

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 – PREMIER AND FINANCE

Monday 4 March 2024

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

THE LEGISLATURE UNCORRECTED

The Committee met at 9:15.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham (Chair)
The Hon. Robert Borsak (Deputy Chair)
Ms Abigail Boyd
The Hon. Wes Fang
Ms Sue Higginson
The Hon. Mark Latham
The Hon. Cameron Murphy
The Hon. Bob Nanva
The Hon. Peter Primrose
The Hon. Chris Rath

PRESENT

The Hon. Ben Franklin, *President of the Legislative Council*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the fifth and penultimate hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance for the additional round of hearings for the inquiry into budget estimates 2023-2024. Firstly, I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Jeremy Buckingham and I am the Chair of this Committee. I welcome the President of the Legislative Council and accompanying officials to this hearing.

Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of The Legislature. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage all Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of those procedures.

To the witnesses, welcome and thank you for making the time to give evidence. Mr President, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. I note that Mr Blunt and Mr Webb also do not need to be sworn as you have both been sworn at an earlier budget estimates hearing before this Committee.

UNCORRECTED

Mr DAVID BLUNT, AM, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council, Legislative Council, Parliament of New South Wales, on former oath

Mr MARK WEBB, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of New South Wales, on former affirmation

The CHAIR: Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.15 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. During this time there will be questions from the Opposition, crossbench and Government. We will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Thank you, Mr President, Mr Blunt and Mr Webb for joining us today. I was listening to the ABC this morning and they said that we should probably expect a royal visit, hopefully the King, later in the year. I was wondering if you could give an update on whether we should expect the King to visit as part of the bicentenary celebrations.

The PRESIDENT: I'm not sure that the commentary this morning suggested that the King is definitely coming, but I think that we're all very enthusiastic and excited about the possibility of a royal visit. I have written to the King to invite him, as the President of the Legislative Council, to a formal ceremonial opening of the Parliament later in the year. In my role as President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association I have also invited him to attend the opening of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, which will be held in Sydney from 4 to 8 November this year. I had the opportunity to write that letter, to travel to Government House alongside the Clerk and to give it formally to the Governor, who then sent it off to Buckingham Palace.

We have since then been in contact with the Prime Minister's office. The reports today are true. They have, in fact, reached out to us to ask what sort of program would be appropriate, and obviously to the Government of New South Wales as well. Those two things, particularly, are things that we're enthusiastic about. The short answer is that we don't have a confirmation. The King had a health diagnosis that we all heard about, and I know that I speak for everyone in the room when I say that we wish him a speedy and full recovery, but we're all very hopeful that he will be able to be here in November, or if not he then another member of the royal family, in order to appropriately acknowledge both the bicentenary of the Legislative Council and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, which is in Australia for the first time in over two decades. Mr Blunt may have something further to add to that.

DAVID BLUNT: Mr Rath, I think it's a matter of public record that on 1 September 2022 the former President, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, and I had the honour of having an audience with the then Prince of Wales—that was five days before he became King—at his private residence in Scotland, the purpose of which was for the former President to convey a verbal, formal invitation for a visit in October or November this year as part of the bicentenary events. Whilst there are protocols that prevent me from disclosing any of the matters discussed during that audience, I can indicate that we were received most warmly during that visit.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: If we're not fortunate enough to get a visit from His Majesty, maybe Prince William? Hopefully not Prince Harry.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Meghan Markle?

The CHAIR: Prince Andrew.

The PRESIDENT: We couldn't possibly comment on any other arrangements the royal family might make. I guess the only final comment I would make, though, is that if the King were to visit, it would actually be delightful in its circularity as in 50 years ago, at the 150th anniversary of the Legislative Council, he was present. To have him again, 50 years later, but this time as the King, would be a really lovely opportunity for the Parliament.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: To more mundane matters, the lifts in Parliament are often broken or out of service. I was wondering if you could give an update on that and when we might expect the lifts to be in working order.

The PRESIDENT: I'll make a few introductory comments and then throw to Mark, but I know this is an issue of particular interest to everybody in the building. Some initial framing I'd like to give you is this: Most of the lift components in the Parliament are over 40 years old. Because of that, there are frequent breakdowns. In fact, when we put our budget bid in last year, one of the fundamental reasons why we wanted to continue with the capital expenditure that this Parliament requires and continue with the uplift that came from the last Government that has, with great appreciation, continued with this one, was in fact to replace the lifts. Each lift takes approximately 16 weeks to upgrade. What we're doing is upgrading them one at a time and only taking one lift offline each time. But it's an important, long and complex process and something that this Parliament desperately needs. Mark, do you have further information you'd like to add?

UNCORRECTED

MARK WEBB: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr President. Thank you for the question. As the President said, we've taken one lift off at a time—one passenger lift. We've also taken one goods lift offline at the same time so that we can try to get things done as quickly as possible. As you'd imagine, with five passenger lifts and one offline, that's put extra activity and strain on the remaining four, which was fine during the Christmas-New Year period. The activity in the building isn't particularly high, so everything seemed to manage. When we got to the first sitting week of the year, though, those four remaining lifts started to struggle. In particular, you might recall we had some quite hot, humid weather at the time. We went through and did a causal analysis because it wasn't one lift that went offline; it was a series of lifts at different times for different reasons. We found a couple of things. The first thing was the motor room at the top of the building where the lifts are driven from has no air conditioning in it, and the heat and the humidity combined with the extra use on the lifts caused components up there to fail.

