



DEPARTMENT  
OF THE SENATE

Clerk of the Senate  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

14 May 2018

Mr Tas Larnach  
Acting Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Larnach

**Budget estimates hearing 21 May – Department of the Senate**

In accordance with the usual practice, I attach statistics about the operations of committees supported by the Senate Committee Office, which demonstrate the continued high levels of committee activity, albeit moderating slightly, in the 45th Parliament. I have also attached a page updating the information provided to the Chair in response to question on notice No. 1 from the estimates round in February 2017.

Yours sincerely

(Richard Pye)  
Clerk

# Senate committee activity

SUMMARY AS AT 10 May 2018

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## Activity

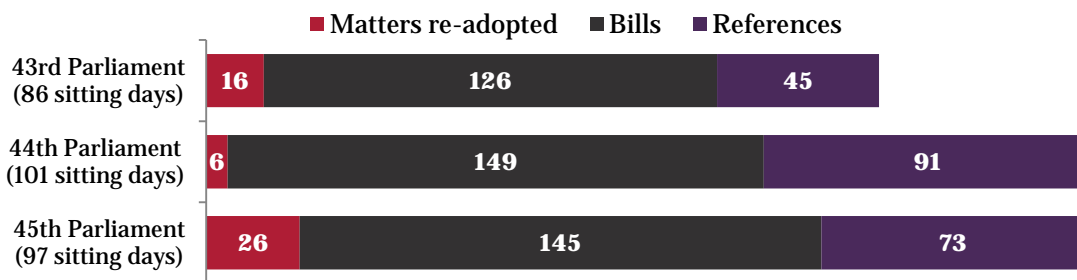
In the 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament, at 10 May 2018, there have been:

- 244 references (218 new references and 26 re-adopted from the 44th Parliament);
- 297 reports tabled;
- 455 hearings.

The following tables compare references and reports at the same point in previous parliaments, as well as a tally by financial year of references and hearings held.

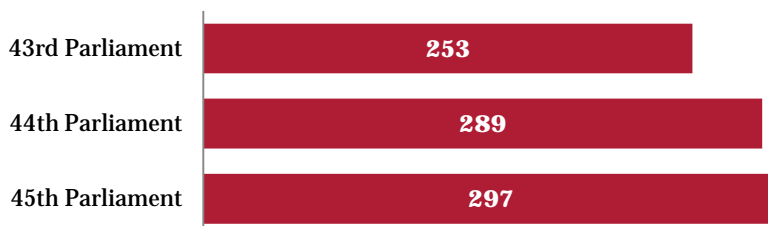
## Number of references

### Standing Committee references in the first 21 months of each Parliament



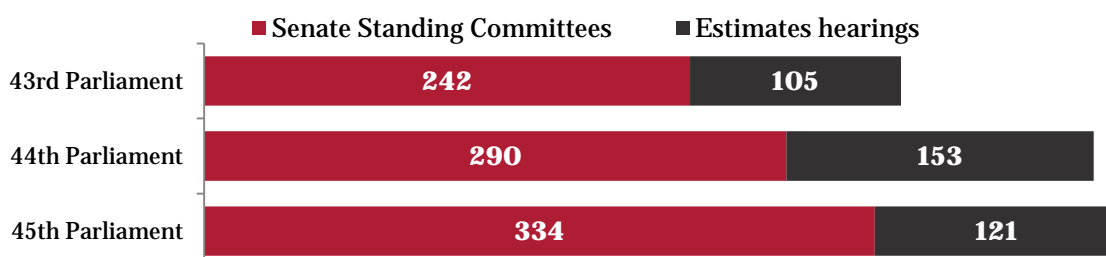
## Reports

### Standing Committee reports in the first 21 months of each Parliament



## Hearings held

### Standing Committee hearings held in the first 21 months of each Parliament



### Additional indicators of activity:

- The department is currently supporting five select committees. Seven select committees have completed their inquiries. During the 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, the department supported 12 select committees.
- At present, the department also supports six joint committees and one joint select committee.

