

## **The Senate Committee System: Historical Perspectives\***

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The system of legislative and general purpose standing committees and estimates committees that came into being on 11 June 1970 was probably the most significant consequence of a general business debate in the entire history of the Senate. The debate that brought these committees into being spread over two Thursday evenings in successive weeks during the time set aside for general business. The outcome hinged on votes on three motions which were being considered concurrently. These votes were decided on the narrowest of margins.

How had the Senate arrived at this crucial point in its history?

Clearly, the committee system did not spring from nowhere. A chronology of procedural developments affecting Senate committees, attached to the paper (Appendix 1), shows that, as in any other house, committees were always an essential part of the Senate landscape. The first Senate committee was established within days of the Senate's first meeting, as soon as debate on the Address-in-Reply had been completed (but not before the Senate had agreed to three orders for the production of documents). The usual range of domestic committees was established the following day and within little more than two months after its first meeting, the Senate had its first select committee, to inquire into steamship communication between the mainland and Tasmania. The first committee witnesses appeared at public hearings the following month and, as early as 1904, the first bill was referred to a standing committee.

Further select committees followed, including on a number of cases concerning the treatment of individuals as well as on such policy matters as the effect of intoxicating liquor on Australian soldiers. At this distance, the number of inquiries into individual cases is surprising and a sign that we perhaps take for granted the now well-established role of the Ombudsman and other aspects of the scheme of administrative review in sorting out the problems that individuals have with the system. A list of these early select committees is also attached (Appendix 2).

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\* This paper was presented at the Senate Committees and Government Accountability Conference at Parliament House, Canberra, on 11 November 2010. The main sources for this paper were R. Laing (ed.), *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate*. Canberra, Department of the Senate, 2009, particularly the introduction, appendix 1 and the entries on standing orders 25, 26, 60 and 62; and J.R. Odgers (ed.), *Australian Senate Practice* (6th edn). Canberra, Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration (ACT Division), 1991.

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Also of note during these early years was the Federal Parliamentary War Committee 1914–18, a high-level advisory committee comprising members of both houses and including the prime minister, Opposition leader and defence minister. The committee provided advice to the government in a number of crucial areas relating to support for the war effort, such as recruiting and the welfare of returned soldiers. It was also a way of ensuring that the federal parliament received information about these matters.

There was certainly a degree of self-consciousness about the potential role of committees in this new-style upper house which was given expression in the establishment of a select committee in December 1929 to inquire into the advisability or otherwise of having standing committees in a number of areas in order to improve the legislative work of the Senate and increase the participation of senators in that work.

These were unpropitious times which we now look back on as the Global Financial Crisis of the 20th century. The Senate was having a great deal of trouble with the Scullin Government which, on a dozen occasions over 1930 and 1931, made regulations concerning waterside transport workers which the Senate repeatedly disallowed. As soon as one set of regulations had been disallowed, the government would immediately remake the same regulations and on it went. In this context, the need for some scheme of formal scrutiny of delegated legislation made by the executive pursuant to Acts of Parliament emerged as a priority and was the subject of one of the key recommendations of the Select Committee on a Standing Committee System. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Ordinances was established in March 1932 and the Acts Interpretation Act was amended shortly thereafter to prohibit the remaking of disallowed regulations within six months of their disallowance. The Scullin Government had lost office at the elections of December 1931.

The committee also recommended changes to the standing orders to facilitate the referral of more bills to committees. There was a contemporary context to this recommendation as well. A select committee was established in July 1930 to examine the Central Reserve Bank Bill. Government members declined to participate in the inquiry and were replaced with Opposition members, so it was a committee comprising Opposition members only. The committee's report was unsupportive of the bill which was defeated early in 1931. It is little wonder that the government regarded the referral of a bill to a committee as a hostile move. Although the standing orders were amended in 1932 to facilitate the referral of bills to committees, it would take decades before this early stigma was neutralised.

