



D20/98603

27 October 2020

Ms Sarah Redden  
Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee  
The Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Redden

**Budget Estimates Hearing 19 October 2020 – Answers to Questions taken on Notice**

The Department of the Senate provides responses to questions taken on notice from Senators Waters and Scarr relating to committees and notices of motion.

Yours sincerely

(Richard Pye)

**Question:** 1

**Topic:** Select committees

**Senator:** Waters

**Hansard:** 19 October 2020, p 7

**Question:**

**Senator WATERS:** ... I'm interested in the cost to date of the joint committee family law select inquiry; the water quality inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef, under the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee; and a Finance and Public Administration Committee inquiry into family violence that didn't actually hold any hearings.

**Mr Pye:** I would be happy to have a look at what we can provide. In lots of ways it's easier to provide a figure for a standalone committee than for a single inquiry—within the work of a different committee, though—because, as you know, very often you're dealing with multiple matters in a set of hearings for which there may be one travel cost and that sort of thing. But we can certainly see what we can put forward.

**Senator WATERS:** Yes, I understand. I am happy with an estimated apportionment to the best of your ability, thank you.

**Answer:**

The Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System was established 18 September 2019, and is due to report on the last sitting day in February 2021. From 18 September to 29 July 2020, the committee was supported by the Finance and Public Administration secretariat. From 29 July 2020 the committee has been supported by a standalone secretariat. The total estimated cost of secretariat support to the committee from 18 September 2019 to 19 October 2020 is \$337,598, comprising employee costs of \$322,958 and hearing costs of \$14,639.

The estimated cost of secretariat support to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee inquiry into identification of leading practices in ensuring evidence-based regulation of farm practices that impact water quality outcomes in the Great Barrier Reef, referred on 17 September 2019 and which reported on 8 October 2020, was \$112,311. This includes employee costs of \$108,564 and hearing costs of \$3,747.

The Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee undertook an inquiry into domestic violence with particular regard to violence against women and their children from 26 February to 19 May 2020. The estimated cost of secretariat support is \$23,478 comprising employee costs only as there were no public hearings.

Employee costs are estimates because staff in the committee office work flexibly across inquiries and across secretariats to respond to committee requirements.

**Question:** 2

**Topic:** Notices of motion

**Senator:** Waters

**Hansard:** 19 October 2020, pp 7–8

**Question:**

**Senator WATERS:** Since the amendment to the standing orders to reduce the number of formal motions that can be moved each day, has the department observed any reduced cost or increased procedural workload? Have you noticed any impacts flowing from that decision as yet?

...Have you been tracking the amount of time that that part of the program has taken under these new rules versus the amount of time it used to take, noting what you've just said about the peaks and troughs that have occurred?

**Answer:**

The average number of formal motions considered each day has steadily increased since 2014. In 2014, there was an average of 7.1 motions per sitting day. In 2019, the average was 12.5. So far in 2020, the average for all formal motions is 13.

The temporary order placing restrictions on general business notices of motion was agreed to on 18 June 2020 and has been in operation for 11 sitting days. Up to 18 June (22 sitting days), the average number of formal motions per day was 14.7. After 18 June, the average has been 9.3.

Since the temporary order commenced, there has been a slight reduction in the time taken by Table Office staff to process notices of motion for consideration at formal business.

From the commencement of the 46th Parliament in July 2019 to 18 June 2020 (when the temporary order was agreed to), formal business took a total of 40 hours 14 minutes. The longest duration on a single day was 1 hr 35 minutes (11 June 2020). The average time taken was 48 minutes.

Since the temporary order commenced, formal business has taken a total of 5 hours 7 minutes. The longest time taken for formal business on a single day was 49 minutes (6 October 2020). The average time taken was approximately 30 minutes.

**Question:** 3

**Topic:** Select committees

**Senator:** Scarr

**Hansard:** 19 October 2020, p 9

**Question:**

**Senator SCARR:** First, I'd just like to follow up on a question that Senator Waters put on notice in relation to cost of Senate select committees. If I could add to the list, please, the cost of a Senate select committee that was established and chaired by the then Senator Di Natale in relation to jobs in the regions, which reported in December last year.

**Answer:**

The estimated cost of secretariat support to the Select Committee into Jobs for the Future in Regional Areas, established on 31 July and which reported on 4 December 2019, was \$88,540. This includes employee costs of \$75,674 and \$12,866 for hearing costs.

Employee costs are estimates because staff in the committee office work flexibly across secretariats to respond to committee requirements.