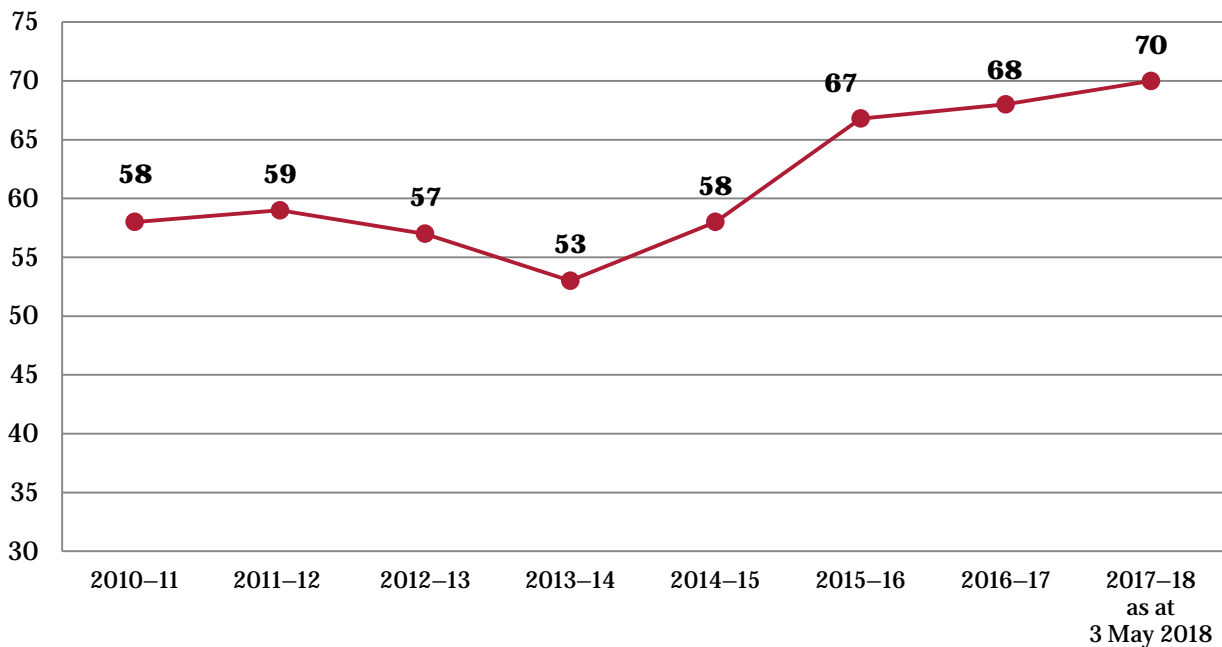
## Staffing

*Average staffing for 2017–18:* At 3 May 2018 there were 70.5 Full Time Equivalent staff in the Committee Office, compared with an average FTE of 68.3 in 2016-17 (66.8 for 2015–16).

The following chart shows changes in average staffing levels over time.

### Committee Office FTE

**Average Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing levels, by financial year**



## Administration

*Cost of running Senate committees:* The current annual budget for the Committee Office is approximately \$9.1 million. This includes employee expenses of \$8.6 million and administrative expenses (including secretariat travel, accommodation and venues for hearings) of \$0.5 million.

In 2016–17, total operational costs for the Committee Office were \$10.6 million (including corporate overheads).

### Summary comparison of committee costs by category (at 30 April 2018)

<b>Standing, select and joint committees, 2014–15 to 2017–18*</b>				
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>2014–15</b>	<b>2015–16</b>	<b>2016–17</b>	<b>2017–18*</b>
<b>Executive</b>				
Staff costs	687,561	693,647	686,217	591,615
Administrative costs	11,502	18,154	8,182	833
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>699,062</i>	<i>711,800</i>	<i>694,399</i>	<i>592,449</i>
<b>Standing</b>				
Staff costs	4,488,285	5,589,323	5,835,397	4,971,168
Administrative costs	454,060	512,887	302,714	247,729
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>4,942,345</i>	<i>6,102,210</i>	<i>6,138,110</i>	<i>5,218,897</i>
<b>Joint Statutory</b>				
Staff costs	899,341	1,096,699	835,792	1,019,713
Administrative costs	94,167	117,959	40,437	53,894
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>993,509</i>	<i>1,214,658</i>	<i>876,229</i>	<i>1,073,608</i>
<b>Select</b>				
Staff costs	559,791	801,960	396,602	6,235
Administrative costs	74,144	101,075	50,165	25,499
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>633,935</i>	<i>903,036</i>	<i>446,767</i>	<i>31,734</i>
<b>Joint Standing/Select</b>				
Staff costs	222,364	975	405,963	666,239
Administrative costs	50,722	3,026	40,924	20,146
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>273,086</i>	<i>4,001</i>	<i>446,888</i>	<i>686,385</i>
<b>Total program expense</b>	<b>7,541,937</b>	<b>8,935,704</b>	<b>8,602,393</b>	<b>7,603,071</b>

*Please note:* the above table has changed slightly from previous versions. The Additional Support Unit, previously included as part of the Executive Office, has instead been distributed across the four types of committee based on the support they provide to those different committees. This gives a better indication of costs associated with the different committees and a clearer indication of costs associated with the Executive (Clerk Assistant and Senior Clerk offices) over time.

