

rm.let.17106

5 February 2010

Ms Christine McDonald
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms McDonald

ESTIMATES HEARING 8 FEBRUARY 2010 – DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE

It has been a practice in the past to provide the Committee with regular updates about the costs and volume of activity of Senate Committees. As long as these updates continue to be of use to the Committee, I will continue the practice.

Please see attached information, tables and statistics of Committee activity updated to February 2010, in the same format as previously provided for ease of comparison.

Yours sincerely

(Rosemary Laing)

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

REPORT TO FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY ESTIMATES 2010

TRENDS DURING THE 41ST AND 42ND PARLIAMENTS

The attached statistics and tables show trends in the activities of Senate committees during the 41st and 42nd parliaments. The Department has met the recent substantial increase in committee work referred by the Senate by:

- enlarging the budget allocation for committee work; and
- using a variety of staffing strategies.

These matters are described and the trends can be summarised as follows:

41st Parliament

During the 41st Parliament, there was a:

- Reduction in numbers of references to committees; and
- No select committees appointed after 1 July 2005.

As a consequence, with committees being less active, staff vacancies arising out of normal turnover were not filled. Committee activities were able to be supported with fewer staff, with staff gradually being reduced during the 40th and 41st Parliaments from 62 staff in 2003, to 53 staff by the end of the 41st Parliament in July 2008.

42nd Parliament

During the 42nd Parliament:

- There was an increase in the numbers of references to committees. The busiest committees with the most number of references have been Economics (maximum of 14 references at one time), Legal and Constitutional Affairs (maximum of 5 references at one time) and Community Affairs (maximum of 12 references at one time);
- This increase in activity is also reflected by the numbers of committee reports being tabled, with the Economics Committee tabling 38 reports and the Community Affairs Committee tabling 23 reports during 2009. On the first sitting day of 2010, already 12 committee reports were presented.
- An increase in the number of very short-term references (ie less than 2 weeks)
- The appointment of 8 select committees within a 12 month period.

As a consequence of this increase in committee workload directed by the Senate, additional staff were recruited. As a result the committee staff level as at May 2009 rose back to 62, comparable to the levels of staffing and committee activity experienced in 2003 – 04. As at February 2010, staffing has reduced slightly to 60.

The significant point is that although the staffing level is not greater now than it was in 2003-04, salary costs have risen significantly over the 6 years.

As mentioned in my report of May 2009, a variety of workload management strategies have continued to be used in the Senate committee office to meet the significant increase in workload as follows:

- Committee staff have been asked to work (in some cases, significant amounts of) additional hours.
- Committee secretariats which are less busy frequently provide research, analysis and administrative assistance to committee secretariats with large numbers of references and those with very short reporting deadlines.
- Officers from other areas of the Department have undertaken additional duties to assist committee secretariats.
- The Department has secured secondments from other Departments to assist with specific committee tasks.

It is clear that all of these strategies are short-term and rely on the goodwill of officers concerned.

Overall cost increase for the Office

The annual cost of the office has risen from \$6.8 million in the 2007 - 08 financial year to \$9.0 million in the 2008 - 09 financial year. This increase of \$2.2 million was made up of:

- additional staff - \$1.1million
- pay increase for existing staff - \$0.2 million
- increase in cost of flights, charter aircraft etc for public hearings - \$0.5 million
- increase in share of corporate overheads of \$0.4 million.

