



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

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14 October 2009

Mr Stephen Palethorpe  
Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Palethorpe

**ESTIMATES HEARING 19 OCTOBER 2009 – DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE**

During the consideration of the Senate Department's estimates on Monday, 23 February 2009, Senators Ferguson and Moore asked questions about the increase in costs and volume of activity of Senate committees.

On 27 February and again on 21 May 2009, I wrote to the committee providing information which illustrated the recent costs and levels of activity of Senate committees and a comparison between the levels of committee activity in the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliaments.

To assist the work of the committee, I now provide the same tables and statistics, updated to October 2009, for ease of comparison.

Yours sincerely

(Harry Evans)

**SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

**REPORT TO FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – OCTOBER ESTIMATES 2009**

**TRENDS DURING THE 41<sup>ST</sup> AND 42<sup>ND</sup> PARLIAMENTS**

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The attached statistics and tables show trends in the activities of Senate committees during the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> 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:

**41<sup>st</sup> Parliament**

During the 41<sup>st</sup> 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 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Parliaments from 62 staff in 2003, to 53 staff by the end of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament in July 2008.

**42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament**

During the 42<sup>nd</sup> 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.
- An increase in the number of very short-term references (ie less than 2 weeks)
- The appointment of 8 select committees within a 12 month period.

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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. As at October 2009, staffing has reduced slightly to 61.

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.

As mentioned in my report of May 2009, a variety of workload management strategies have continued to be 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.

Overall cost increase for the Office

The cost of the office has risen from \$6.8million to \$9.0million. This increase of \$2.2 million is made up of:

- additional staff - \$1.1million
- pay increase for existing staff - \$0.2million
- increase in cost of flights, charter aircraft etc for public hearings - \$0.5million
- increase in share of corporate overheads of \$0.4million.

