



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

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D17/29339

17 May 2017

Ms Lyn Beverley
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
The Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Beverley

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING – 22 MAY 2017
SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIVITY – 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 in the 45th Parliament.

I have also attached a page updating the information provided in response to question on notice no. 1 from the last estimates round.

Yours sincerely

(Richard Pye)

Senate committee activity

SUMMARY AS AT 11 May 2017

Activity

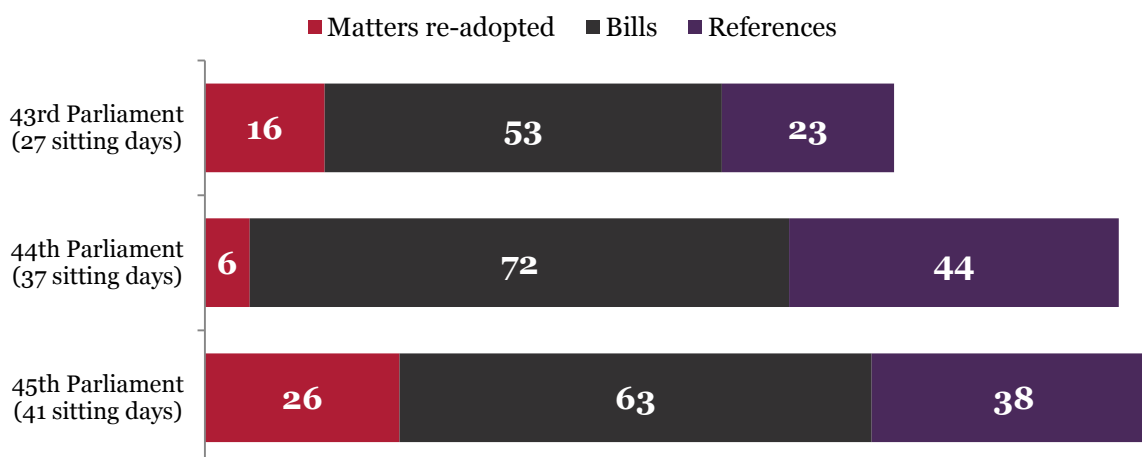
In the 45th Parliament, at 11 May 2017, there have been:

- 127 references (101 new references and 26 re-adopted from the 44th Parliament);
- 121 reports tabled;
- 183 hearings.

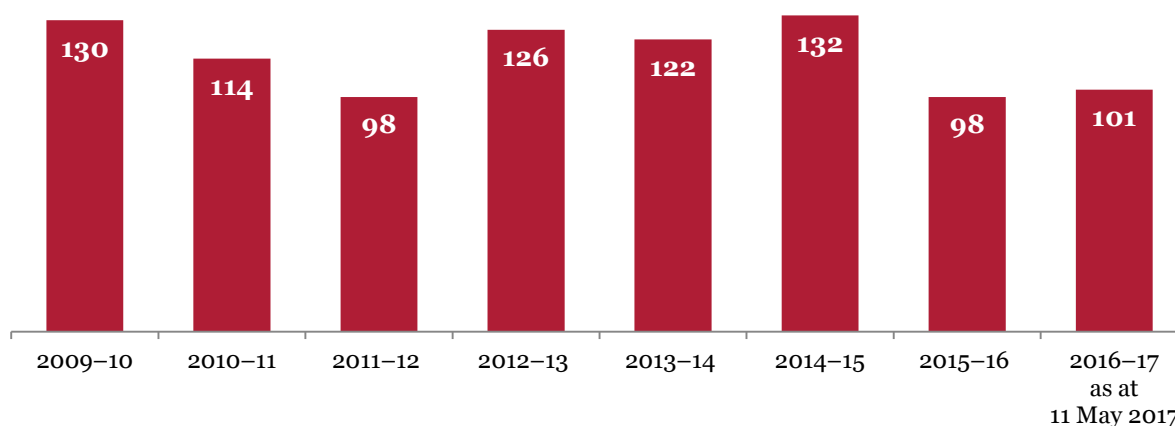
The following tables compare references and reports at the same point in previous parliaments, as well as a tally by financial year of references and hearings held.