A third recommendation made by the Select Committee on a Standing Committee System in its first report caused such consternation at the time that the committee was sent back to reconsider. The committee had recommended the establishment of a committee on external affairs at a time when Australia's foreign policy was dictated from 'Mother England'. It would be at least another decade until Australia adopted the Statute of Westminster and accepted the legislative independence conferred by that Act on dominion parliaments and governments. Australia did not appoint its own diplomatic representatives till World War II. Like the referral of bills to committees, a parliamentary committee on foreign affairs was an idea whose time would come eventually.

The flurry of excitement about the potential for Senate committees soon lapsed as the Great Depression failed to ease and the nation's attention turned to the looming war in Europe and in the Pacific. Before then, however, the Senate's standing orders had been amended in 1934 to provide a mechanism for the consideration of committee reports. The absence of such a mechanism had become apparent when the Regulations and Ordinances Committee began presenting reports on its important scrutiny work. Opportunities for the consideration of committee reports have since expanded but it is significant that it was always a corollary of expanded committee activity that there should be adequate opportunities in the Senate to consider the fruits of the committees' labours.

During World War II, several joint committees were established including on war expenditure, social security, profits, broadcasting, taxation and rural industries. Their purpose, according to Menzies, was to keep parliamentarians in touch with information relating to critical functions while ever the necessities of war meant that the Parliament itself was sitting for much shorter periods and the executive was exercising greater emergency powers. Odgers comments that these committees did much useful work but they were not re-appointed after the war.

After the war, the single most important event for the future development of the Senate was the increase in its size from 36 to 60 senators and the adoption of a system of proportional representation. More senators meant more backbenchers with time on their hands and possibly looking for a greater role. Proportional representation led to greater diversity of membership and the ultimate emergence of minor parties. These were significant precursors for the emergence of a committee system. Also significant was the Smith Mundt grant that the then Clerk Assistant, J.R. Odgers won in 1955 to travel to the United States to study the congressional committee system. He wrote a report on his return that was tabled in the Senate in May 1956. At a time when most parliamentary officers automatically made a pilgrimage to Westminster, it was significant that Odgers travelled to Washington and studied a different model. He had

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just recently published the first edition of his *Australian Senate Practice* and had therefore studied the constitutional foundations of the Senate and its partial basis on the US Senate. He returned with many interesting ideas but the then Opposition Leader in the Senate, Senator McKenna (ALP, Tas.), urged him to be patient, speculating that it would take at least five years to secure acceptance for a new idea.

In the meantime, select committees began to be established again and while those established in the 1950s may have been on more controversial subjects such as the development of Canberra and payments to maritime unions (which involved many witnesses being formally summoned to appear), those established in the 1960s heralded the dawn of a new era by showing how careful, bipartisan inquiries could highlight directions for policy development in the medium to long term. Reports of select committees on road safety, the encouragement of Australian productions for television, the container method of handling cargoes, the metric system of weights and measures, off-shore petroleum resources and the later inquiries on air and water pollution were well received and influential in the development of policy in these areas. They tapped into sources that had hitherto been largely ignored in government policy-making efforts.

At the 20th anniversary conference in 1990, the late Senator Gordon Davidson (Lib., SA) recounted the opposition of Prime Minister Menzies to the spate of select committees being established by the Senate in the 1960s. ‘Backbench Senators’, Menzies is reported to have said, ‘will have access to matters not meant for them and to material which is inappropriate for their role in Parliament’.<sup>1</sup> Menzies had changed his tune since promoting the advisory joint committees of the war era, but it seems that backbench senators did not agree with this assessment and participated enthusiastically in what came to be seen as work of fundamental importance to their role as senators.

