



DEPARTMENT
OF THE SENATE

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21 March 2019

Ms Ann Palmer
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Palmer

April budget estimates hearings – Department of the Senate

In accordance with the usual practice, I attach statistics about the operations of committees supported by the Senate Committee Office. 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 20 March 2019

Activity

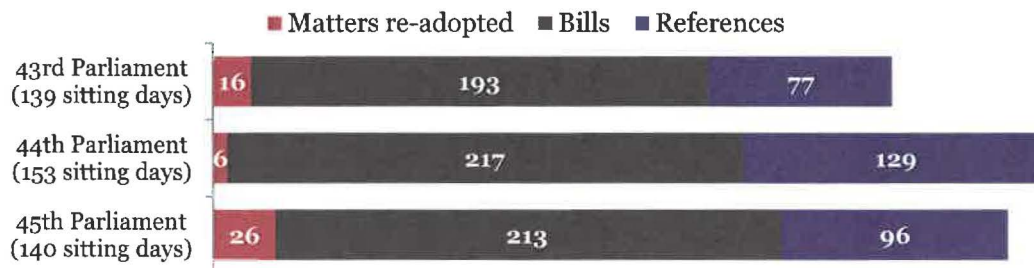
In the 45th Parliament, at 20 March 2019, there have been:

- 335 references (309 new references and 26 re-adopted from the 44th Parliament);
- 425 reports tabled;
- 716 hearings.

The following tables compare references, reports and hearings at the same point in previous parliaments.

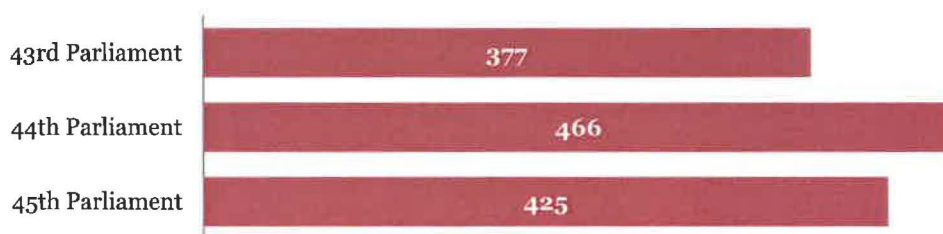
Number of references

Standing Committee references in the first 32.5 months of each Parliament



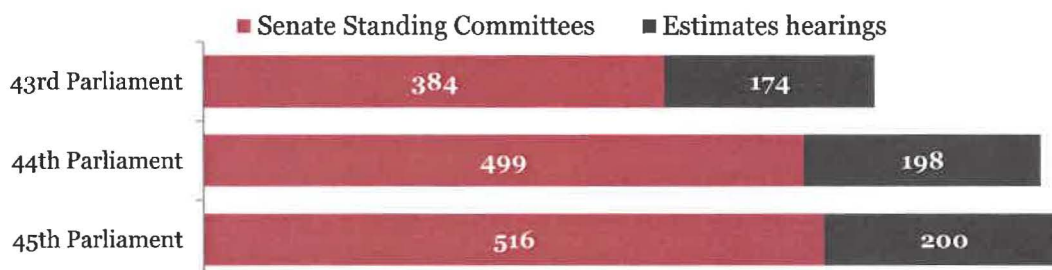
Reports

Standing Committee reports in the first 32.5 months of each Parliament



Hearings held

Standing Committee hearings held in the first 32.5 months of each Parliament



Additional indicators of activity:

- The department is supporting one select committee. Fourteen select committees have completed their inquiries. During the 44th Parliament, the department supported 12 select committees.
- The department also supports six joint committees and one joint select committee.