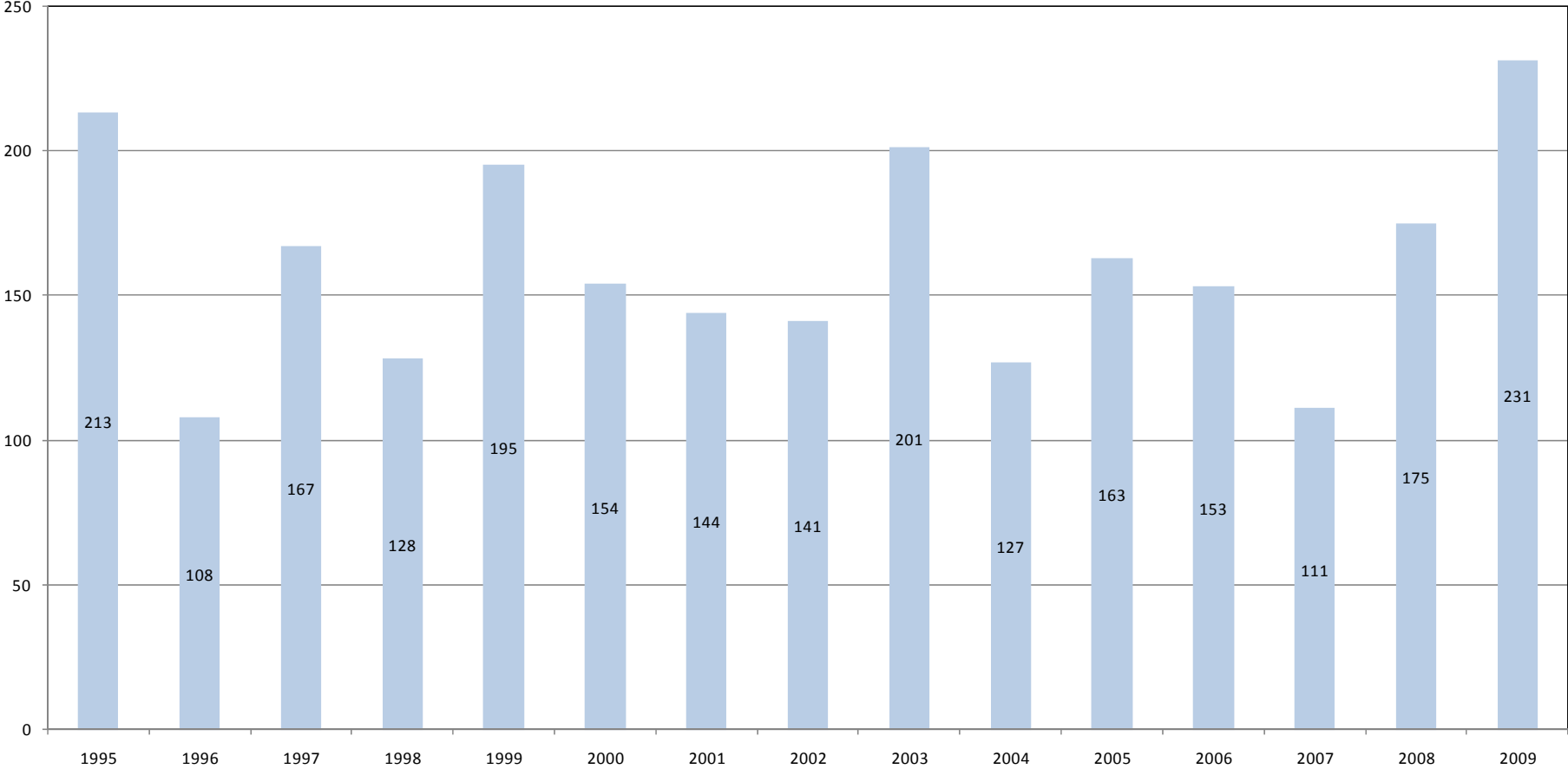
Financial trend for 2009 – 10

During the period 1 July 2009 to 31 December 2009, the cost of the committee office was \$4.8 million. At this stage the financial year cost is expected to be \$9.6 million. This increase of \$600,000 is less than \$2.2 million increase last year.