If the new legislative and general purpose standing committees established in 1970 built on the taste for committee work that senators developed through participation in these select committees, the origins of estimates committees were also beginning to emerge in the 1960s along with the growing recognition of the importance of governments being seen to be accountable. From 1961 the Senate began to examine the estimates of proposed expenditure in committee of the whole before the appropriation bills were received from the House of Representatives, thus giving senators more time to conduct their scrutiny of the government’s expenditure proposals. The new procedure was not without its critics. It was alleged that it was a subversion of bicameralism, it evaded the spirit of the Constitution and contravened numerous standing orders. This alleged abomination was, however, the kernel of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Papers on Parliament*, no. 12, August 1991, p. 23.

estimates process as we know it today. The particulars of proposed expenditure were examined in committee of the whole line by line and senators could ask questions of the relevant minister who would often have to trot over to the advisers, sitting off the floor of the Senate, for detailed information. It was a frustrating process but the potential for further development was apparent. By the end of the decade it had developed into proposals for estimates *committees* covering the various departments of state and in which senators would have face-to-face access to public servants in order to question them directly about financial and administrative matters.

It is well known that Senator Lionel Murphy, then Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, was a great proponent of the legislative and general purpose standing committees. He saw the valuable work that US congressional committees were doing in exposing what was happening in the conduct of the Vietnam War. At his behest the Standing Orders Committee produced several reports on various options for committee systems but no particular recommendations were made to the Senate. From another angle, Senator Kenneth Anderson, Leader of the Government in the Senate, promoted estimates committees as a more contained (and containable) expression of the Senate's growing interest in committee work. Senator Vince Gair, leader of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), thought a hybrid system of committees which included some legislative and general purpose standing committees and a committee exercising oversight of statutory corporations was the way to go.

Thus there were three proposals before the Senate on 11 June 1970. Murphy's motion for legislative and general purpose standing committees was agreed to by 27 votes to 26, with Liberal Senator Ian Wood (Qld) and independent Senator Spot Turnbull (Tas.) supporting the ALP against the combined forces of the coalition and the DLP. Senator Anderson's motion for estimates committees also succeeded by 26 votes to 25, Senators Wood and Turnbull absenting themselves from the vote. Finally, Senator Gair's motion for a hybrid system was defeated on an equally divided vote with Senator Wood again siding with the ALP against the motion and Senator Turnbull not voting. Senator Wood explained that he was opposing the motion because it effectively duplicated Senator Murphy's proposal which had already been agreed to.

What would become the renowned Senate committee system started out slowly and incrementally with the first two committees established in August 1970. Further committees were gradually added and reports started being presented from May 1971. The first of these was the report of the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare on mentally and physically handicapped persons in Australia (as the term of art then was), followed closely by a report from the Standing Committee on Primary and Secondary Industry and Trade on that old favourite subject of shipping services and freight rates to and from Tasmania. Estimates committees met as required, supported

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by staff drawn from all over the department on an ad hoc basis, and early reviews suggested that expectations for committees were being met.

The pattern of committee work throughout the 1970s and 1980s was similar. Legislative and general purpose standing committees undertook reasonably lengthy inquiries (by modern standards) into significant policy areas, usually on a bi- or multi-partisan basis. Inquiries usually involved extensive travel throughout Australia for hearings and site inspections ('taking parliament to the people') and reports were often the subject of lengthy deliberation. Those involved in the operations of committees today will be surprised to hear that committees almost never met while the Senate itself was sitting and that motions to authorise them to do so were relatively rare. There were senators who would argue on principle that it was wrong to allow such practices because senators could not be in two places at once and their first duty was to the Senate. Any committee relying on a last-minute motion being moved by leave to authorise it to meet was in a precarious position, dependant on those senators who opposed the practice in principle not exercising their right to deny leave. To place this in context, however, the sitting day used to include generous meal breaks during which time committees might hold meetings.

The early versions of the Committee Office manuals also suggested that secretariats should factor in three weeks for reports to be printed, a far cry from today when whole inquiries are sometimes required to be completed in less time than this, and anything other than camera-ready copy is unheard of.