The CHAIR: Climate change.

MARK WEBB: I wouldn't comment on the cause of the heat and humidity, but heat and humidity were still there. What we have done is install some temporary air conditioning in that room. We've obviously added a permanent air conditioning solution up there as part of the refresh program that we're working on at the moment. As the President said, the lifts are now well over 40 years old and it meant that some of the components we needed to fix the lifts weren't in Australia. The lifts are too old and nobody was maintaining them anymore. We were able to scrounge around and find some in that week, but since then we have been sourcing spare parts and having spare parts in the building that will allow us to more rapidly fix the lifts that went through. The final thing is that we had through that week, and we will continue to have on sitting days, a lift technician in the building. Normally, we have a service arrangement. If something goes wrong with the lift, we call them and they come in. Sometimes, it's 20 minutes; sometimes, it could be an hour and a half. For the remainder of this program, we'll have somebody in the building, which means we can respond quickly when there are any issues that come up through the course of the time.

I can't promise that the lifts won't break down. We are replacing them for a reason. They are not very reliable. They are not just complete breakdowns. I'm sure some of you have been in the lift as it comes to a halt and it shudders that last few centimetres and sort of shudders up to the end. We do recognise that is a real issue. But, as I say, unfortunately, because it takes 16 weeks to replace a lift, there is no 16-week period with no sittings that we could have taken more than one offline to wait through, so it is another 18 months of fixing before we get to the end of this program of work. The final thing I would say is I would just recognise that as those new lifts come online they will be more reliable than the previous lifts, so I'm hoping that the overall reliability of the system will improve progressively as we go through and replace those lifts.

The PRESIDENT: Just two points I'd add quickly. The first is that I want to commend Mr Webb and the DPS team for when we did have the challenges in February—on the sixth and seventh, if I remember correctly. He immediately organised for there to be a technician on site for the entire rest of the parliamentary sitting week, so it meant that if and when there were other issues, they could be dealt with straightaway. The second point is that one of the goods lifts—number eight, in fact—has now been fully replaced and is now fully operational, and all of the evidence that we have anecdotally is that the travel times, the reliability and so on, has massively increased. The amount of time it's taken to get the lifts has increased substantially. We're very optimistic that this is the solution. It is just going to be a bit of a challenge for the next few months.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That's not a good thing. You're saying it takes extra time to get the lifts. Don't you mean less time?

The PRESIDENT: Sorry, less time. Yes, absolutely. Thanks, Mr Latham.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: The Jubilee Room is one of the most beautiful rooms in the building—at least in my opinion—but has been offline for some time, especially on non-sitting weeks. I think even as part of this budget estimates we've only had maybe one session in there. Can you provide an update on what is happening in the Jubilee Room and when it might be back to normal?

The PRESIDENT: Mr Webb?

MARK WEBB: Thank you for that and, yes, we do appreciate everyone's flexibility through this time. We have finished the work in the Jubilee Room per se. The main reason we have kept it offline through this estimates period is so that we can continue on the work with the Rum Hospital, the Parkes Room, the Members' Lounge, the Wentworth Room and the area upstairs to make sure that it is finished by the first week of April, which is our current schedule. As you know, this program of work was originally due to go through to 30 June. We are ahead of schedule, which is fantastic, but we wanted to make sure we pushed through and finished that work as early as possible. So, from early April, the Jubilee Room will be completely back to normal operation.

UNCORRECTED

You can expect future estimates periods to be in the Jubilee Room. As you said, there was at least one estimates day this time where the Jubilee Room was required. We were able to stop work in the Rum Hospital to allow that to happen.

I did want to express my appreciation for everybody's patience as we went through that work. The Rum Hospital work has been incredibly important. You would have seen just recently Westminster approve a £1.2 billion fund for restoring their Parliament and there are parts of that building that are unusable at the moment. While we are nowhere near that size and complexity, we were heading in a similar direction in terms of the usability of the space, so being able to push through, finish this Rum Hospital restoration work and have it done a few months ahead of schedule and on budget is very much something that we're very proud of, but we do appreciate the flexibility everyone has shown to make sure that we can make that happen.

The PRESIDENT: The other important point that I'd add is we have been able to keep the Parliament operating while the works have happened. This is not something that happens in numbers of other legislatures. The Canadian Parliament, for example, is going to have to shut down for years, as is Westminster itself. In fact, Westminster probably will have to move out for a decade in order to deal with the works that are required to do it. The fact that we have been able to continue to operate the Parliament as it should, without losing a sitting day, is, I think, testament to the not only excellent work of DPS but the building contractors and all of those involved in the refurbishment.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Great. I asked this last estimates. The painting of the founding of Australia, as well as the painting of King George V, when will they be returned to be on display? As part of that answer, I assume you'll probably want to talk a bit about when the restoration works will be concluding.

The PRESIDENT: Sure. I'll start and then Mark can add some details. The restoration works will be completed by April, which is ahead of schedule. Once the restoration works are completed, that's when it's the appropriate time to return artworks and to ensure that that area is then curated in the appropriate way. Hopefully, Mr Rath, by the next budget estimates you won't have to ask this same question once again. Can I say it's important that that painting is returned but equally as important is to ensure that there's an appropriate place for the new Aboriginal artwork which has been commissioned as part of the bicentenary, too. That will also be an important piece of art for the Parliament in the public space. But we are very comfortable about the refurbishments being completed ahead of time and on budget. I'll throw to Mark for any further comments.