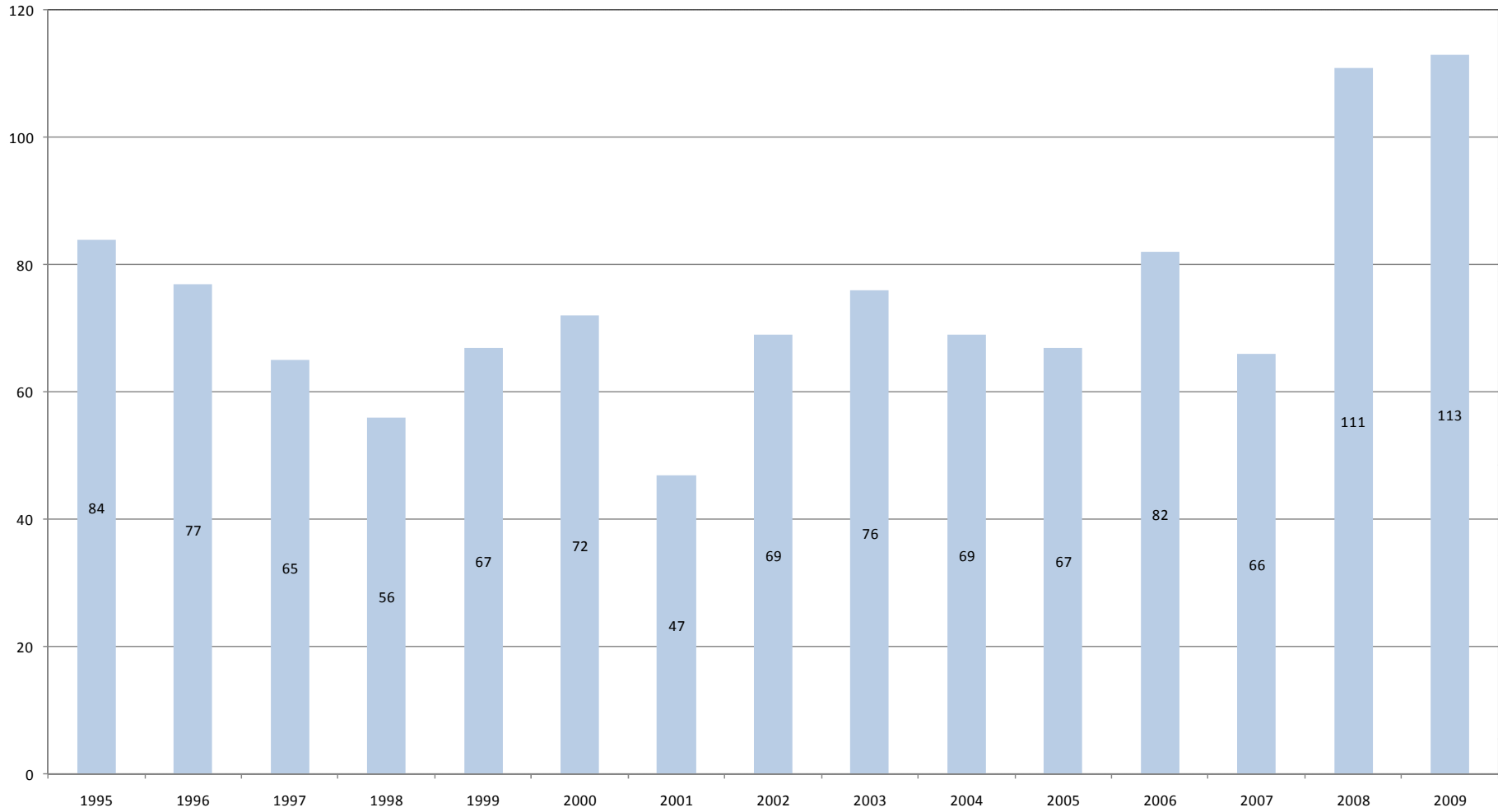
CJC Elliott
Clerk Assistant (Committees)
4 February 2010