As well as holding inquiries into policy matters, committees also gradually expanded their accountability work. A leader in this field was the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Operations which did groundbreaking work on the accountability of statutory authorities. One long-term interest of that committee was the compilation of a list of Commonwealth statutory bodies because no one in government could say how many such bodies there were, let alone what their functions were. This task has now been handed over to the Department of Finance and Deregulation which maintains the list and publishes updates from time to time.

An interest in statutory bodies led to an interest in how such bodies could be held accountable to the Parliament. There is a collection of resolutions in the back of the volume of Senate standing and other orders that chronicles the efforts of the Senate to require such bodies to be accountable, to appear before estimates committees, to answer questions about their taxpayer-funded operations and to prepare annual reports to the Parliament. The systematic scrutiny of those annual reports dates from 1973 in its original, discretionary form, with the current form being adopted in 1989 following

the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Operations on the timeliness and quality of annual reports.

It was important that the daily routine of business should provide adequate opportunities for the consideration of committee reports. Equally important was what happened to the reports afterwards. Again as early as 1973, the Senate expressed the view that governments should provide a response to recommendations in committee reports within three months of the presentation of the report. While this resolution had little effect at first, the Standing Orders Committee pursued the issue and the government made a statement in May 1978 that it would try to adhere to a six-month response timeframe. Governments have subsequently reiterated commitments to respond to reports in a timely manner. The President's report on government responses outstanding after three months is another mechanism by which the Senate keeps tabs on overdue responses. This practice also dates from the 1970s.

While the legislative and general purpose standing committees and estimates committees continued to function as originally envisaged, select committees also continued to be established for other purposes. Some of these were on controversial subjects, such as the select committees on the Human Embryo Experimentation Bill 1985, the conduct of a judge and allegations concerning a judge, and the airline pilots' dispute in 1989. Others were long-term inquiries that did not readily fit into the portfolio structure of the existing committees. One of these was the Select Committee on Animal Welfare which ran for many years and eventually metamorphosed into the present Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport. The animal welfare committee famously inquired into animal welfare in the thoroughbred racing industry and managed to undertake a special study of the Melbourne Cup—on site, of course. There were also at least two more select committees on the perennial subject of shipping links with Tasmania.

The system was never a static one and adjustments were made over time to adapt to changing requirements. These changes are all chronicled in the *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate*, published in 2009, and also available online as *Commentaries on the standing orders*.<sup>2</sup> One particular challenge to the system occurred in 1987 when, after the double dissolution election on the Australia Card Bill, a system of standing committees was also proposed for the House of Representatives. A government caucus committee developed a scheme for parallel standing committees in each house that would be empowered to meet as joint committees. Amendments moved in the Senate to the resolution ensured that such joint meetings could occur only in accordance with a resolution of the Senate in each

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: [www.aph.gov.au/Senate/pubs/aso/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/pubs/aso/index.htm).

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case. In practice, the idea of joint legislative and general purpose standing committees never took off.

Perhaps the biggest impact on the committees was the adoption in 1989 of a scheme for the systematic referral of bills to committees which came into operation in 1990, although it had been envisaged as early as 1929. This is not to ignore the work of the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, established in 1981, to assess all bills against particular criteria relating to civil liberties and parliamentary propriety, but the referral of bills under the new orders would involve inquiries into individual bills and would involve scrutiny of any aspects of the bills including their policy merits.

Detailed scrutiny of individual bills has become a hallmark of Senate committee operations and has led to innumerable improvements to bills before the Parliament. In its early days, however, the referral of bills exposed some strains in the system. In the first instance, committee workload increased dramatically and there was correspondingly less time to spend on the longer-term inquiries into matters of policy and accountability. Examination of government bills also led to a much higher incidence of dissenting and minority reports, leading to some cracks in the hitherto highly collegiate operations of committees.