MARK WEBB: I can confirm that's the time frame that we're working to. The primary piece of work that was still to be completed is the air conditioning that we're doing for the front of the building. I think I've mentioned at previous estimates that the air that went into both the Chambers and all that front Rum Hospital used to come from the very back of the building and out of some of the garden spaces. Part of this works has been to put a new air-conditioning plant down underneath the Parkes Room. For those who've been in the Parliament for a while—Mr Primrose would remember it used to be an archive space but completely unusable by modern work health and safety standards.

The Hon. WES FANG: Don't know why he singled you out, Peter.

MARK WEBB: Former President Primrose, I should say, would remember, as former President. We've used that space to put in an air-conditioning plant, which means that the air conditioning will be running from the front of the building. The air intake will be much closer and it will be much more reliable. I think most people at the front of the building, who have workspaces there, would've recognised that you were at the end of the air-conditioning path before. So the air that was coming through could often be weaker and not work quite as well. So that's the big piece of work we still have left to do.

Both the Members' Lounge and the Wentworth Room are physically complete, so all we have to do is turn on the air conditioning there. The Parkes Room is close to being complete and the upstairs area is close to being complete as well. So really the only piece of work that the whole thing is dependent on is this air-conditioning work that we're working through. As the President said, one of the reasons why we haven't been able to restore the artworks earlier is because of the air conditioning. It's incredibly important that we have the right climate control for these valuable pieces of art, and this air-conditioning system will help with that as well. As the President said, our expectation is that we would be restoring the artwork once we finish these refurbishments, and they will be finished in the first part of April.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, in the last estimates session I asked you for the budget of your office, correct?

The PRESIDENT: I assume so, yes.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. WES FANG: In that question, you will note it is recorded that I specifically asked you for four separate parts of your budget. I asked you for the total budget of the operation of your office, the total budget of your travel, the total catering budget for your office, the discretionary budget for your office. Do you recall me asking for those things?

The PRESIDENT: I do, Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: Do you recall that you took those questions on notice?

The PRESIDENT: I do and, in fact—

The Hon. WES FANG: In fact, I notice that it's actually question 2, on page 4.

The PRESIDENT: I'm aware of the question.

The Hon. WES FANG: You said, "But I'm happy to provide all of that." Mr President, do you recall the answer you gave me?

The PRESIDENT: I do.

The Hon. WES FANG: Do you recall the four parts that you gave me as an answer?

The PRESIDENT: The thing about the office of the President's budget is that it's not broken down like that. There's not a catering component and a discretionary component and so forth, which is why I gave you the holistic number, which, I think, was \$917,000, if I remember correctly.

The Hon. WES FANG: Correct.

The PRESIDENT: That's why.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'll redirect now. You said in your response you provided only the single figure, but it was also only for the financial year of 2022-23. I was asking for the current budget, which is 2023-24.

The PRESIDENT: Sorry. I misunderstood that.

The Hon. WES FANG: We were doing estimates based on the 2023-24 budget, correct?

The PRESIDENT: Sure.

The Hon. WES FANG: So why did you—

The PRESIDENT: There's no great conspiracy here. If we gave you 2022-23 and were supposed to give you 2023-24—very happy to do that and, once again, I am happy to take that on notice and provide that to you, Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can you provide the actual expenditure for the four separate items—budget, travel, catering and discretionary—for 2022-23 and also 2023-24?

The PRESIDENT: Happy, once again, to take that on notice.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, since the last estimates session, can you indicate how many times you travelled overseas and in what capacity? What was the cost of the travel, and who travelled with you and in what capacity?

The PRESIDENT: Sure. I've travelled overseas once since the last budget estimates. It was in a private capacity, full stop.

The Hon. WES FANG: Private capacity?

The PRESIDENT: There was no government expenditure or parliamentary expenditure on that trip.

The Hon. WES FANG: Understood. In answer to question on notice number 4 you stated, "n/a". That was in response to if you'd only taken the two regional trips that we discussed in that estimates and if you'd taken any others. Can I infer from that answer that you actually only took those two trips?

The PRESIDENT: I think I talked in the last budget estimates about a range of different things that I'd done and obviously there were those trips that I had taken. I think I also made the point that, as a resident of the North Coast—of the Northern Rivers—I obviously spent significant amount of time doing a range of functions up in Northern Rivers as well.

The Hon. WES FANG: Excellent. I will redirect because that's going exactly where I'm going to next.

The CHAIR: Order!

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: Let me just finish the answer.

The Hon. WES FANG: No, I'm just redirecting.

The CHAIR: Order! There is no redirect. I'm sorry, this not a court. The President is—I know it's a practice that's emerged in the last couple of weeks, this idea—

The Hon. WES FANG: You're burning my time out.

The CHAIR: Order! The President was in the middle of answering your question.

The Hon. WES FANG: I know but I'm about to ask questions on the matter that he's directing—

The CHAIR: You can do so, Mr Fang, when the President has concluded his answer.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The redirection of the Opposition.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Chair. We do have lot of time here today so I'm very happy to answer any questions.

The Hon. WES FANG: I've got plenty of questions, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: I welcome them all.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm not sure you will.

The PRESIDENT: The short answer is obviously that wasn't definitive in terms of, as I mentioned, all of those different functions and trips that I took to the Northern Rivers—going home but then going to a range of events up there at the same time, but that's fair.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can you provide to me the total number of regional trips you've made since becoming President?