Senate Committee Hearings Held - 1995 to 2009

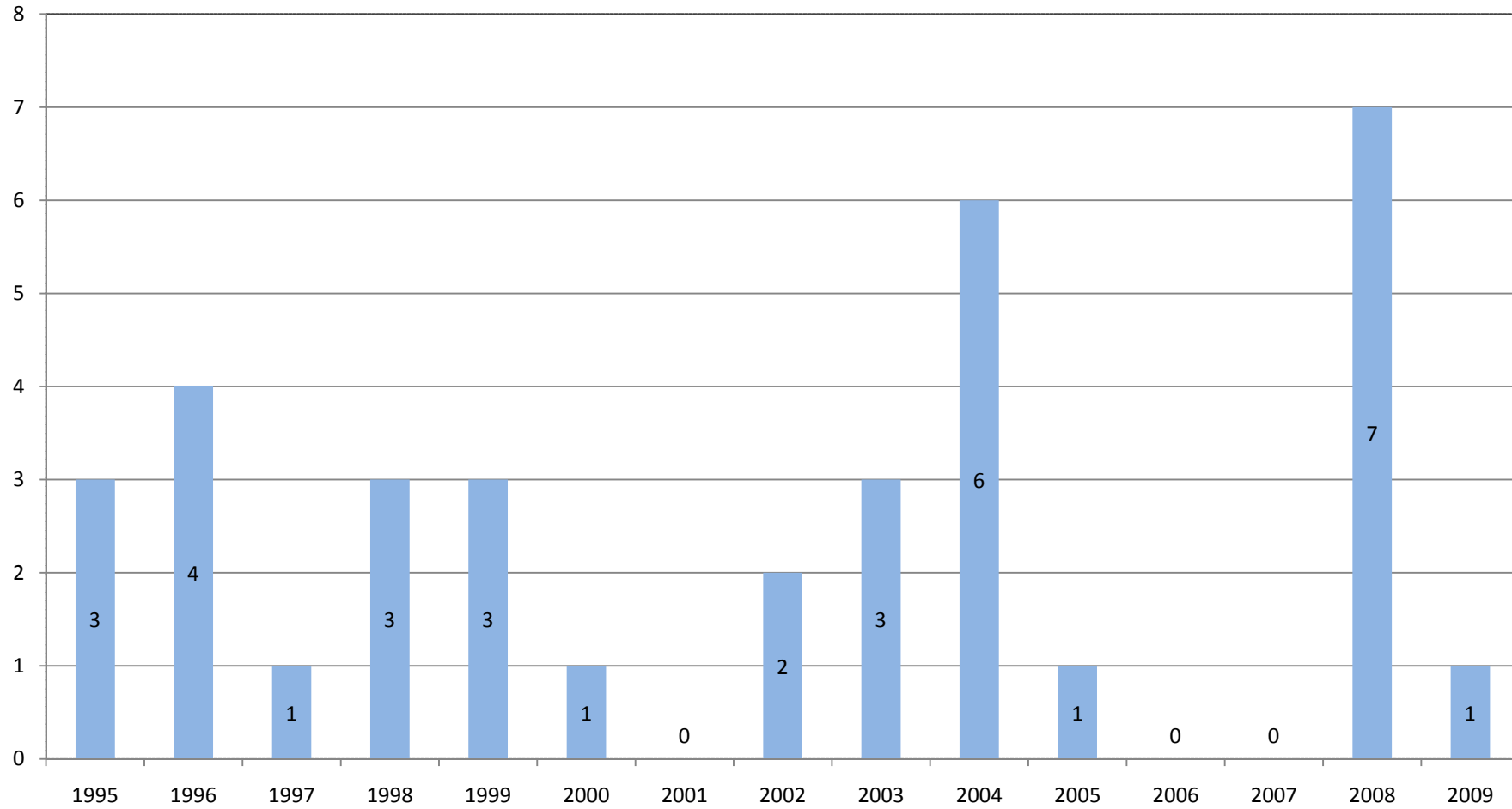
(as at 18/12/09)