While ever committees remained as fact-finding bodies, there appeared to be general acceptance of the idea that they should be chaired by government senators. Their engagement in more partisan work, however, caused this assumption to be questioned. By 1994 there were concerns that the existing committee structure was not delivering optimal outcomes. Multiple select committees were being established to carry out particular inquiries, often with non-government chairs. There was pressure from the Opposition for a share of the chairs of standing committees. All this resulted in the Procedure Committee (formerly known as the Standing Orders Committee) being tasked with a major reference on the committee system in February 1994.

The committee reported in June 1994 with a scheme to refurbish the committee system so that it would be more responsive to the composition of the Senate and would provide a more efficient structure. The proposals were adopted on 24 August 1994 with effect from 10 October 1994. The committee system as we know it today dates from that restructuring in 1994. The major features of the system, in structural terms, are as follows:

- paired legislation and references committees in eight subject areas to perform all the functions previously carried out by the legislative and general purpose standing committees and estimates committees;

- legislation committees with government chairs to undertake inquiries into bills, examine the estimates of expenditure and annual reports of agencies, and, of their own motion, to monitor the performance of departments and agencies in their portfolio areas;
- references committees with non-government chairs to inquire into matters referred by the Senate;
- membership to be in accordance with the formula designed to reflect the composition of the Senate and non-government chairs to be allocated in accordance with representation of non-government parties in the Senate;
- a new category of committee membership allowing senators who are not voting members of the committees to participate in inquiries with all the rights of full members (other than the right to vote);
- an ability for senators to substitute for members of the committees by resolution of the Senate;
- formalisation of the position of deputy chair and allocation of deputy chairs in reverse to the allocation of chairs;
- formalisation of a Chairs' Committee, chaired by the Deputy President.

The adoption of the new system in 1994 entailed a significant change in the powers of committees examining estimates. Before that time, estimates committees were limited to asking for explanations from ministers in the Senate or officers, relating to items of proposed expenditure and had no inquiry powers. The absorption of the estimates function by legislation committees from 1994 meant that the full range of inquiry powers was available for the estimates function. In other words, committees considering estimates now had the power to send for persons and documents. In practice, these powers have been little used but non-government majorities in the Senate have used their numbers from time to time to pass orders requiring the appearance of particular offices before estimates hearings.

Between 2006 and 2009, there was a brief return to the earlier system of legislative and general purpose standing committees, with these committees also carrying out the estimates function. This change came about when the fourth Howard Government unexpectedly gained a majority of seats in the Senate and used its numbers to bring committee operations under government control. During this time many more bills were referred to committees but new inquiries on matters of policy or accountability became rare.

The system has now returned to what could be regarded as normal practice although the proliferation of joint committees continues to raise questions about their role and effectiveness.

## Appendix 1

### Senate committees—a chronology of procedural developments

Extracted from Appendix 1, *Annotated Standing Orders of the Australian Senate*.

5.6.1901	Standing Orders Committee established to recommend which state legislature's standing orders should be adopted on a temporary basis pending the development of permanent standing orders
6.6.1901	Library, House, Printing, and Elections and Qualifications committees established for the first time
26.7.1901	First select committee appointed, into steamship communication with Tasmania
8 & 15.8.1901	Mr David Mills, Melbourne manager for the Union Steamship company of New Zealand Ltd, Mr W.T. Appleton, Managing Director of Huddart, Parker & Co. Pty Ltd and Clerk of the Parliaments, E.G. Blackmore, are the first witnesses to be called before Senate committees to give evidence (Select committee appointed to inquire into steamship communication between Australia and Tasmania, and Committee of Elections and Qualifications)
9.10.1901	Standing Orders Committee reported to the Senate with a draft of the proposed standing orders
20.4.1904	First (and only) select committee appointed to inquire into a privilege case (Senator Neild)
20.10.1904	Parliamentary Evidence Bill 1904 referred to the Standing Orders Committee by motion after second reading, the first referral of a bill to a standing committee
5.12.1929	Establishment of select committee to inquire into the advisability or otherwise of having standing committees in a number of areas in order to improve the legislative work of the Senate and increase the participation of senators in that work
9.4.1930	First report of the select committee on standing committees tabled
1 & 8.5.1930	First report of the select committee on standing committees considered and referred back for further consideration
10.7.1930	Second report of the select committee on standing committees tabled. First referral of a bill to a select committee (Central Reserve Bank Bill 1930)
14.5.1931	Select committee's second report on standing committees considered and recommendations (for a new committee to scrutinise regulations and ordinances and for revised procedures for the referral of bills to committees) adopted