The PRESIDENT: I'm very happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Turning to the actual budget papers—

The PRESIDENT: Excellent.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —such a novel idea at estimates—at *Budget Paper No. 01*, page A5-7, there's just one item listed in the "Measures Statement"—these are the discretionary policy changes—and that is, over the forward estimates, \$15 million is allocated here for the implementation of the Broderick Review. What's that \$15 million going to be spent on?

The PRESIDENT: I'll ask Mr Webb to address this in depth, but I'll just make some introductory remarks. There are a number of different parts of the project that need to be addressed. There need to be some important health and safety support services established. A number of significant policies need to be developed, or have been developed, which require consultation, so, for example, the bullying and sexual harassment policy which we've just had the consultation for. I'm delighted to advise that we had, I think, greater consultation on that policy than we've had on any policy that we can recall for some time.

There's extensive staff training in areas such as complaints handling, leadership, appropriate workplace behaviour and the continued work of the independent complaints officer but, most importantly, an additional 10 or 11 staff who will be working to assist in implementing those recommendations—the 31 recommendations—in the HR area. Also, Mr Latham, I'd make the point that those staff will be able to provide broader service to the Parliament as well. The final point I'd make before I hand over to Mr Webb is that we have had communication from SafeWork Australia about our legislative requirements and ensuring that we fulfil various State and Federal legislative requirements. That's something that these new staff will assist in as well.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I get a breakdown on all those components that add up to—

The PRESIDENT: Sure. I might just ask Mr—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —because \$15 million is a lot of money, isn't it, so can I get a breakdown on the components that add up to \$15 million?

The PRESIDENT: Understood. I might ask Mr Webb to add further and then we can go from there.

MARK WEBB: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr Latham. As you say, it was one of the big budget items that came through. The four broad categories, as the President outlined, were the parliamentary staff—support from parliamentary staff—support for some of the committee actions that came out of that work and then the training and other related costs and there was—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What's the cost for each?

MARK WEBB: I'm about to go through that for you. Also, we did have a component for members' staff short-term relief. So if members' staff were required to attend training, we put a component in to allow for members to have short-term relief for any time that members' staff were involved. As you say, the \$15 million was over the forward estimates period. I can provide these figures to you directly. I'll give them to you now, but I can also provide them separately on notice, if you want to have them written down. In the first year, in 2023-24—and I'll round the numbers broadly, if that's okay, so that I'm not reading out huge numbers—it was about \$2.8 million for the parliamentary staff, \$470,000 for the support for committee actions, \$630,000 for short-term relief for members' staff and \$1.1 million for the training and the consultants associated with that training et cetera. That comes to about \$5 million. That's for the first year.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: When you say \$2.8 million for parliamentary staff, what do you mean by that?

MARK WEBB: That's the HR staff that the President was referring to before—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How many extra staff are you employing?

MARK WEBB: Eleven extra staff.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Eleven extra staff?

MARK WEBB: For the first year, yes, that's correct. On the staff, and I think that's an area that's worth—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I get, on notice, a list of all the job descriptions—

MARK WEBB: Sure thing.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —for the 11 extra staff to implement this policy, and also a breakdown of the \$1.1 million for training and other items? On the training, is Elizabeth Broderick going to receive money for the training?

MARK WEBB: No, Elizabeth Broderick is not involved in—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: She's off the books?

MARK WEBB: She's not involved in the—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Could I get the same breakdown for the \$4 million in the following year, the \$3 million after that and the \$3 million that all add up to 15?

MARK WEBB: Yes, you can.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: On the implementation, mention was made of the main implementer, I suppose, in the building—the Independent Complaints Officer. What is the point in having this role and having these policies if certain people are ineligible in this building to be harassed?

The PRESIDENT: Sorry, can you explain?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The Independent Complaints Officer has adopted a policy that you need to have certain personal characteristics to be possibly harassed if a complaint is received. I have just been through a process where as a white, straight man with two legs, I'm ineligible to be a victim of harassment.

The PRESIDENT: That's certainly not my—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: How can we have a two-tier policy here, spending all this money on it and all this other hoopla that goes with it, where certain people—perhaps a large number of people in the building—can receive no end of harassing text messages late at night, put in a complaint and be told, "No, because of your personal characteristics, you cannot be harassed"?

The PRESIDENT: I have two points to make to that, Mr Latham. The first is that is absolutely not my view. My view is that this Parliament needs to be a safe—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm not asking for your view. I'm asking why do we have an Independent Complaints Officer when that is the policy?

The PRESIDENT: I understand. It's a two-part answer, if you would give me a moment. The first is, and I think this is probably helpful to you, I want to make it very clear that is not my view. My view and my intention is that every single person in this Parliament should be able to view this place as a safe and respectful

UNCORRECTED

workplace. Point two is that, if that is the case, that is concerning. I note that there is a review currently underway by the Privileges Committee of the role of the Independent Complaints Officer. I would encourage you to provide information and a submission to that—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I have done that.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. It's important that, with something like this, with a new role, we continue to look at the parameters and the functioning of this role to make sure it's appropriate for the Parliament and the parliamentary precinct.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So you're of the view that every person in the building, if they're harassed, no matter their personal characteristics, should be able to put in a legitimate complaint—

The PRESIDENT: Absolutely.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —and have that treated on its merits—

The PRESIDENT: That's absolutely my view, yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —rather than be told that, because of your skin colour, gender or physical shape, you're not eligible for the policy?

