

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Additional Estimates Hearing—February 2014**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Parliamentary Library**

Question: **167**

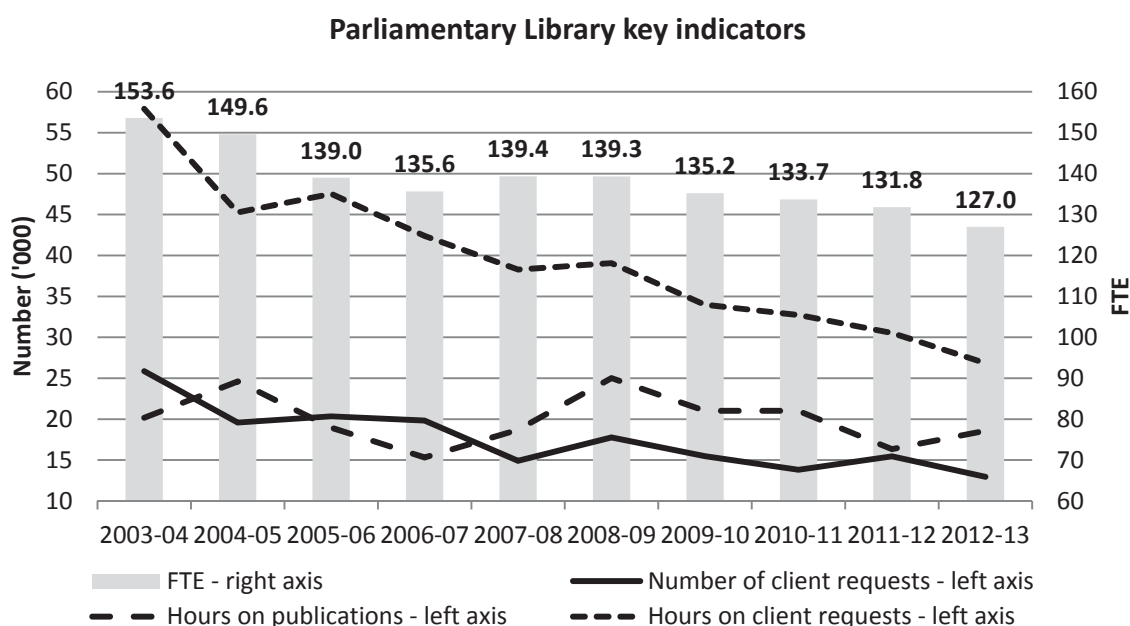
Written **Senator McKenzie**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 April 2014

1. Does the library record the total number of requests it receives each year?
2. What is the trend in relation to the Library's research output? Is it increasing or are the number of client requests declining?
3. How many requests for research briefs have been submitted to the library since September 9 2013?
4. Can the total number of requests to date be broken down on a monthly basis?
5. Since 9 September what has been the most common form of request? Has it been request relating to bills and legislation? Have the most common requests been of a statistical nature? Have issues brief been the most commonly requested library products?
6. Which subject matter specialists have had the most requests since September 2013?
7. Is the library able to break down the number of requests it receives by the broad category of Senators Members and Shadow Ministers?
8. How do staff numbers at the Library this financial year compare with last year?
9. Does the Library expect the number of full time staff it employs to decline over the forward estimates?

Answer

1. The Library collects statistics, inter alia, on the total number of client requests handled by the Library and the number of hours spent on client requests.
2. Trend data for direct client requests (to 30 June 2013) is set out in the graph below.



Note: Total number of completed client requests and hours on client requests includes both research requests and client requests to the Electronic Media Monitoring Service (EMMS)

The Library's research output comprises both general distribution publications and individualised and confidential client research.

