

## INTRODUCTION

The Senate has appointed committees since its establishment in 1901. In 1970 the Senate established a comprehensive standing committee system comprising two groups of committees—legislative and general purpose standing committees and estimates committees. Although this committee structure has undergone change the work of Senate committees continues. The number of reports produced since 1970 has been considerable: more than 2830 as at the end of 2008. The reports deal with a large and diverse range of issues.

In October 1994 and again in 2006 the Senate committee system was restructured.

In 1994 the former legislative and general purpose standing committees and estimates committees were replaced with eight pairs of legislation and references committees. The legislation committees absorbed the function of the former estimates committees in addition to undertaking inquiries into bills and the performance of government agencies. The references committees conducted inquiries into any other matters referred to them by the Senate.

In September 2006 the eight pairs of legislation and references committees became eight committees again. The functions of the two committees – the legislation and references – were amalgamated. Each of the eight legislative and general purpose standing committees is responsible for the consideration of estimates, bills, and inquiries into the performance of government agencies and other matters referred by the Senate.

The Consolidated Register of Senate Committee Reports is in two volumes: Volume 1 from 1970-2004 and Volume 2 from 2004-07. This annual supplement lists reports tabled since the beginning of 2008 until December 2008. On-line the register will continue as a consolidated list of reports. Annual supplements listing reports produced over the life of a parliament will continue to be produced to assist legislators, researchers and others, in Australia and internationally, in locating particular Senate reports or reports on particular topics.

Reports are listed chronologically in total, and chronologically by committee and by subject matter. The register also lists bills referred to committees, reports on the scrutiny of annual reports and reports on the consideration of estimates of expenditure.

The consolidated register can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/register/report/index.htm>. The on-line version of the register is updated regularly to provide timely and current information on the work of Senate committees.

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