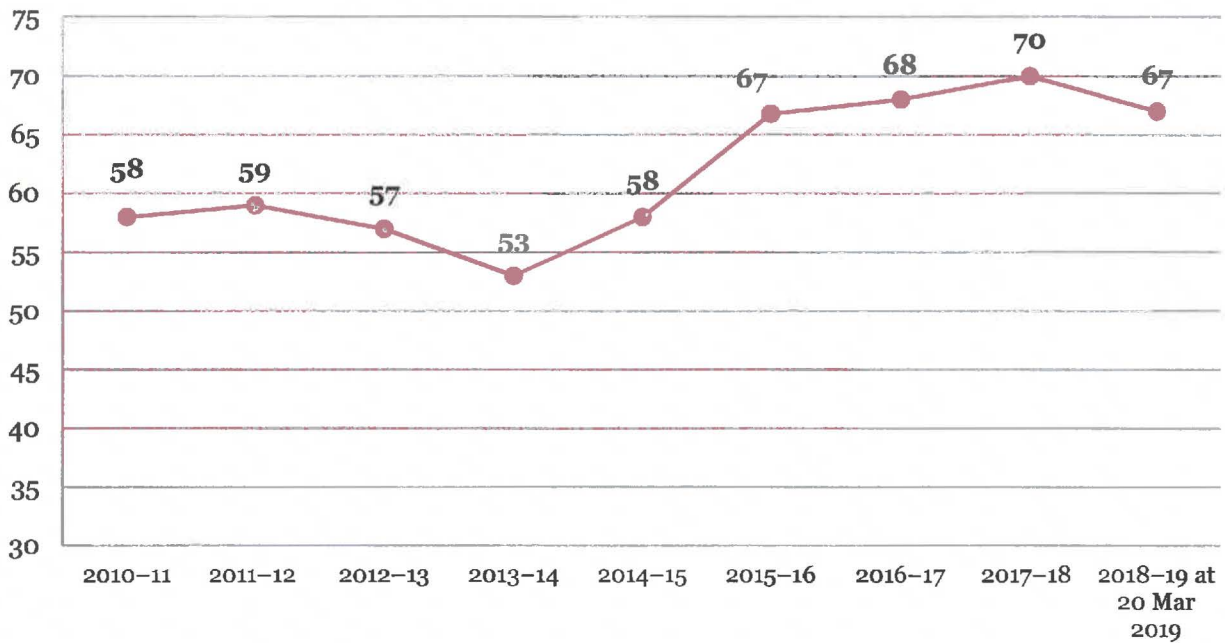
Staffing

Average staffing for 2018–19: At 20 March 2019 there were 66.6 Full Time Equivalent staff in the Committee Office, compared with an average FTE of 70.2 in 2017–18 (68.3 for 2016–17).

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 \$8.8 million. This includes employee expenses of \$8.3 million and administrative expenses (including secretariat travel, accommodation and venues for hearings) of \$0.5 million.

In 2017–18, total operational costs for the Committee Office were \$11.1 million (including corporate overheads).

Summary comparison of committee costs by category

Standing, select and joint committees, 2015–16 to 2018–19				
Expenses	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19*
Executive				
Staff costs	693,647	686,217	720,845	480,972
Administrative costs	18,154	8,182	171	35
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>711,800</i>	<i>694,399</i>	<i>721,016</i>	<i>481,007</i>
Standing				
Staff costs	5,589,323	5,835,397	5,504,497	3,496,802
Administrative costs	512,887	302,714	571,388	293,587
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>6,102,210</i>	<i>6,138,110</i>	<i>6,075,885</i>	<i>3,790,389</i>
Joint Statutory				
Staff costs	1,096,699	835,792	883,845	539,397
Administrative costs	117,959	40,437	59,668	24,472
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>1,214,658</i>	<i>876,229</i>	<i>943,513</i>	<i>563,869</i>
Select				
Staff costs	801,960	396,602	825,515	602,206
Administrative costs	101,075	50,165	76,540	46,636
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>903,036</i>	<i>446,767</i>	<i>902,055</i>	<i>648,842</i>
Joint Standing/Select				
Staff costs	975	405,963	441,859	473,625
Administrative costs	3,026	40,924	131,109	33,656
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>4,001</i>	<i>446,888</i>	<i>572,968</i>	<i>507,281</i>
Total program expense	8,935,704	8,602,393	9,215,437	5,991,388