The PRESIDENT: Without knowing the background of the issue that you're talking about specifically—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You can read my submission.

The PRESIDENT: —in terms of the premise that you have just laid before me, I absolutely agree with that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And what about the second limitation on the work of the Independent Complaints Officer, meaning that she's barely got any work to do. That is a very, very broad—I would have thought ridiculous—interpretation of matters relating to things that are said and done in the Chamber. The ruling that I have received is that you can send a text message, any old harassing communication, and as long as it relates to something that was once said in the Chamber, it doesn't count as harassment. Shouldn't harassment begin and end at the Chamber door?

The PRESIDENT: Clearly there are going to be different issues in terms of parliamentary privilege and in terms of the parliamentary Chamber, and we all know that there are different rules that apply to the parliamentary Chamber than apply to the entirety of the rest of society. That's the first point that I'd make. The second point, though, is just to go back to my original comment, which is that there is indeed this current review happening of the ICO and her role broadly, and I'd encourage these sorts of issues to be raised in that inquiry.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Do you regard it as too broad an interpretation to say that anything that was ever said or done in the Chamber can be subject to a harassing message subsequently and not be part of the policy—not be eligible for a complaint?

The PRESIDENT: Mr Latham, I wouldn't want to comment on that specifically—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Don't you think matters relating to the Chamber are things that actually happened in the Chamber?

The PRESIDENT: Well, yes. Indeed.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I don't want to be too commonsense about this, but—

The PRESIDENT: No, I understand the point. The point is a valid intellectual point, but I don't want to get too far down into the weeds on the review into the ICO. But I think these are exactly the sort of matters that should be considered. When you set up this new structure—a new, independent person who is charged with oversight of dealing with potential complaints about behaviour within this precinct—inevitably, because it's such a unique environment, there are going to be some challenges in getting that right. I understand the points that you're making. I think they're valid points, and that's exactly why there is currently this review happening.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: When is the review expected to be completed?

The PRESIDENT: That's a good question. Do you know, Mr Blunt?

DAVID BLUNT: I'm afraid I'm not aware of the reporting date of the committee on this matter, but I'll make some inquiries. I suspect before the end of this hearing we should have an answer for you.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Until then, we're stuck with the two-tier system. Maybe the 11 extra HR staff can speed it up. Just some on extra expenditures, what ended up being the full final cost of replacing the roof?

The PRESIDENT: I'll throw to Mr Webb.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Including the different iterations that were attempted.

MARK WEBB: You mean the membrane at the top of the—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, the roof.

MARK WEBB: I will have my crack squad behind me find the exact number for you. Over the four years we were working on it, it was in the vicinity of about \$17 million.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Seventeen million dollars!

MARK WEBB: I don't know how many members have been up on the roof as a part of looking around, but it involved the lifting of a significant amount of plant equipment—things like water towers and stuff—in order to get in and strip out the leaking membrane. I think I've said in this forum before that the roof had got to the point where there was so much water that had gone through the insulation up there that the roof was approximately three times heavier than the building was designed to hold up. So this was very, very necessary work, but it was expensive work. There is absolutely no doubt about it. It did increase the longevity of the building by a significant number of decades.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: What was the full final cost for the work on the facade at the front of the building?

MARK WEBB: That was part of the general critical maintenance works that we undertook. The total critical maintenance works came to \$22 million, which was the original budget. I do have a breakdown of that, if you give me a moment.

The PRESIDENT: While we're doing that, Mr Latham, Mr Blunt has some extra information about the Privileges Committee issue, if you're happy to accept that now.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Sure.

DAVID BLUNT: I am reliably informed that the Privileges Committee currently has a six-week period in which submissions are welcome in relation to the review of the ICO. There is no reporting date set in the terms of reference; that's a matter for the committee to determine when it has concluded that inquiry and report. I would note, though, that the committee has a number of active, very important inquiries at the moment, including one that just came up during the last sitting week: an inquiry into the new draft regulation under the Constitution Act for members' disclosures. That's a matter which should be of interest to all members and I think that's also at a similar stage at the moment. So how the committee weighs up when to report on those different matters is a matter for the committee.

MARK WEBB: For the facade, the total cost out of that \$22 million was \$5.1 million. I think I've mentioned at previous estimates, that included things like having to replace whole sandstone columns at the front. I'm not sure if this is the technical term but the term that was used to me is they had gone soft, which means they weren't holding up anything anymore. I think most of the Committee knows that several of the upstairs columns in the verandah, which were actually made from wood and painted to look like they were made from stone because they ran out of money when building the original hospital, were completely hollowed out by termites—not active termites, I should say. They were well and truly dead, but the columns were out. Also, there was 40 years of damage to the facade itself. It was put to me once, "Did you just put a coat of paint over it?" No, there was a huge amount of work in just restoring the facade—\$5.1 million.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It doesn't sound like we're running out of money these days. Could I get a breakdown of the other \$17 million in the so-called maintenance works? Does that include the room restoration that you mentioned earlier on and also the two Chambers?

MARK WEBB: Yes, it includes the two Chambers, the work done on the north and south atriums, which included replacing the glazed roofs, the Rum Hospital internal restoration and the facade.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Could I get a breakdown of the \$22 million?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Also, what's the estimated full cost of the bicentennial, including money already spent and what we're projecting for the rest of the year?

