SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

REPORT TO THE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE – ESTIMATES FEBRUARY 2012

RECENT TRENDS

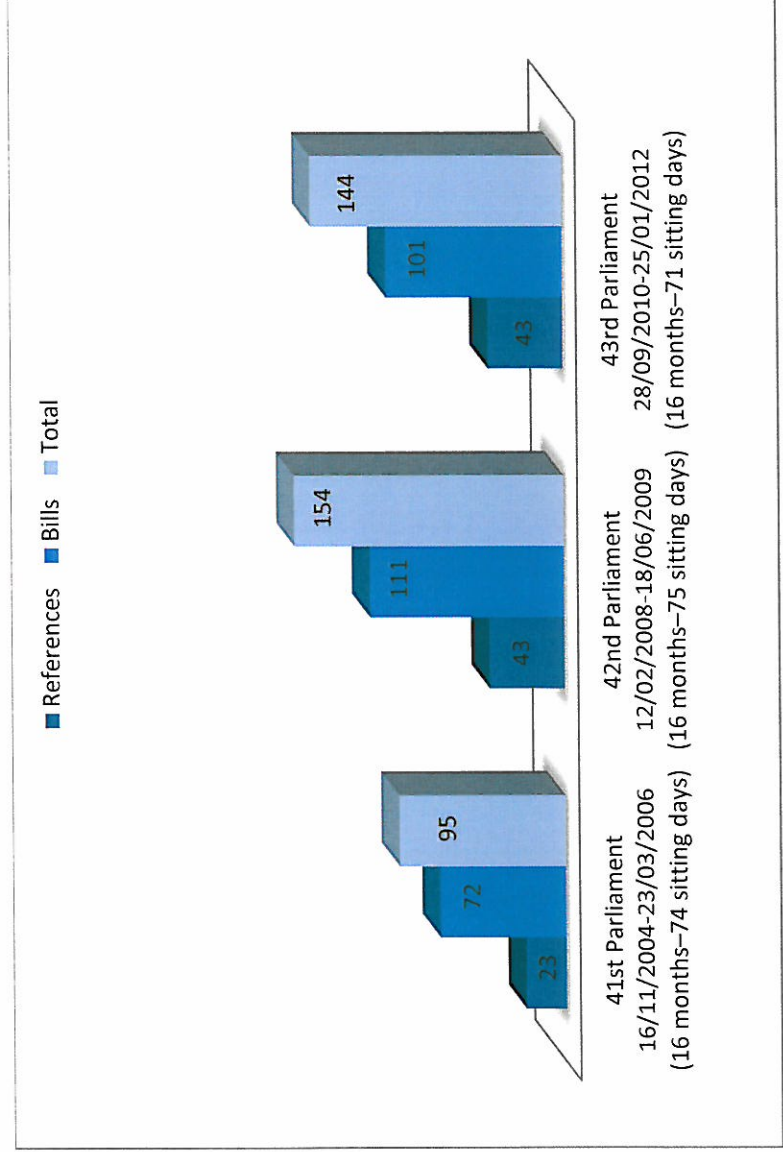The following data shows trends and comparisons in the activities of Senate committees:

- The 42nd parliament experienced an increase in the total number of matters referred to standing committees, increasing from 234 in the 41st to 309 in the 42nd. So far in the 43rd Parliament (at 25 January 2012) there have been 144 matters referred. This compares to 154 matters referred after a similar period in the 42nd parliament and 95 in the 41st parliament.

- The 42nd parliament also experienced an increase in the total number of committee reports tabled, rising from 396 in the 41st to 493 in the 42nd. Committee reports tabled thus far in the 43rd Parliament (at 31 January 2012) total 210. This compares to 213 reports tabled after a similar period in the 42nd parliament and 137 in the 41st parliament.

- The busiest committees at any one time during the 42nd parliament were Economics (maximum of 14 references at one time) and Community Affairs (maximum of 14 references at one time). In the 43rd parliament, the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committees have twice dealt with a maximum of 12 references at one time (in November 2010 and May 2011).

- In calendar year 2011, the Legal and Constitutional Affairs committees tabled 34 reports, the Economics committees 32, the Community Affairs committees 23 and the Environment and Communications committees 21 reports.

