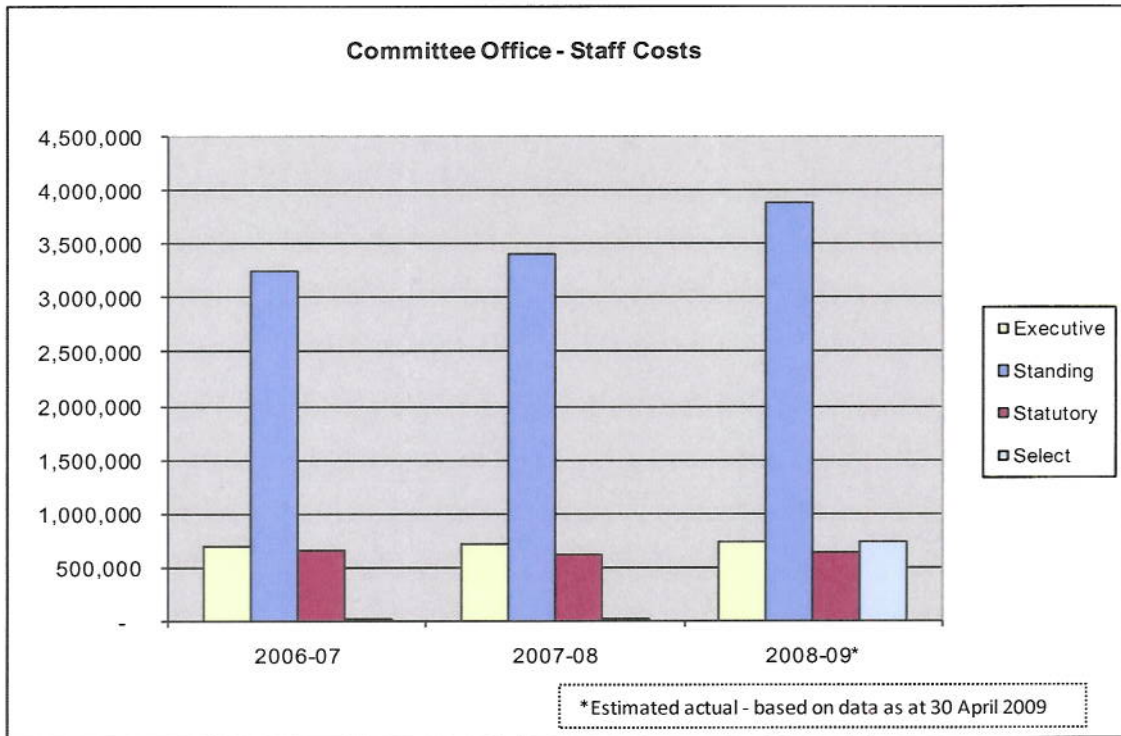


**COMMITTEE OFFICE STAFFING LEVELS
FROM 2000 - 2009**

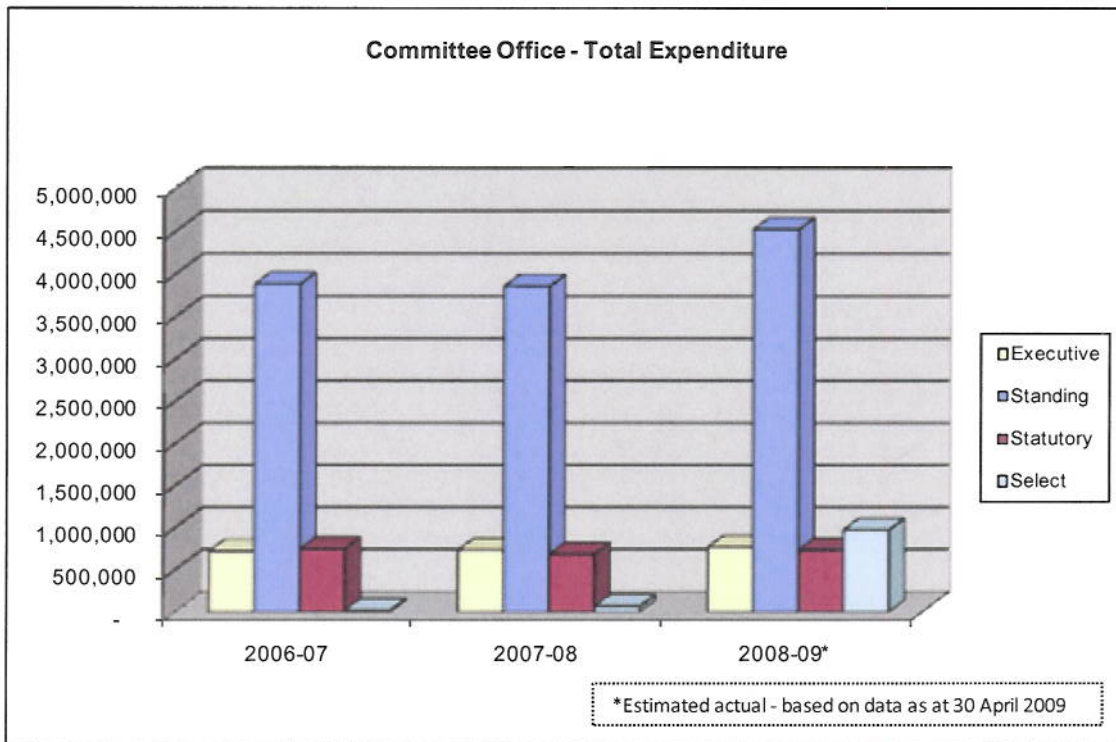
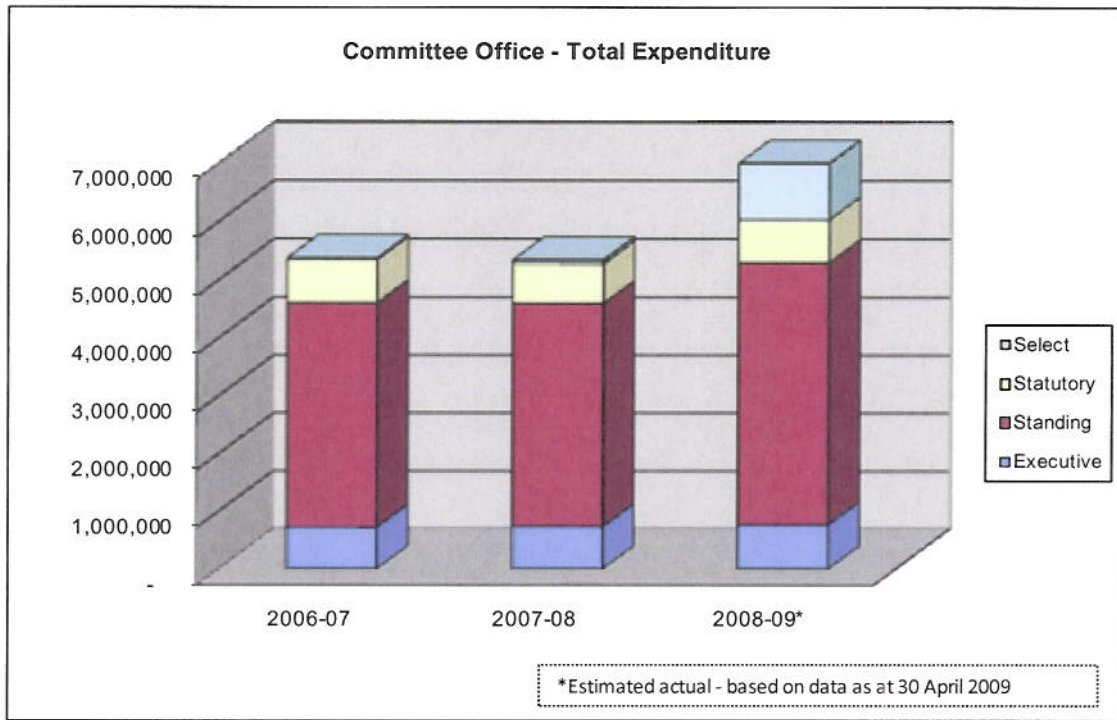
Committee Office FTE 2000/01 to 2008/09