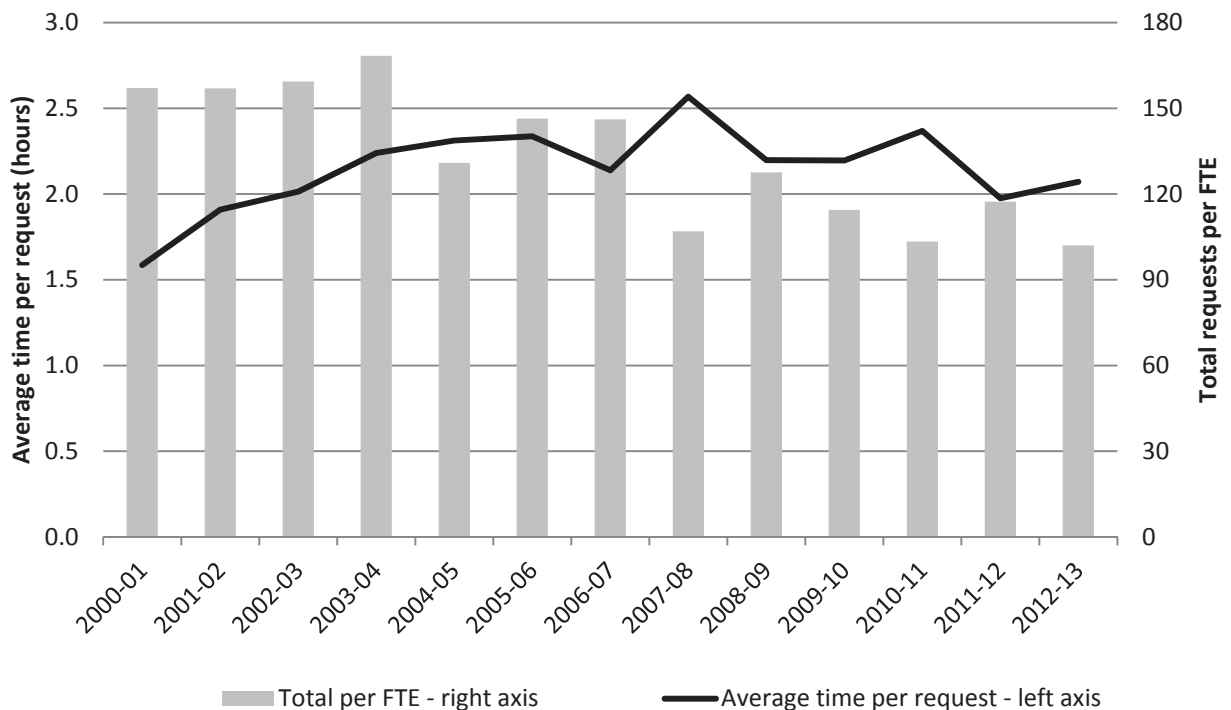
The Library's publications range from short, topical blog posts to general research papers on topics judged to be of relevance and interest to clients, and Bills Digests which provide Senators and Members with impartial and independent explanation and commentary on bills as they come before the Parliament. The Library issued 421 research publications in 2012–13 including 164 Bills Digests.

Library data indicates that between 2003-04 and 2012-13, the number of research publications produced by the Library increased by 31.2 per cent, and the number produced per FTE rose from 2.1 to 3.3, a 58.6 per cent increase in output.

In regard to individualised research, the Library responded to 12,957 direct client requests in 2012-13, down from the 15,460 it handled in the 2011-12 financial year. In part this difference can be explained by the fact that 2013 was an election year. (Historically, the number of client requests dips in election years.) However, in 2005-06 the Library handled over 20,000 individual client requests. One explanation for the reduction is the increased amount of information available online, including the enhanced self-service capabilities of the new platform for the Electronic Media Monitoring which was launched in September 2012. However, it reflects also the Library's diminishing capacity to handle such requests. This was noted in the *2012-13 Library Resource Agreement* which reduced the Library's KPI from 14,000 client requests to 13,000, and reduced the associated KPI for timeliness from 95 to 90 per cent.