UNCORRECTED

DAVID BLUNT: Mr Latham, the business case that was successful in obtaining money from Treasury in the 2022-23 budget and forward over another two years was, I think, in the order of the \$20 million mark that Mark and the President have been referring to in relation to the critical maintenance work, plus a figure of approximately \$5 million for events, including the hosting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So \$5 million is the full budget?

DAVID BLUNT: In relation to events.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The celebration of the Chamber's bicentenary.

DAVID BLUNT: That's right.

The PRESIDENT: I'd make a point on that, Mr Latham. That also includes the funding for our bid to host the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Australia, as I mentioned before, for the first time in 20 years, where there will be 800 or so delegates from around the world coming. It is incumbent upon the hosts of that event to provide a substantial amount of that funding, so that's part of it as well.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Is there contingent planning around the unfortunate illnesses in the royal family—the King and the Princess of Wales? Also, the reality is that Prince Harry and Prince Andrew seem to be ineligible for this type of event. Can we survive and have a bicentenary without a royal presence?

The PRESIDENT: A royal presence would significantly add to all of the events that are currently in train and that will happen whether or not there is a royal visit.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Are you saying there will be a royal presence?

The PRESIDENT: The bicentenary will continue whether there is a royal visitor or not, Mr Latham. We have a range of events, which I'm happy to go through in detail.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: There will be a royal presence. That's what you're saying?

The PRESIDENT: No, that's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is the events will happen. As I mentioned in my answer to Mr Rath, we are very hopeful that there will be a royal presence at one or a few of those events but, of course, that is a matter entirely out of our hands. We are very hopeful that the King makes a full and speedy recovery.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I've received a report of one drone, maybe more, parked outside the balcony of MPs' offices, seemingly peering in to who was having a meeting in that office. Is this something that's known to the Parliament? Is it our drone? What are we doing to stop drones infringing on the rights and the privilege, one would have thought, of MPs to have private meetings in their offices?

The PRESIDENT: This is the first that I've heard of it. No-one has raised this issue with me before. Instinctively, it is something of concern. I don't know if Mr Blunt or Mr Webb have anything to add.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It's not an HR drone, is it?

MARK WEBB: No, it is not an HR drone, I promise. The only use of drones I'm aware—

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: It's Broderick.

MARK WEBB: When I give you the breakdown—no.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: One of the 11 is not a drone operator?

MARK WEBB: The rumour is that we've set some secret bunker up somewhere.

The Hon. WES FANG: You've now got 12 staff coming, Mark.

MARK WEBB: The only drone work I'm aware of recently was doing some sweeping shots of the whole building. I cannot think of anything that would require a drone sitting outside.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That was a drone from DPS?

MARK WEBB: We don't own it, but we hired someone to come in and take just some photos of the building from above.

The PRESIDENT: For promotional purposes.

MARK WEBB: Yes, that's right, and to show the works that we'd been doing. But there would be no reason for that drone to be sitting outside anyone's office in any way, shape or form.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The report was a bit concerning in that regard.

MARK WEBB: Absolutely.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Maybe you can take it on notice as to happened with that one drone.

MARK WEBB: I will.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If that's not the infringing drone, I can give you the details that I've heard outside the meeting.

The PRESIDENT: Mr Latham, we'd be grateful if you could.

MARK WEBB: Please, yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Maybe in this era of a drone operation, we need some sort of precaution against it because it's quite an infringement on the work of an MP, isn't it?

MARK WEBB: Absolutely.

The PRESIDENT: Of any individual in terms of privacy, absolutely. That's instinctively of great concern and I suspect that this issue, not just for the Parliament and the parliamentarians, but for society more broadly is going to become a bigger and bigger issue. We'd be very grateful for any information that you can provide us, and we'll certainly look into it with utmost seriousness.

MARK WEBB: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you. Just back on the bicentenary, how much has it cost to commission the Aboriginal artwork, so-called?

The PRESIDENT: I believe it's \$100,000.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Has that already got a location picked out for where it will hang?

The PRESIDENT: No. It will be somewhere prominent within the building, I suspect, within the public confines of the Fountain Court area, but it depends on what the final artwork comes out with.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It won't replace the placement of the artwork Mr Rath mentioned.

The PRESIDENT: *The Founding of Australia*? No, not at all. My view is that both of them are important to tell the story of Australia and the story of New South Wales, and both of them will have a similarly prominent place.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Right. Who's the artist for that?

The PRESIDENT: We have gone a substantial way through the process. I'm just not sure if we've made the public announcement yet of the artist. Mr Latham, do you mind if we take that on notice? We may be able to provide that information before the end of estimates today. If not, we'll certainly be able to provide it on notice.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I've got a couple of questions around security, Mr President. I might just follow on from Mr Latham in relation to the drone.

The PRESIDENT: Please.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: It may help to know that it was Wednesday last week, around 11.00 a.m., off a balcony of a member on the eleventh floor.

The PRESIDENT: When you say "off a balcony of a member", did the drone take—

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: About a metre off the balcony.

The PRESIDENT: Right. And it was hovering?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Hovering—hovering for some time. I'm happy if you take this on notice to find out whether you can provide anymore information about that incident. I understand it was reported to security shortly after it occurred. I just want to know what steps are being taken to ensure that we don't have this again if it was a drone from somewhere else.

The PRESIDENT: It's a very valid set of questions. As I made the comment to Mr Latham, I find this instinctively extremely concerning. I don't know that there's anything necessarily, but of course we'll come back to you with anything that we can do to guarantee that it will never happen again because it's an open public-facing building onto a very large expanse of open land. Nonetheless, it's concerning and we'll certainly look into it. We'll

UNCORRECTED

speak to security and we'll also come back to this Committee with a response. I think Mr Webb might wish to say something on this.