Number of references

Standing Committee references in the first 8.5 months of each Parliament

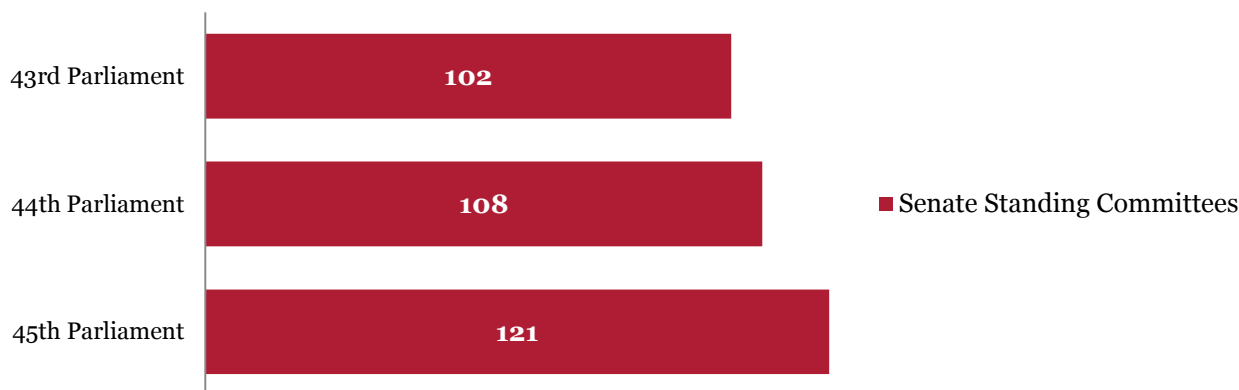


Standing Committee references by financial year



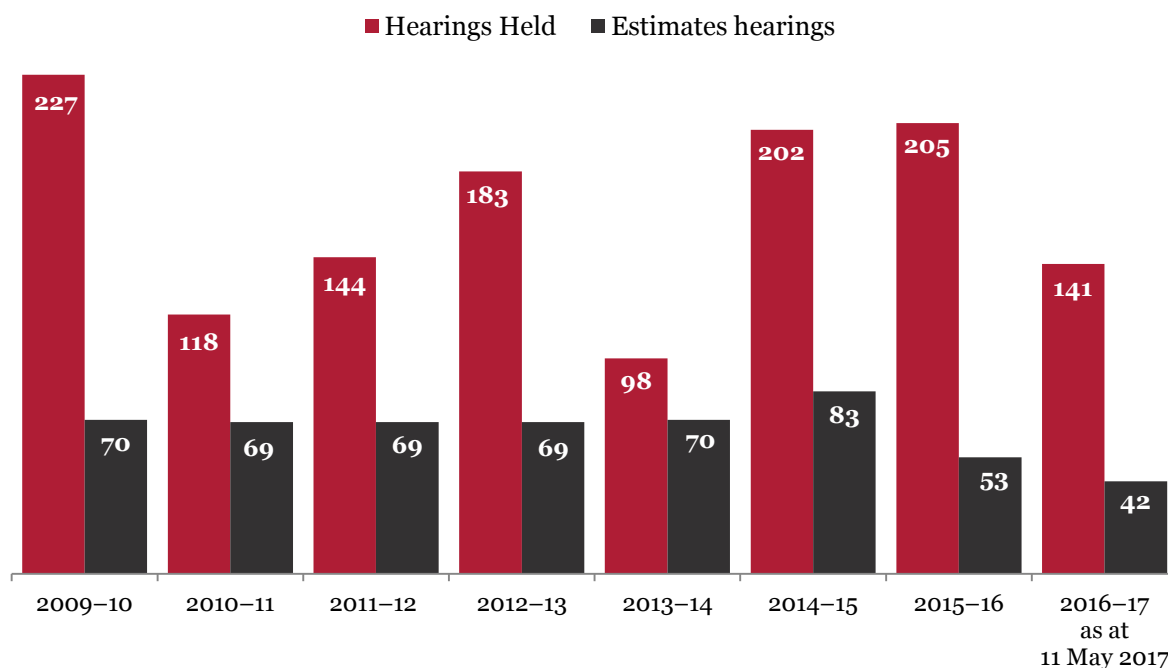
Reports

Standing Committee reports in the first 8.5 months of each Parliament



Hearings held

Standing Committee hearings held, by financial year



Additional indicators of activity:

- The department is currently supporting six select committees. Two select committees have completed their inquiries. During the 44th Parliament, the department supported 12 select committees (including one committee later re-established).
- At present, the department also supports six joint committees.