To look at longer term trends from the perspective of FTE, Library data indicates that between 2000-01 and 2012-13 there was an overall decline in the number of client requests of 35.1 per cent per FTE. However, over that same period there has been an increase in the average amount of time spent on individual requests. For example in 2000-01 the average client request took staff 1.6 hours to complete; in 2012-13, it took 2.1 hours -- an increase of 30.6 per cent over the whole period. One explanation for this trend is that there seems to be a gradual change in the balance of research queries the Library receives. Clients are increasingly able to find the answers to simple queries online, with the result that the queries received by the library are increasing in complexity.

Client requests - relative indicators



One of the Library's key service strategies is to increase the amount of the collection available online, including content created by the Library's researchers, to meet the

changing needs of Senators and Members: resources need to be easily accessible to those in electorate offices or travelling out of Canberra as well as those in Parliament House. The Library has increased the percentage of its collection available in digital form from 15 per cent at the end of June 2006 (when we first started collecting data) to 34 per cent at the end of June 2013. The use of these digital collections continues to grow: in 2012-13 there were over 5 million online uses of the Parliamentary Library's publications (available via the internet) and over 440,000 uses of the Library's Electronic Resources Repository (available via the Parliamentary Computing Network).

- Between 1 September 2013 and 31 March 2014, the Library completed 6644 individual client requests -- this figure includes both research requests and client requests to the Electronic Media Monitoring Service (EMMS). (Due to the nature of the Library's data base, figures can only be provided from the first of the month.)
- The total number of client requests completed since 1 September 2013 broken down on a monthly basis (this figure includes both research requests and client requests to the EMMS):

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2013-14	518	792	1153	768	726	1285	1402

- The Library's data base is primarily designed to record and manage individual client jobs. Identifying specific types or groupings of requests as outlined in the question would not be possible without a significant diversion of resources to conduct a manual tally. Requests may also often cross different subject areas and require a coordinated response across different research teams. However, statistical analysis of the keywords used in completed client requests for the period from 1 September 2013 to 31 March 2014 shows that the following keywords have been used at least 50 times in requests:

policy, electorate; industry; tax; government; health; election; funding; research; Western Australia; international; legislation; economic; education; United States; NSW; mining; income; Coalition; Qantas; investment; unemployment; Indigenous; history; China; debt; employment; cost; health; companies; energy; business; foreign; rates; trade; carbon

These keywords would suggest that economic queries have been the most common, which is confirmed by the number of enquiries completed by the Economics area in this period (see response to Q.6).

In regards to the Library's publications, these are available online and are promoted through our e-newsletter, Twitter and RSS feeds. While researchers may refer clients to a particular publication, it is not usual for a client to call requesting a particular Library publication given their easy availability online. Overall, Library publications which receive the most page views are those on immigration issues, particularly asylum seekers.

- The Economics section has completed the most client requests since 1 September 2013. (The figures in the table below do not include data relating to publications so do not reflect total research output.)

Subject area	No of requests completed from 1 Sept 2013 to 31 March 2014
Economics	1248
Central Enquiry Point (CEP)	1049
Social Policy	960
Electronic Media Monitoring Unit	781
Statistics and Mapping	728
Law and Bills Digest	621

Politics and Public Administration	466
Foreign Affairs, Defence & Security	429
Science, Tech, Environ & Resources	329
Other (Information Access Branch, Publishing and Library Executive)	33

7. The table below shows the number of completed requests from September to March 2014, broken down by Members, Senators, Ministers and Shadow Ministers.

Number of completed requests from 1 September 2013 to 31 March 2014 (these requests include media requests)	
Members	3790 requests
Senators	1554 requests
Ministers*	596 requests
Shadow Ministers*	1052 requests
Shadow Ministry (including Outer Shadow Ministry)*	1765 requests
Parliamentary Committees, parliamentary departments and reciprocal arrangements	1300 requests

* Figures also included in Members or Senators number of requests

8. The Library's FTE has fallen from 127 in 2012-13 to an anticipated 121.3 in 2013-14.
9. Yes. The Library's FTE has declined significantly since 2003-04 (when its FTE was 153.6). We expect this trend to continue in 2014-15 and beyond due to budgetary pressures and reductions in the Department of Parliamentary Services' appropriation in the forward estimates.