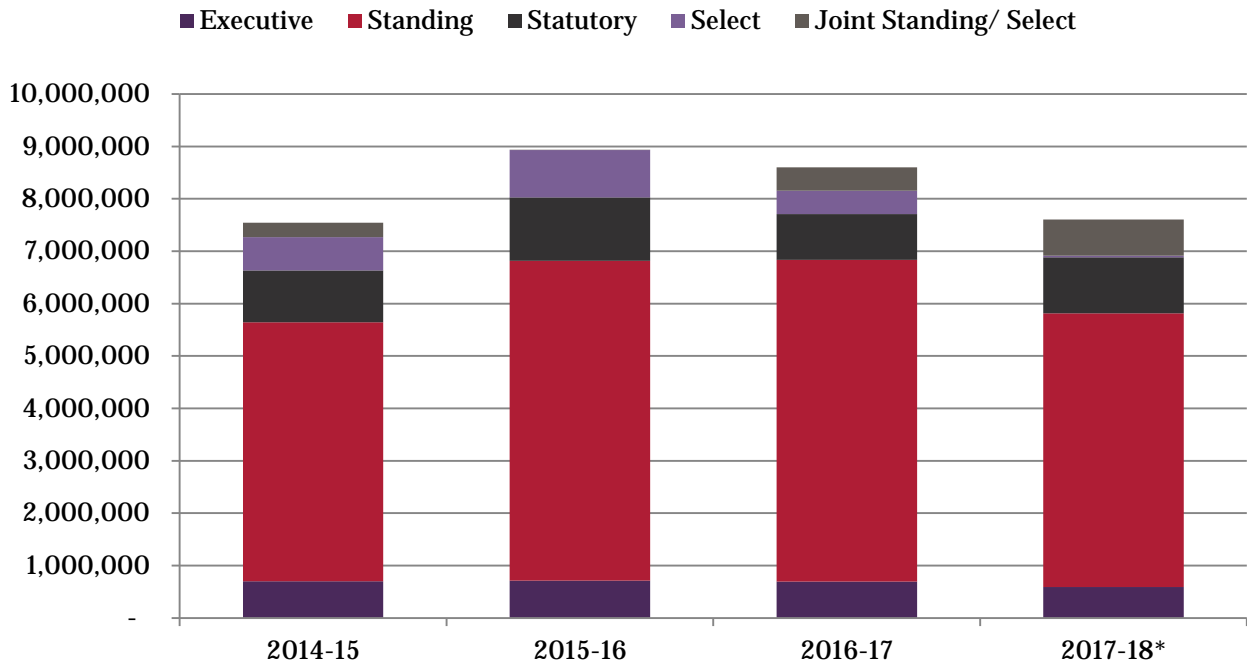
\*Costs for 2017–18 are year to date.

*Staff costs* – the salaries of Senate staff working within the secretariat. These staffing costs are based on estimates of time allocated by departmental staff and are a guide only.

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

# Total expenditure

## Committee Office



\* Year to date as at 30 April 2018

## Comparative statistics

### Inquiries supported by the Senate Committee Office as at 10 May 2018

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The following table and charts break down legislation, references and select committees inquiries for the last three parliaments. For the sake of completeness, joint committees supported by the Senate Department are also included.

Table 1: Number of inquiries

	43rd Parl	44th Parl	45th Parl (to 10/5/18)
Refs Ctee inquiries readopted <sup>1</sup>	15	6	26
New Refs Ctee inquiries	80	124	72
Bill inquiries <sup>2</sup>	235	216	145
Other Leg Ctee inquiries <sup>3</sup>	5	6	1
Select Ctee inquiries	5	12	12
Joint Select Ctee inquiries <sup>4</sup>	14	2	1
Joint Ctee inquiries <sup>5</sup>	30	9	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>275</b>

1. References which lapsed in the previous parliament and were readopted

2. Includes one bill considered by a references committee in the 43rd Parliament

3. For instance, inquiries into the performance of agencies

4. NB: the number of inquiries, not the number of committees. In particular the Joint Select Committee on Gambling in the 43rd Parliament considered 10 separate inquiries

5. This is the number of joint committee inquiries administered by the Senate department.

**Chart 1: Number of inquiries (actual)**



	<b>43rd Parl</b>	<b>44th Parl</b>	<b>45th Parl</b> (to 10/5/18)
Time (in weeks)	149	130	75

As an indicator of the level of committee activity, the following chart averages the number of inquiries referred over the duration of each parliament. For instance, there were fewer references in the 44th Parliament than the 43rd, however, the 44th Parliament was 19 weeks (4 and a half months) shorter in duration so the level of activity over time was higher. Similarly, the figures for the 45th Parliament cover approximately 21 months to May 2018, but as can be seen the rate at which matters have been referred is higher than in the previous two parliaments.

**Chart 2: Number of inquiries (pro rata)**