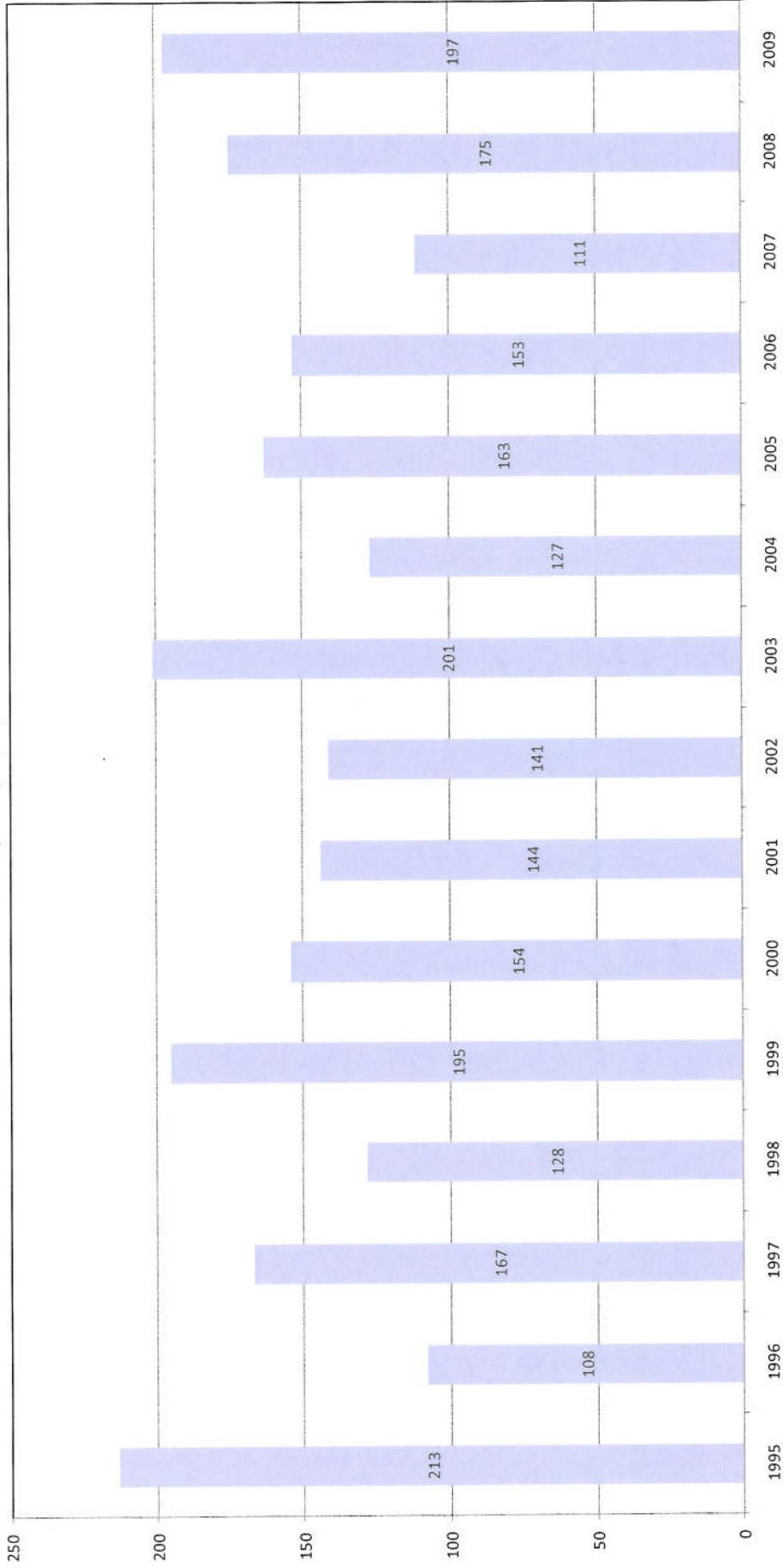
  
CJC Elliott

Clerk Assistant (Committees)

14 October 2009

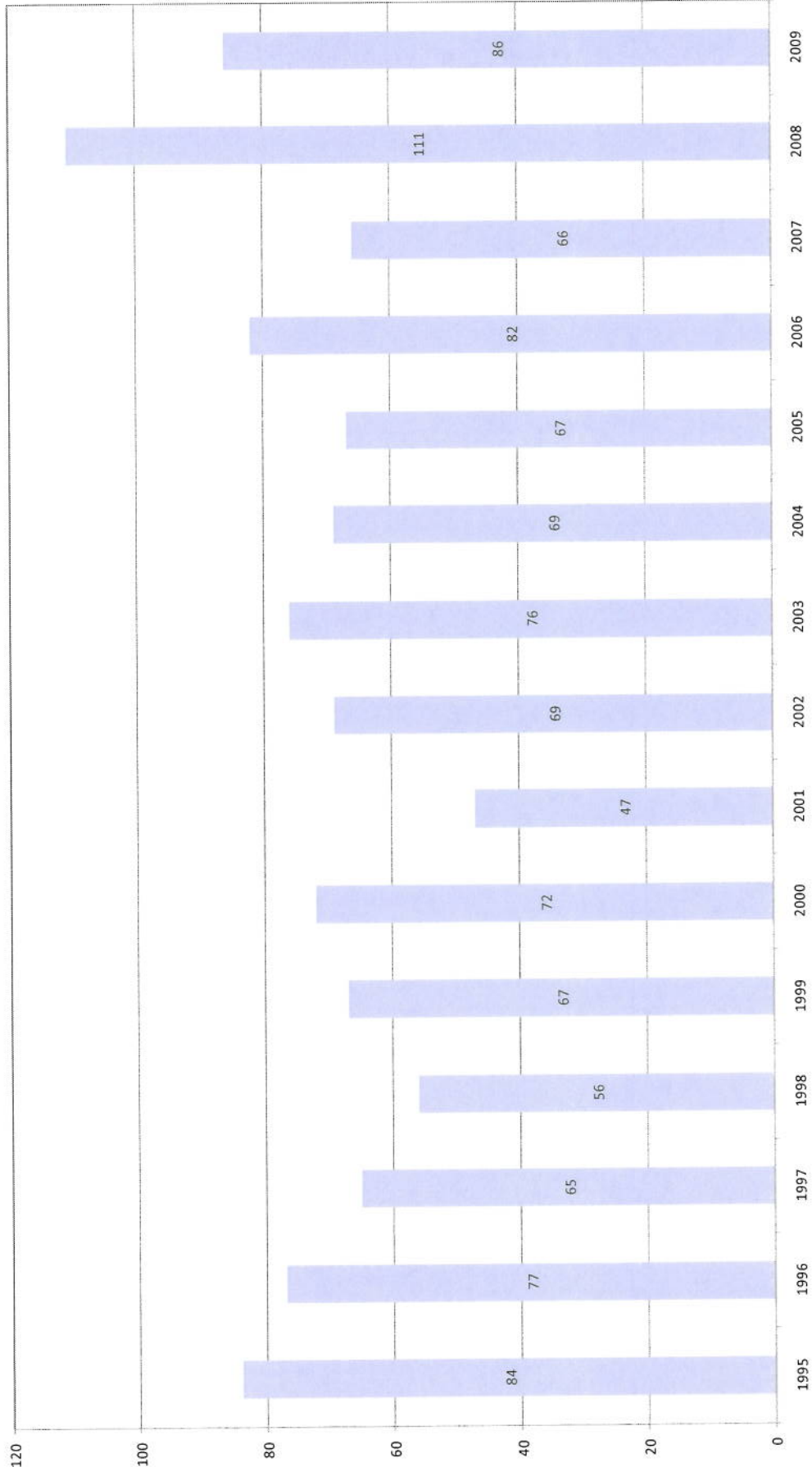
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**Senate Committee Hearings Held - 1995 to 2009**  
(as at 9/10/09)