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**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF COMMITTEE COSTS BY CATEGORY -
STANDING, SELECT AND JOINT COMMITTEES – 2006-07 TO 2008-09**

	2006-07 Full Year Actual	2007-08 Full Year Actual	2008-09* Full Year Forecast
Executive			
Staff costs	693,880	714,464	732,155
Administrative costs	23,784	17,157	31,262
Total Expenses	717,664	731,621	763,416
Standing			
Staff costs	3,239,223	3,407,126	3,882,374
Administrative costs	641,611	447,673	641,789
Total Expenses	3,880,834	3,854,799	4,524,163
Statutory			
Staff costs	655,654	615,606	636,851
Administrative costs	90,866	65,186	98,285
Total Expenses	746,520	680,792	735,136
Select			
Staff costs	16,152	25,532	727,775
Administrative costs	235	38,237	241,816
Total Expenses	16,386	63,770	969,591
Total Committees Expense	5,361,404	5,330,982	6,992,306

* *Estimated actual - based on data as at 30 April 2009*

Staff costs - the salaries of Senate staff working within the secretariat.

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

**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF COMMITTEE COSTS BY INDIVIDUAL
 COMMITTEE – 2007- 08 TO 2008-09**

Standing Committees	2007-08 Full Year Actual	2008-09* Full Year Forecast
Community Affairs		
Staff costs	489,755	522,462
Administrative costs	97,406	107,008
Economics		
Staff costs	410,767	550,801
Administrative costs	60,158	107,249
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations		
Staff costs	408,032	473,751
Administrative costs	54,709	82,232
Environment, Communications and the Arts		
Staff costs	394,281	350,333
Administrative costs	52,004	70,936
Finance and Public Administration		
Staff costs	372,210	445,758
Administrative costs	47,858	67,873

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Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Staff costs	458,756	474,623
Administrative costs	39,994	50,437

Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Staff costs	449,170	599,642
Administrative costs	50,624	63,892

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Staff costs	424,154	465,005
Administrative costs	44,921	92,163

**Joint
Statutory
Committees**

**Australian Commission for Law Enforcement
Integrity and Australian Crime Commission**

Staff costs	348,672	325,602
Administrative costs	35,545	65,201

Corporations and Financial Services

Staff costs	266,934	311,249
Administrative costs	29,641	33,084

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**Select
Committees**

Agricultural and Related Industries

Staff costs	-	62,730
Administrative costs	12,815	15,641

State Government Financial Management

Staff costs	-	-
Administrative costs	10,627	8,851

Housing Affordability in Australia

Staff costs	23,042	2,351
Administrative costs	13,597	4,808

Regional & Remote Indigenous Communities Select Committee

Staff costs	-	218,180
Administrative costs	-	93,475

Fuel and Energy

Staff costs	-	245,026
Administrative costs	-	74,912

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**National Broadband
Network**

Staff costs - 162,274

Administrative costs - 40,154

Select Committee on Men's Health

Staff costs - 31,658

Administrative costs - 2,909

Select Committee on Climate Policy

Staff costs - 5,139

Administrative costs - 1,065