MARK WEBB: I just make the general point that we will do all the things that the President said. We don't discuss security matters relating to the Parliament in public hearings. As you'd imagine, talking about the vulnerabilities and security measures that we've taken is not something we like having on the public record. I would ask, when we come back, to brief the Committee in private, but my very strong preference would be to not do so in a way that would put the information in the public domain.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Certainly, yes. The second question I have is when was the last time the duress alarms in electorate offices were tested? How often is it required that they be tested?

MARK WEBB: I should say that as this estimates hearing focuses on the operation of the LC and DPS, I don't traditionally answer any questions about the Legislative Assembly and how it works. I would say, however, that we have a regular regime of all duress alarm testing, both in this building and across the electorate office network on a regular basis. Again, sorry, I'm picking my words carefully for the aforesaid not talking too much about public, but if there is a specific threat brought to our attention in either a particular part of the building or more broadly, we do additional testing at that time.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Can you take that on notice and provide that to the Committee in the same way, where it's not made public?

MARK WEBB: Yes, absolutely.

The PRESIDENT: Sorry, I might make one quick comment, Mr Murphy. As a newer member as well, just so that you know, and others, the remit of this Committee has never extended into looking at the operation of electorate offices, so I just want to make that clear to everybody.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Sure. The other question I had was just around the same issue, but were they properly functioning the last time they were tested? Do you have any information you can provide about that? In relation to Parliament specifically, is there always a constable in the building, 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

MARK WEBB: Yes, that's correct. Obviously the deployment of special constables is higher when the building is open and higher again on a sitting day, but there is a 24/7 presence here in the building. Again, without talking about the specific details of where they're located for the reasons I outlined before, there are always special constables in the building and they monitor not just the building but all of the feeds that come into the building as well.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: You might need to take this on notice for the reasons that were previously discussed, but I just want to know from what time are the front and back entrances of the building staffed by the special constables? Does that differ between sitting days, non-sitting days, weekends, public holidays et cetera?

MARK WEBB: I'll take that on notice. It does differ in those areas but, if you don't mind, again, even where and when we have special constables is something that I prefer not to put on the public record. I'm happy to brief the Committee privately on that matter.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Certainly. They're the only questions I have at the moment. I might hand over to my colleague, Mr Nanva.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Mr President, the Parliament has significantly progressed on its maturity with respect to cybersecurity. Given that attacks can often occur through third-party contractors and suppliers, do we check on the maturity of those contractors and suppliers before we engage them?

The PRESIDENT: Before I throw to Mr Webb to talk about the specifics, I should just say that this is an issue—and the cybersecurity of this place is an issue—about which we are very concerned. We continue to invest appropriately in doing all we can to ensure that members and others involved in the parliamentary precinct are protected from cybersecurity attacks. We know, though, that this is going to be an issue that is going to become increasingly larger, that the attacks are going to get more sophisticated—they already are—and that it's going to remain a substantial challenge. When you're speaking to your Government colleagues, Mr Nanva, I would ask you, perhaps, to remind the Treasurer and others that we will be needing significant resources on an ongoing basis in order to continue to address this issue. The Government has been excellent so far; I'm not in any way complaining, but I just want to make that point. Mr Webb, could you answer the specifics of Mr Nanva's question?

MARK WEBB: Yes, absolutely. I will start just with a similar caveat to the physical security issues. I try not to talk in public too much about specifics around what we've done in the cybersecurity space, but I think

UNCORRECTED

it's fair to confirm to you that assessing the cybersecurity maturity of vendors that we engage with is now a standard part of our procurement processes. When we go through, we do look at that. Depending on the nature of the system, we also require ongoing—saying "attestation" would make it sound perhaps more formal than it is, but we do recognise that the state of security on letting a contract might not reflect the state of security, say, two years down the track or three years down the track, so it is something that we check on on a regular basis as well.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Is there an incident response plan?

MARK WEBB: Yes. You mentioned in your opening comments—and I do appreciate that—that we've been working on increasing our maturity in this space. I think many of you might have heard reference to the Federal Government's framework, which is called the Essential Eight, which is looking at the dimensions of cybersecurity preparedness. Part of what we have been doing as part of improving our preparedness is around incident response testing. We do, for instance—I'm hesitating. I would be very happy to brief the Committee in private, in more detail than this, but there is an array of incident response preparation work that's done and a fair bit of scenario testing that would allow us to build our confidence in our ability to respond to an incident, as well as the infrastructure investment that we're making to try and make sure incidents don't happen in the first place. Sorry. I do recognise I'm being perhaps slightly more vague than I would like to be but I'm very happy to talk to the Committee in private and perhaps be a little more detailed in my answers.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Something that I've been briefed on on several occasions in this space is that what can often be overlooked is the preservation of information, after a security incident, that would help understand the extent of the threat and help shape the response. Does that factor into the incident response plan that you've got in place?

MARK WEBB: It does. One of the things that we've been looking at is ensuring that we are not just capturing but maintaining logs and other sources of information that would allow us to both assess—used in two ways. Again, this is generic cybersecurity stuff, so I'm not saying anything specific about the Parliament, but we use that data both to track when there might be an incident happening but also, if there has been an incident, to be able to go back and look at the root cause of that incident and see if that has any implications for our ongoing cybersecurity framework and settings.