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**Senate Committees - Number of References 1995 to 2009**  
(as at 17/09/09)



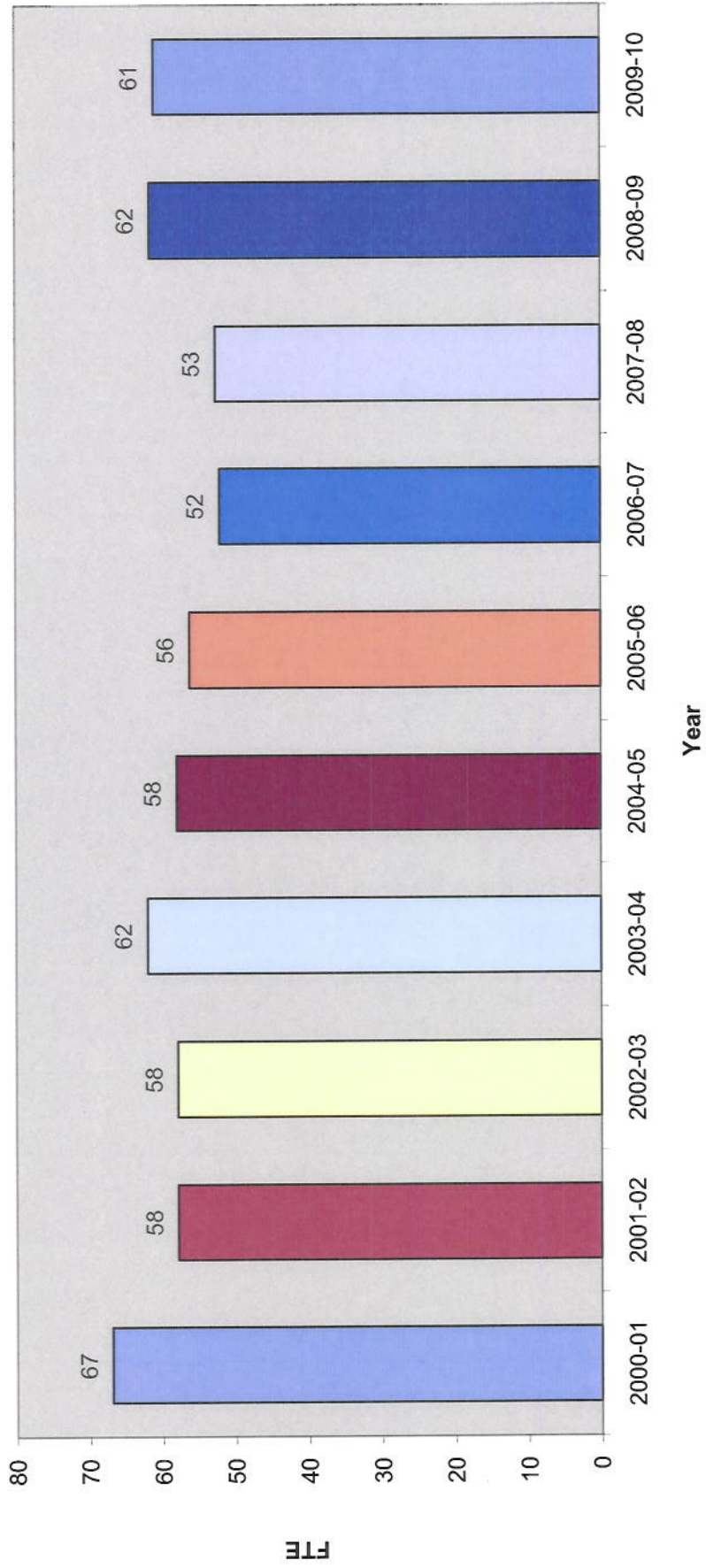
### Senate Select Committees Appointed - 1995 to 2009