Senate Committees - Number of References 1995 to 2009
(as at 30/11/09)



Senate Select Committees Appointed - 1995 to 2009



**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF COMMITTEE COSTS BY CATEGORY -
STANDING, SELECT AND JOINT COMMITTEES – 2006-07 TO 2008-09**

As at 31 Dec
2009

<i>Expenses</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10*</i>
<i>Executive</i>				
Staff Costs	693,880	714,464	730,947	591,514
Administrative Costs	23,784	17,157	31,330	27,935
<i>Total Expenses</i>	717,664	731,621	762,277	619,449
<i>Standing</i>				
Staff Costs	3,239,223	3,407,126	3,923,416	4,202,466
Administrative Costs	641,611	447,673	668,702	692,377
<i>Total Expenses</i>	3,880,834	3,854,799	4,592,119	4,894,843
<i>Statutory</i>				
Staff Costs	655,654	615,606	644,454	579,659
Administrative Costs	90,866	65,186	99,420	104,031
<i>Total Expenses</i>	746,520	680,792	743,874	683,691
<i>Select</i>				
Staff Costs	16,152	25,532	758,461	856,601
Administrative Costs	235	38,237	269,857	192,818
<i>Total Expenses</i>	16,386	63,770	1,028,318	1,049,419
<i>Total Program Expense</i>	<u>5,361,404</u>	<u>5,330,982</u>	<u>7,126,588</u>	<u>7,247,402</u>

* Estimated actual - based on average monthly expenditure

Staff costs - the salaries of Senate staff working within the secretariat.

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

**SUMMARY COMPARISON OF COMMITTEE COSTS
BY INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE – 2007-08 TO 2009-10**

	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	As at 1 Jul.. 2008 2009-10*
Standing Committees			
Community Affairs			
Staff costs	489,755	525,651	623,895
Administrative costs	97,406	111,546	98,427
Economics			
Staff costs	410,767	555,361	543,854
Administrative costs	60,158	111,257	129,603
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations			
Staff costs	408,032	482,181	445,151
Administrative costs	54,709	86,450	80,044
Environment, Communications and the Arts			
Staff costs	394,281	356,511	516,538
Administrative costs	52,004	82,848	66,459
Finance and Public Administration			
Staff costs	372,210	453,016	431,813
Administrative costs	47,858	71,230	35,911

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Staff costs	458,756	478,792	524,019
Administrative costs	39,994	47,669	43,724

Legal and Constitutional

Staff costs	449,170	604,366	673,107
Administrative costs	50,624	66,976	105,301

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Staff costs	424,154	467,538	444,090
Administrative costs	44,921	90,726	132,909

Joint Statutory Committees**Joint Comm on Corporations and Securities**

Staff costs	266,934	313,276	308,560
Administrative costs	29,641	31,358	58,490

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity / Australian Crime Commission

Staff costs	348,672	331,178	271,099
Administrative costs	35,545	68,062	45,542

Select Committees

Agricultural and Related Industries

Staff costs	346	63,754	132,037
Administrative costs	12,815	21,061	39,101

State Government Financial Management

Staff costs	578	348	-
Administrative costs	10,627	7,376	0

Housing Affordability in Australia

Staff costs	23,042	1,959	-
Administrative costs	13,597	4,027	-

Regional & Remote Indigenous Communities Select Committee

Staff costs	1,567	220,945	269,785
Administrative costs	1,198	79,925	53,337

Fuel & Energy

Staff costs	-	255,246	285,761
Administrative costs	-	79,652	39,620

National Broadband Network

Staff costs	-	172,174	171,645
Administrative costs	-	41,340	47,730

Select Committee on Men's Health

Staff costs	-	29,268	789
Administrative costs	-	11,258	921

Select Committee on Climate Policy

Staff costs	-	14,767	1,839
Administrative costs	-	25,218	12,110

** Estimated actual - based on average monthly expenditure*