- Currently, three select committees administered by the Senate are in operation (one Senate select committee and two joint select committees).

Staffing: the committee office FTE staffing level as at 18 January 2011 is 62. Recruitment is currently taking place to select Committee Secretaries (PEL 2) and Research Officers (APS 4). This is both for planning purposes and to fill one vacancy at each level.
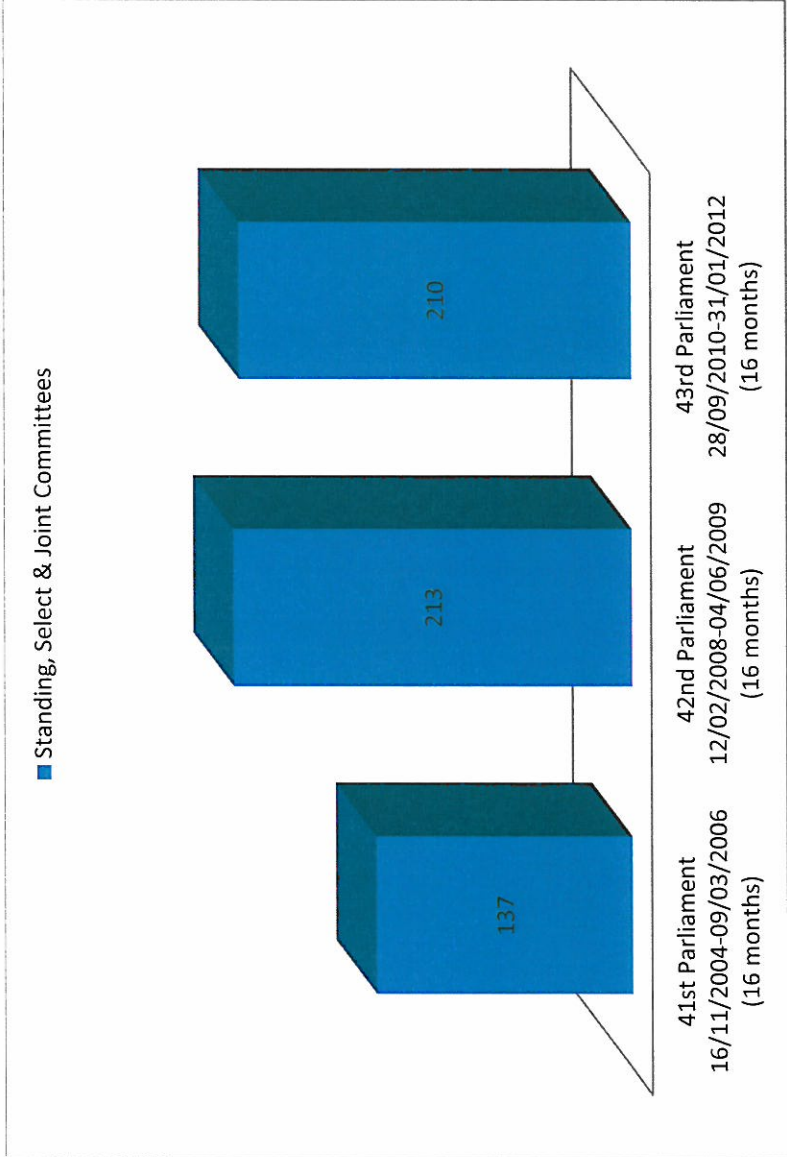
Cost of running Senate committees: the break-down of costs incurred 'by committee' for the three years 2008-09 to 2010-11 was included in the October 2011 report to the Committee. This report will be updated in May 2012 when the costs incurred by each committee for financial year 2011-2012 can be accurately projected.