- The busiest committee during the 44th Parliament was the Economics Committee, which managed 20 inquiries in February 2016, and 18 in September and in November 2015.

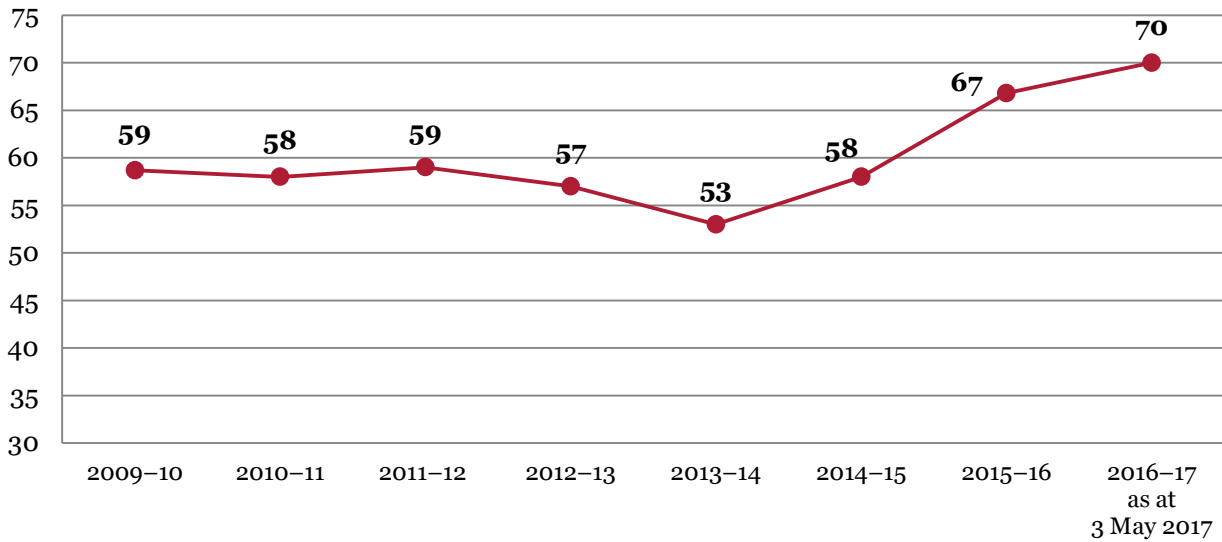
Staffing

Average staffing for 2016–17: At 3 May 2017 there were 70.4 Full Time Equivalent staff in the Committee Office, compared with an average FTE of 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 \$8.8 million. At 30 April 2017, the 2016–17 year-to-date operational costs for the office were \$8.5 million.

In 2015–16, operational costs for the Committee Office were \$10.7 million (including corporate overheads). Additional resources were sought and used in the last financial year.