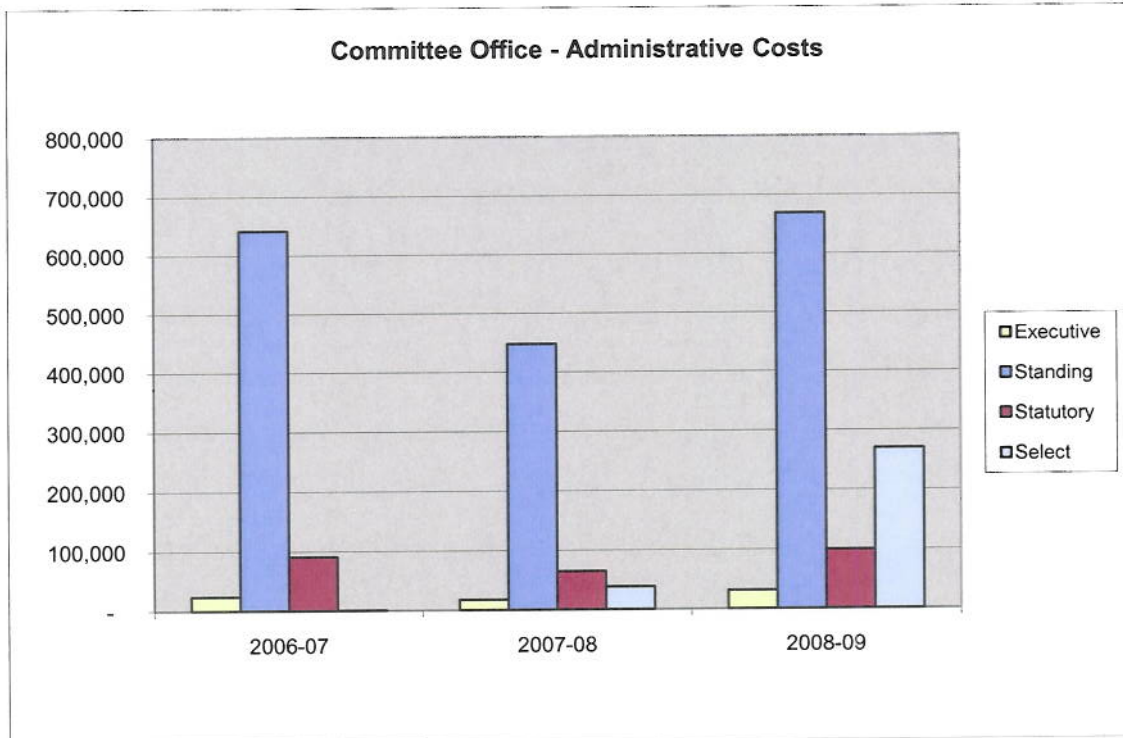
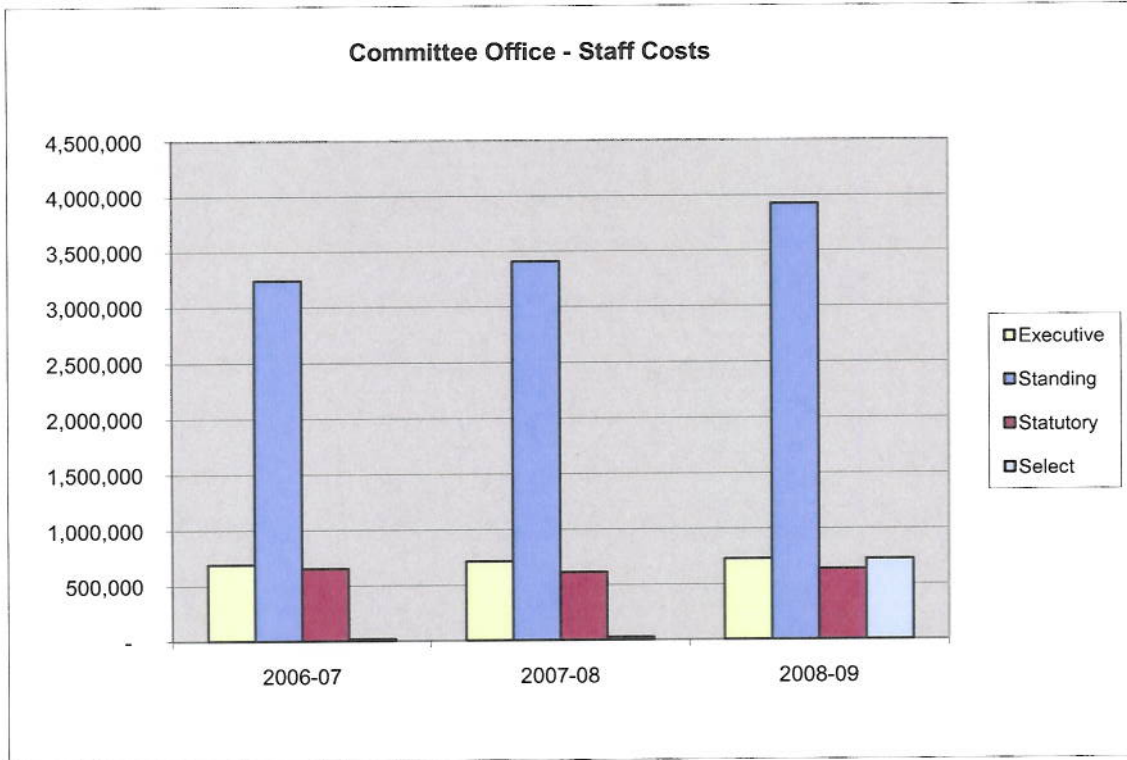
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COMMITTEE OFFICE STAFFING LEVELS  
FROM 2000 - 2009