11.3.1932	Establishment of Regulations and Ordinances Committee (SO 23) and adoption of amended procedures to facilitate referral of bills to committees
18.5.1932	First report of the Regulations and Ordinances Committee tabled
28.9.1932	Consideration of the First Report of the Regulations and Ordinances Committee raises issues about opportunities to debate committee reports
1.8.1934	Adoption of a new standing order to facilitate consideration of committee reports (SO 60) (effective 1.10.1934)
11.11.1954	Appointment of Select Committee on the Development of Canberra heralds a resurgence of select committee activity from the later 1950s and throughout the 1960s
27.9.1961	New procedures adopted for the consideration of estimates of expenditure in committee of the whole before the receipt of the Appropriation Bills from the House
2.12.1965	First changes to standing orders since 1953, including change to terms of reference of the Regulations and Ordinances Committee and establishment of Committee of Privileges (SO 18)
11.6.1970	Establishment of seven legislative and general purpose standing committees and five estimates committees (SOs 25 and 26)
12.6.1970	Printing Committee reconstituted as the Publications Committee with full inquiry powers when sitting as a joint committee with its House of Representatives counterpart (see SO 22)
19.8.1970	Further resolution relating to the establishment of legislative and general purpose standing committees, including membership formula and other details
17.9.1970	Estimates committees received their first reference of particulars of proposed expenditure
9.12.1971	Declaration by the Senate that statutory authorities are accountable for all expenditures of public funds
14.3.1973	Senate agreed to a resolution declaring its opinion that governments should respond to committee reports within three months after their presentation
7.11.1973	First version of the resolution referring annual reports to legislative and general purpose standing committees adopted (see SO 25)
19.8.1975	Procedure adopted for questions to be asked of chairs of committees (see SO 72)
18.8.1981	Report of the Select Committee on Parliament's Appropriations and Staffing tabled
19.11.1981	Establishment of the Scrutiny of Bills Committee (as part of the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee) (see SO 24)
25.3.1982	Establishment of the Appropriations and Staffing Committee (SO 19); a separate appropriation bill for the Parliament introduced for and from 1982–83
25.5.1982	Establishment of the Scrutiny of Bills Committee as a separately constituted committee

22.9.1987	‘Standing Orders Committee’ renamed ‘Procedure Committee’ (SO 17). Eight legislative and general purpose standing committees appointed, renamed and empowered to meet as joint committees with similar House of Representatives committees
28.2.1988	Privilege Resolutions agreed to
23.8.1990	Order of continuing effect agreed to regularising the practice of placing written questions on notice at estimates hearings (see SO 26)
23.2.1991	Guidelines for disclosure of in camera evidence in dissenting reports adopted (see SO 37)
6.5.1993	Procedures for supplementary hearings of estimates committees and limitations on consideration of appropriation bills in committee of the whole adopted as orders of continuing effect (see SOs 26 and 115)
17.3.1994	Resolutions for the registration of senators’ interests agreed to. Senators’ Interests Committee established (SO 22A)
24.8.1994	Proposals by the Procedure Committee adopted for the restructure of the committee system with effect from 10.10.1994. Pairs of legislation and references committees established in each subject area. Estimates committee functions taken over by the legislation committees (see SO 25)
13.2.1997	Several sessional orders and orders of continuing effect incorporated into standing orders, including provision for supplementary estimates hearings and electronic committee meetings
22.11.1999	Resolution of the Senate declaring that all questions going to the operations or finances of departments and agencies are relevant to estimates
6.2.2001	Supplementary hearings on additional estimates dropped
19.11.2002	Participating members of legislative and general purpose standing committees able to be counted towards a quorum (see SO 25). Quorum procedures for committees brought into line with quorum procedures in the Senate (see SO 29)
9.11.2005	Orders agreed to allowing senators to take action in respect of unanswered estimates questions on notice (see SO 72)
7.12.2005	Appointment of Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library following the creation of a statutory position of Parliamentary Librarian (see SO 20)
14.8.2006	Committee system restructured with effect from 11.9.2006. Legislation and references committees combined under government chairs (see SO 25)
24.6.2008	Motion agreed to for production in time for estimates hearings of information about appointments and grants made by departments and agencies
10.3.2009	Provision for questions to chairs of committees abolished. Procedure adopted on a permanent basis for appointing substitute members of committees when the Senate is not sitting (see SOs 72 and 25)