Accessibility of on-line material to the vision impaired: the Environment and Communications References Committee completed its trial to convert to HTML a selection of submissions received by the committee for its inquiry into the *status, health and sustainability of Australia's Koala population* (report tabled 22 September 2011). The report from the secretariat was presented to the Clerk, who referred it to the Chairs' Committee for consideration. At its meeting of 23 November 2011, the Chairs' Committee endorsed the Clerk's view that the Department of the Senate should arrange and fund the conversion of documents, on request.
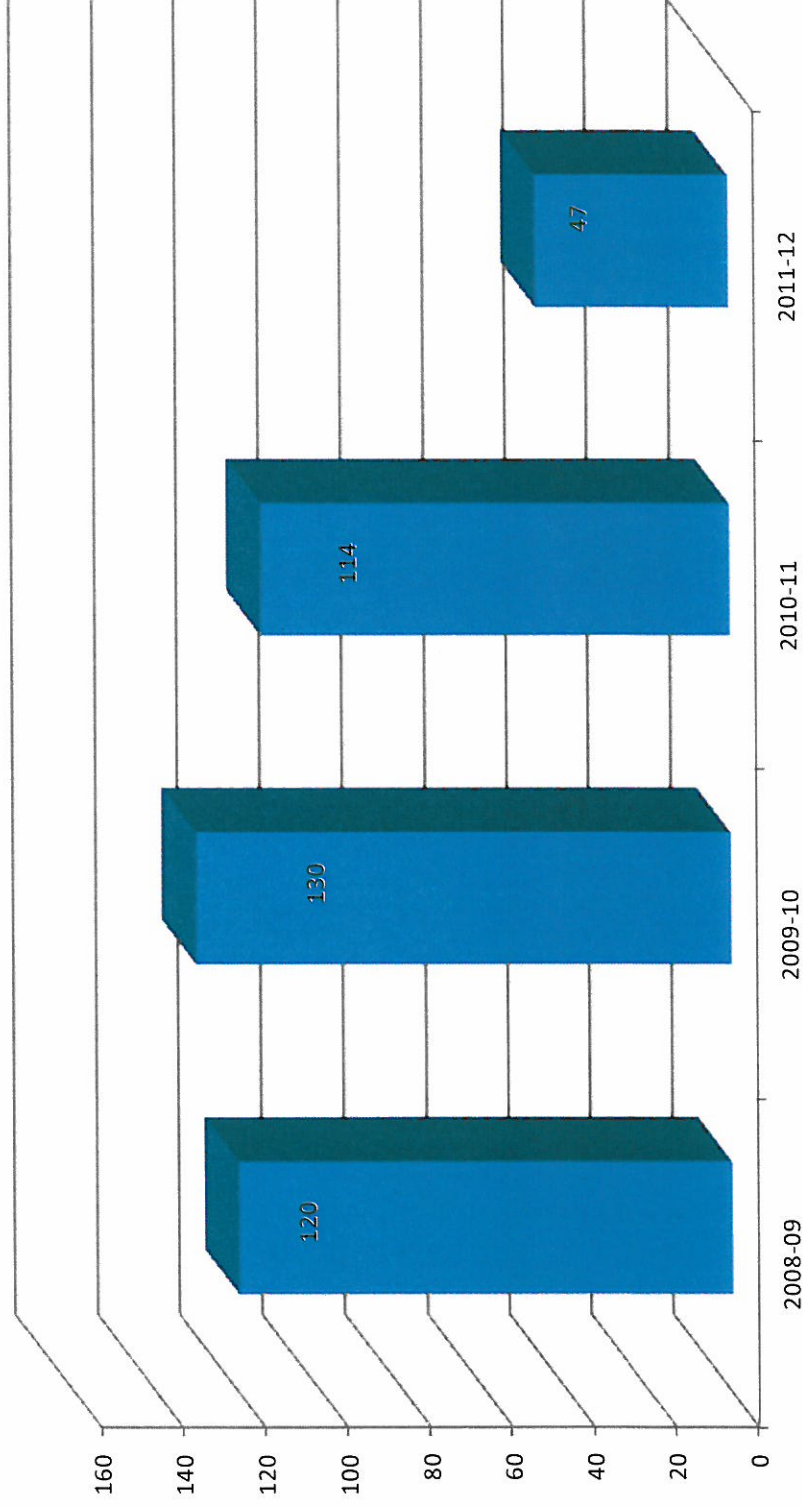
Comparison: references to standing committees during the 41st, 42nd and 43rd Parliaments

Legend: References | Bills | Total

41st Parliament
16/11/2004-23/03/2006
(16 months–74 sitting days)
- Total: 95
- Bills: 72
- References: 23