Summary comparison of committee costs by category

(as at 30 April 2017)

Standing, select and joint committees, 2013–14 to 2016–17*				
Expenses	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17*
Executive†				
Staff costs	822,952	800,436	1,219,392	1,265,287
Administrative costs	41,541	24,360	57,059	55,664
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>864,493</i>	<i>824,796</i>	<i>1,276,451</i>	<i>1,320,951</i>
Standing				
Staff costs	4,143,561	4,406,759	5,199,215	5,447,231
Administrative costs	263,927	444,773	484,019	249,834
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>4,407,487</i>	<i>4,851,532</i>	<i>5,683,234</i>	<i>5,697,065</i>
Joint Statutory				
Staff costs	715,560	882,953	1,019,048	779,172
Administrative costs	60,946	92,300	112,212	35,486
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>776,506</i>	<i>975,253</i>	<i>1,131,260</i>	<i>814,657</i>
Select				
Staff costs	253,201	549,334	744,230	223,192
Administrative costs	23,391	72,953	96,803	18,604
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>276,592</i>	<i>622,287</i>	<i>841,033</i>	<i>241,796</i>
Joint Standing/Select				
Staff costs	125,875	217,860	719	368,154
Administrative costs	20,201	50,209	3,007	9,805
<i>Total expenses</i>	<i>146,075</i>	<i>268,069</i>	<i>3,726</i>	<i>377,959</i>
Total program expense	6,471,154	7,541,937	8,935,704	8,452,428

†Executive comprises Clerk Assistant and Senior Clerk's offices and additional staff engaged to provide 'surge capacity' to meet peaks in demand.

*Estimated actual – based on average monthly expenditure.

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



Comparative statistics

Inquiries supported by the Senate Committee Office as at 11 May 2017

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 11/5/17)
➤ Refs Ctee inquiries readopted ¹	15	6	26
➤ New Refs Ctee inquiries	80	124	38
➤ Bill inquiries ²	235	216	63
➤ Other Leg Ctee inquiries ³	5	6	0
➤ Select Ctee inquiries	5	12	8
➤ Joint Select Ctee inquiries ⁴	14	2	0
➤ Joint Ctee inquiries ⁵	30	9	10
Total	384	375	145

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

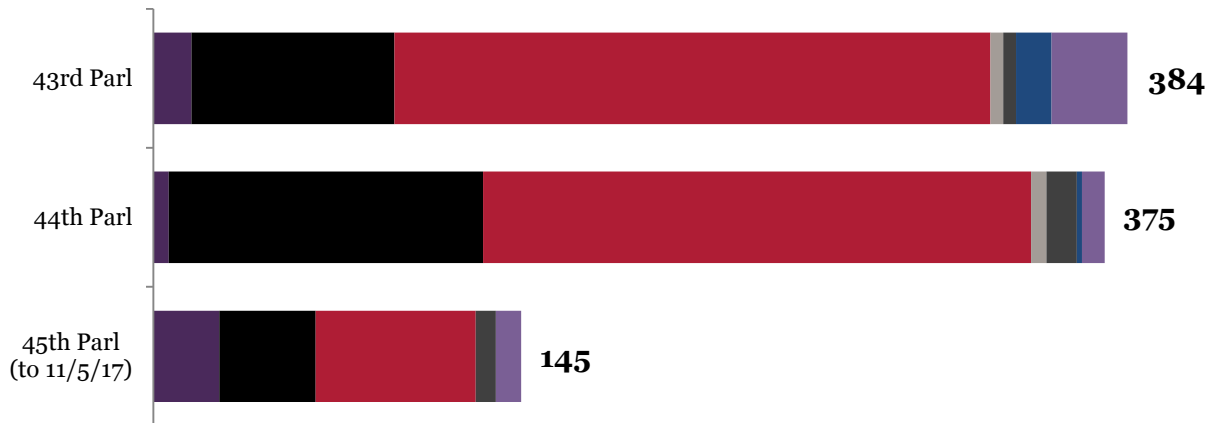
2. Includes one bill considered by a references committee in the 43rd Parliament

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 11/5/17)
Time (in weeks)	149	130	38

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 just over 8 months, to mid-May 2017, 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)