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13.5.2009	Committee system restructured with effect from 14.5.2009 to return to the system of paired legislation and references committees (see SO 25)
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## Appendix 2

### Senate select committees, 1901–84

For later committees, see Appendix 9, *Odgers Australian Senate Practice*, 12th edition.

Tasmania and Australia Steamship Communication 1901–02  
Old-age Pensions 1904  
Privilege—Case of Senator Lt. Col. Neild 1904  
Retrenchment of Major Carroll 1904  
Tobacco Monopoly 1905  
Press Cable Service 1909  
Fitzroy Dock, Sydney: Partial closing-down 1913  
Chinn, Mr H.—Dismissal from Transcontinental Railway 1913  
General Elections 1913—Allegations of Roll-stuffing and Corrupt Practices 1913  
Mr Teesdale Smith’s Contract—Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta Railway 1914  
Post Office, Balfour, Tasmania 1914–17  
Intoxicating Liquor—Effect on Australian Soldiers etc. 1917–19  
Senate Officials 1920–21  
Strasburg, Captain J.—Claims for War Gratuity 1922  
Warrant-Officer J.R. Allan—Discharge from Military Forces 1923–24  
Repatriation Case of First Lieutenant W.W. Paine 1923–24  
Case of Munitions Worker J.T. Dunk 1924  
Beam Wireless Messages: Charges, Australia to England 1929  
Standing Committee System 1929–31  
Central Reserve Bank Bill 1930  
Conway, Captain T.P.—Case for compensation 1937–40  
Constitution Alteration (Avoidance of Double Dissolution Deadlocks) Bill 1950  
National Service in the Defence Force 1950–51  
Commonwealth Bank Bill 1950 (No. 2)  
Development of Canberra 1954–55  
Payments to Maritime Unions 1958  
Road Safety 1960–61  
Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television 1962–63  
Container Method of Handling Cargoes 1968  
Metric System of Weights and Measures 1968

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Off-shore Petroleum Resources 1970–71  
Air Pollution 1969  
Water Pollution 1970  
Medical and Hospital Costs 1969–70  
Canberra Abattoir 1969  
Drug trafficking and drug abuse 1971  
Securities and Exchange 1974  
Foreign Ownership and Control 1972–75  
Civil Rights of Migrant Australian 1973–74  
Shipping Services between King Island, Stanley and Melbourne 1973  
Corporations and Securities Industry Bill 1975  
Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders 1976  
Mt Lyell Mining Operations 1976  
Passenger fares and services to and from Tasmania 1981  
Parliament's Appropriations and Staffing 1981  
Government Clothing and Ordnance Factories 1982  
South West Tasmania 1982  
Industrial Relations Legislation 1982  
Statutory Authority Financing 1983  
Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes 1984  
Animal Welfare 1985  
Conduct of a Judge 1984  
Allegations Concerning a Judge 1984  
Volatile Substance Fumes 1985  
Video Material 1984