42nd Parliament
12/02/2008-18/06/2009
(16 months–75 sitting days)
- Total: 154
- Bills: 111
- References: 43

43rd Parliament
28/09/2010-25/01/2012
(16 months–71 sitting days)
- Total: 144
- Bills: 101
- References: 43

Comparison: committee reports tabled during the 41ˢᵗ , 42ⁿᵈ and 43ʳᵈ Parliaments

■ Standing, Select & Joint Committees

137

41st Parliament
16/11/2004-09/03/2006
(16 months)

213

42nd Parliament
12/02/2008-04/06/2009
(16 months)

210

43rd Parliament
28/09/2010-31/01/2012
(16 months)

Senate Standing Committees - Number of References
(as at 31/12/11)

Year	Number of References
2008-09	120
2009-10	130
2010-11	114
2011-12	47

Senate Standing Committees - Hearings Held
(as at 31/12/11)

Hearings Held
Estimates hearings

2008-09: 241, 69
2009-10: 227, 70
2010-11: 118, 69
2011-12: 72, 17
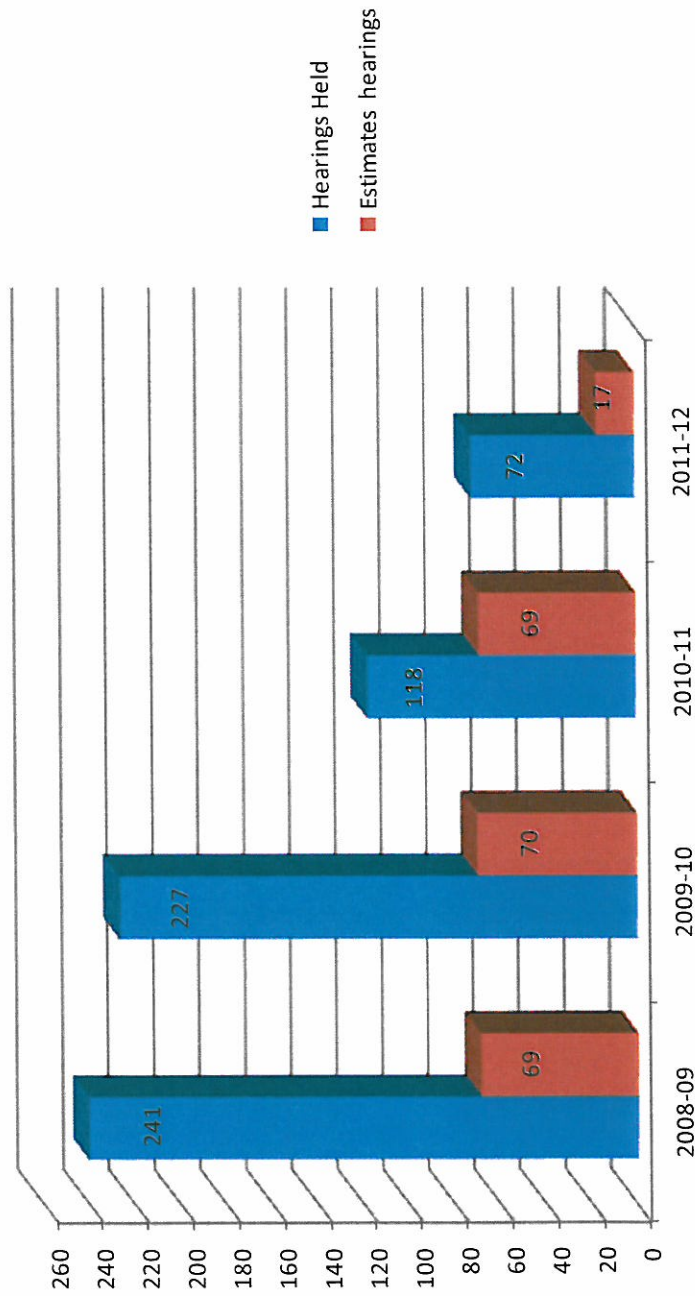
Committee Office FTE 2000/01 to 2011/12 (@ 18 Jan)