Committee Office FTE 2000/01 to 2008/09

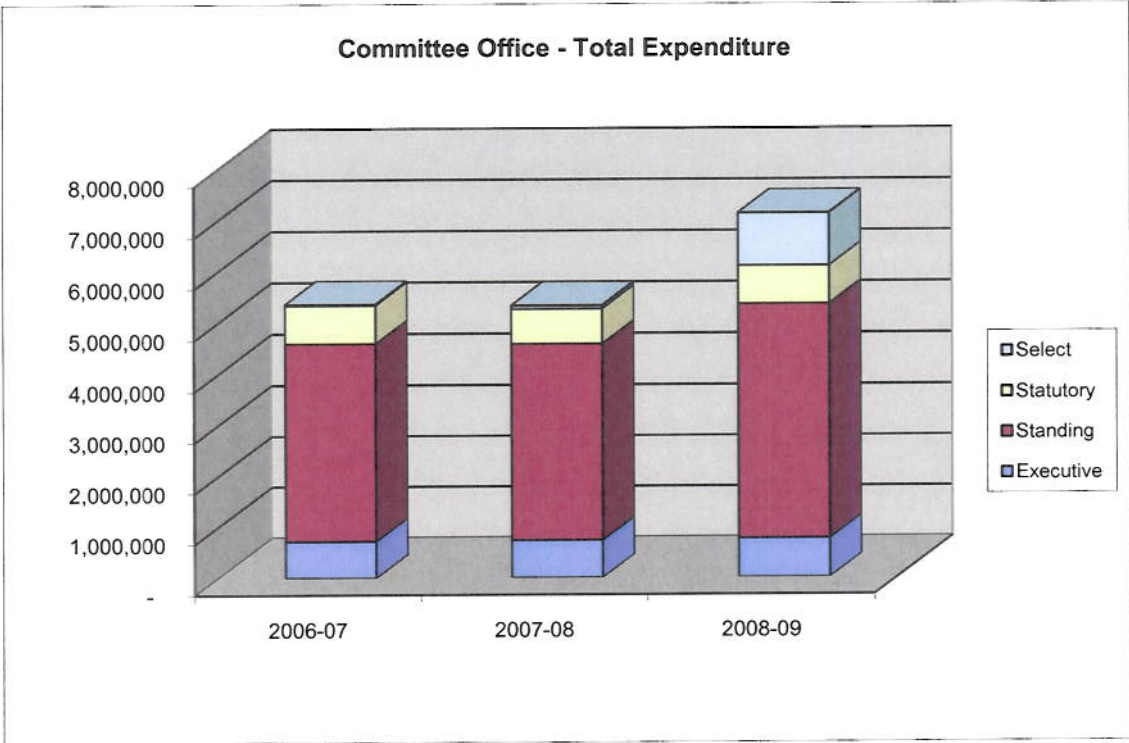
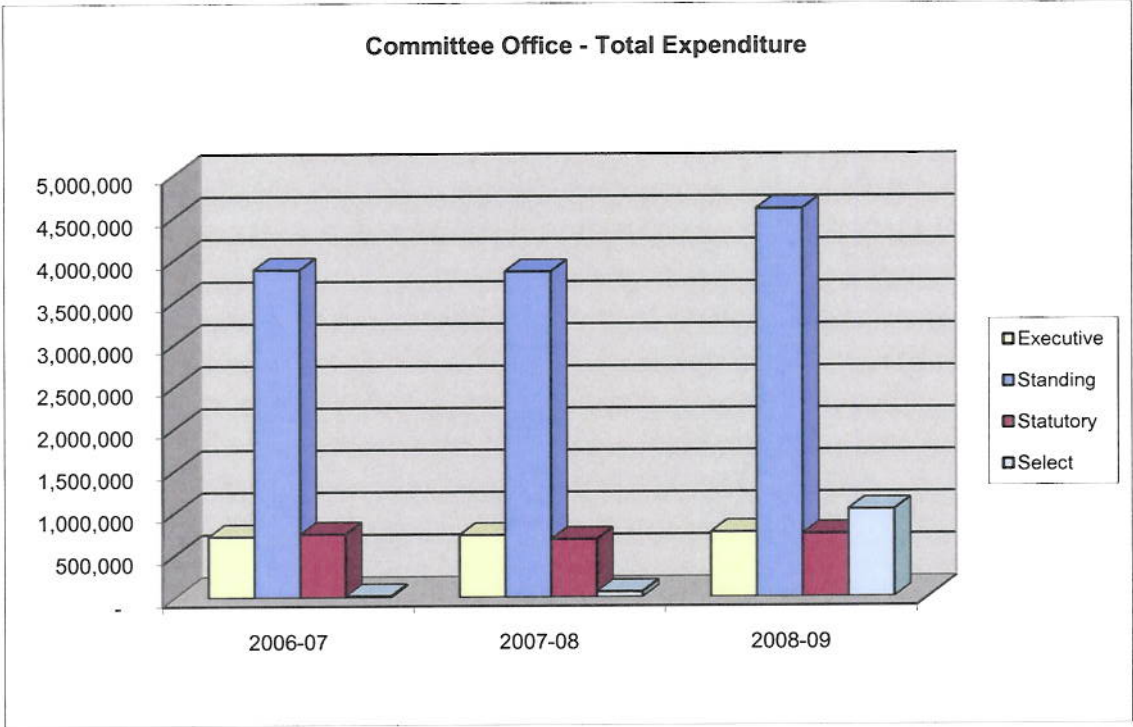