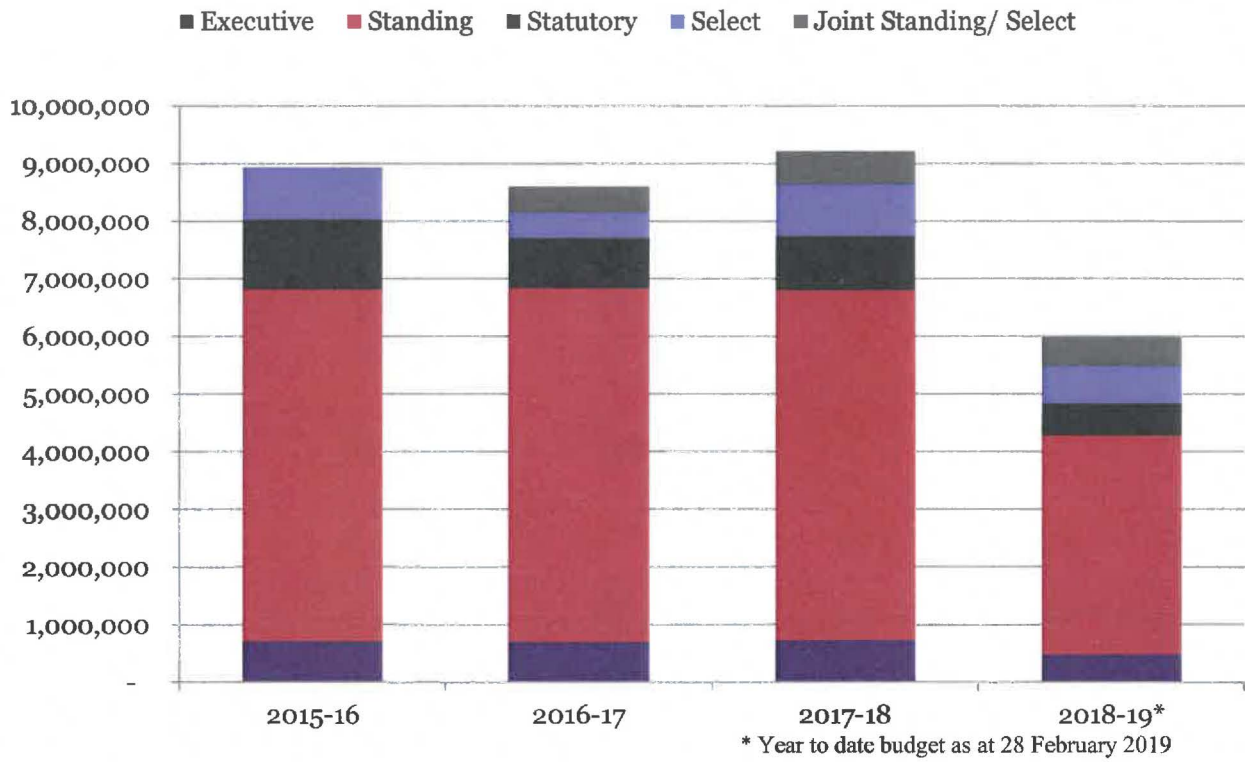
* Year to date actual as at 28 February 2019

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 and printing. Note: the decline in administrative costs associated with the Executive reflects a more accurate allocation of costs (training, advertising, secondments) to specific committees.

Total expenditure

Committee Office



Comparative statistics

Inquiries supported by the Senate Committee Office
as at 20 March 2019

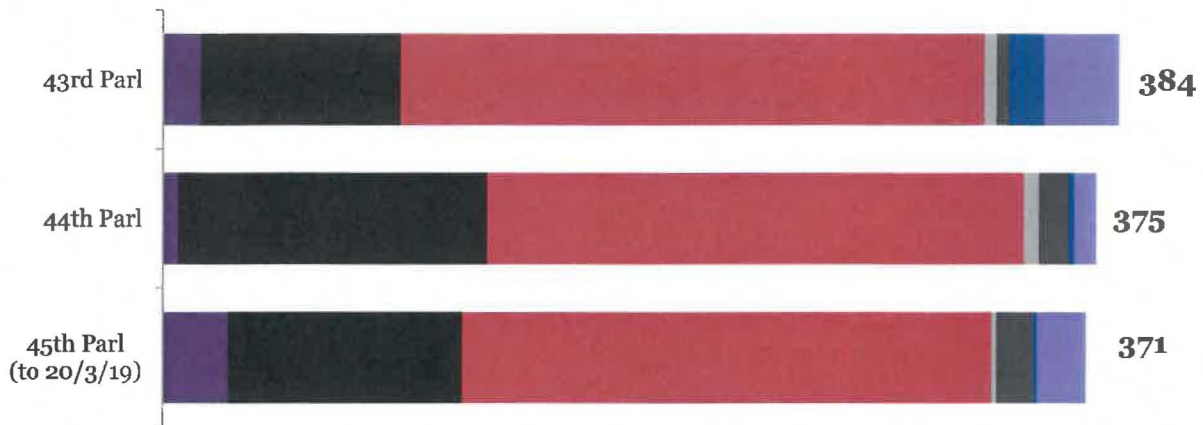
The following table and charts break down legislation, references and select committees inquiries for the last three parliaments. For the sake of completeness, joint committees supported by the Senate Department are also included.

Table 1: Number of inquiries

	43rd Parl	44th Parl	45th Parl (to 20/3/19)
Refs Ctee inquiries readopted ¹	15	6	26
New Refs Ctee inquiries	80	124	94
Bill inquiries ²	235	216	213
Other Leg Ctee inquiries ³	5	6	2
Select Ctee inquiries	5	12	15
Joint Select Ctee inquiries ⁴	14	2	1
Joint Ctee inquiries ⁵	30	9	20
Total	384	375	371

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)



	43rd Parl	44th Parl	45th Parl (to 20/3/19)
Time (in weeks)	149	130	133

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 45th Parliament has a comparable rate of referrals to the 44th Parliament and a higher rate of referrals than the 43rd.

Chart 2: Number of inquiries (pro rata)