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**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF COMMITTEE COSTS BY CATEGORY -  
 STANDING, SELECT AND JOINT COMMITTEES – 2006-07 TO 2008-09**

	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09*</i>
<b><i>Executive</i></b>			
Staff costs	693,880	714,464	730,947
Administrative costs	23,784	17,157	31,330
<b><i>Total Expenses</i></b>	<u>717,664</u>	<u>731,621</u>	<u>762,277</u>
<b><i>Standing</i></b>			
Staff costs	3,239,223	3,407,126	3,923,416
Administrative costs	641,611	447,673	668,702
<b><i>Total Expenses</i></b>	<u>3,880,834</u>	<u>3,854,799</u>	<u>4,592,119</u>
<b><i>Statutory</i></b>			
Staff costs	655,654	615,606	644,454
Administrative costs	90,866	65,186	99,420
<b><i>Total Expenses</i></b>	<u>746,520</u>	<u>680,792</u>	<u>743,874</u>
<b><i>Select</i></b>			
Staff costs	16,152	25,532	758,461
Administrative costs	235	38,237	269,857
<b><i>Total Expenses</i></b>	<u>16,386</u>	<u>63,770</u>	<u>969,591</u>
<b><i>Total Committees Expense</i></b>	<u><u>5,361,404</u></u>	<u><u>5,330,982</u></u>	<u><u>7,126,588</u></u>

*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.*

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

<b>Standing Committees</b>	<b>2007-08 Full Year Actual</b>	<b>2008-09* Full Year Forecast</b>
<b>Community Affairs</b>		
Staff costs	489,755	525,651
Administrative costs	97,406	111,546
<b>Economics</b>		
Staff costs	410,767	555,361
Administrative costs	60,158	111,257
<b>Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</b>		
Staff costs	408,032	482,181
Administrative costs	54,709	86,450
<b>Environment, Communications and the Arts</b>		
Staff costs	394,281	356,511
Administrative costs	52,004	82,848
<b>Finance and Public Administration</b>		
Staff costs	372,210	453,016
Administrative costs	47,858	71,230

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**Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade**

Staff costs	458,756	478,792
Administrative costs	39,994	47,669

**Legal and Constitutional Affairs**

Staff costs	449,170	604,366
Administrative costs	50,624	66,976

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

Staff costs	424,154	467,538
Administrative costs	44,921	90,726

**Joint  
Statutory  
Committees**

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

Staff costs	348,672	331,178
Administrative costs	35,545	68,062

**Corporations and Financial Services**

Staff costs	266,934	313,276
Administrative costs	29,641	31,358

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**Select  
Committees**

**Agricultural and Related Industries**

Staff costs - 63,754

Administrative costs 12,815 21,061

**State Government Financial Management**

Staff costs - 348

Administrative costs 10,627 7,356

**Housing Affordability in Australia**

Staff costs 23,042 1,959

Administrative costs 13,597 4,027

**Regional & Remote Indigenous Communities Select Committee**

Staff costs 1,567 220,945

Administrative costs 1,198 79,925

**Fuel and Energy**

Staff costs - 255,246

Administrative costs - 79,652

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**National Broadband  
Network**

Staff costs - 172,174

Administrative costs - 41,340

**Select Committee on Men's Health**

Staff costs - 29,268

Administrative costs - 11,258

**Select Committee on Climate Policy**

Staff costs - 14,767

Administrative costs - 25,218