The PRESIDENT: Could I just add one final comment, which is not exactly relevant but tangentially relevant but is, I suspect, going to be of interest to all members. That is that the Surface Pros that members have were rolled out some time ago, and there'll be new laptops rolled out to all members this financial year to replace them and to staff in the following financial year. That's just providing a bit more information for members.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I'll just change tack now to staff conditions. Before I do, I just want to note my gratitude, as a relatively recent member in this place, for the professionalism and the dedication and, frankly, the skills of all the staff who serve in this place. I want to focus specifically on members' staff at the moment, noting that there are a number of reviews that have taken place and will take place with respect to conditions. Would you agree that there is a significant breadth of functional areas and depth to specific tasks that members' staff undertake, which are just not documented at the moment?

The PRESIDENT: I absolutely would agree with that, having been a staffer for a member of the Legislative Council myself many, many years ago. Of course, that's a fair contention.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Given that role descriptions are currently not a true and accurate reflection of the functional areas nor the intensity and the complexity of the individual tasks that those staff undertake, do you think that leaves them at a structural disadvantage with respect to pay, first and foremost, and with respect to transferring their skills to alternative forms of employment, who may not get the nuances and subtleties of the role in Parliament?

The PRESIDENT: I might just make a couple of introductory comments and throw for detail to Mr Webb. I remember when this issue was first raised—if I remember correctly, it was with President Ajaka—when he committed to looking into conditions for staff, and there's been a relatively long process, since that time, where we're heading towards, I think, an appropriate point where these issues can be considered in depth. This is something that's important to get right. We rely on our staff deeply—and, in the Legislative Council, particularly those members who have only one staff member. It's incredibly important to understand the depth and the breadth of their role and to make sure that they're remunerated accordingly but also that they have other conditions that are appropriate to their role. There is quite a lot of work that's being done but Mr Webb will speak to the detail.

MARK WEBB: First, can I start by saying I agree entirely with your comments on this matter. I think I've reflected at a previous estimates hearing that when we went back to try and work out what the basis of remuneration for members' staff was, we couldn't find a basis for that remuneration. It goes back into the deep dark times of the 1980s where Mr Latham and I were at Hurlstone Agricultural High School so it was a long time

UNCORRECTED

ago. It is something we could not find the detail of. I'm the second-best Mark to come out of Hurlstone. I do recognise that the basis of the remuneration—there is no history there. There is no capacity to say how they came to the conclusions they came to, but I think it is fair to say that the role of a member's staff has changed significantly since that time and has some of those characteristics that you were talking about.

More than that, if it was just a matter of writing a position description and evaluating it, it probably would have been done a long time ago but it's going to those other issues that you raised around—it's not just the remuneration; it's also the conditions of employment. A member's staff in the LC, for instance, who starts early in the morning on a sitting day, is still here at midnight later that night so, regardless of the remuneration, that length of time on duty, if you like, creates work health and safety issues that we wanted to also work through as well. In fact, some of the false starts we've had in this space has been because the work has not gone to the level of detail required to be able to get to those issues. As I say, if it was just a matter of writing a position description and evaluating it, we would have been done quite some time ago.

Just to give you a sense of where we're at with that work, we will, in the next couple of weeks, be bringing the results of the latest round of work to the PEG—the presiding officers, the Clerks and myself—for approval to go to the next stage of consultation. That will be making an actual proposal as to how we think things should be. When the Presiding Officers put down their annual determination of conditions of employment for 1 July, or should I say for the pay period on or around 1 July—and that's a shout out to Helen Gors, our head of HR, who doesn't like me saying 1 July—the intent is that all these things will be in place by that period of time. We are very aware of the fact that it's taken a long time to get to where we are at the moment and we are absolutely committed to making sure this work is completed in that time frame.

The second point you made, I think, is a really valuable one and that was to do with the recognition outside of the parliamentary environment as to the value and skills of members' staff. I would go probably slightly further and say that there's probably not as good an understanding of members' skills and experiences that they build up over time here as well. One of the most common pieces of feedback I've received from former members when they leave this place is the difficulty of translating the work they've done here into a work environment that perhaps doesn't understand the Parliament as much. This is something that we have been looking at in the context of members and members' staff as well. We want to try to provide resources that allow people to translate "Parliament work experience" speak into either "corporate or public service work experience" speak and enable both members and members' staff to be able to make that transition a little bit more smoothly as well.

I must admit I've put probably more emphasis on finalising the former rather than the latter—the getting the conditions of employment and the salaries right is where I've asked people to focus, but this is an area that we're also doing work on and we intend to roll out more things over the course of the next year or so. In particular, hopefully in talking to your colleagues who finished here previously, you might've seen that we've provided better support for members who are finishing up in the Parliament than we ever have before. This work is not just about members' staff but also about members and we will be taking that forward as well.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Can I add a question while you're at it? You're going in the direction I wanted to ask about. Has there been any significant progress in relation to helping not just staff but members exiting this place in terms of separation services?

MARK WEBB: As you know, at the moment there is no provision for members who are leaving for any transition payments at all. We're one of the few jurisdictions in Australia where that is the case. Most jurisdictions, depending on how many terms you've served for, have some form of transition payment. In other jurisdictions, it's reflecting the fact that not only is it difficult to make the transition in a general sense but, if you are going for re-election, you can't look for another job until you know the results of the election one way or the other. So there is that period of time afterwards.

The Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal has indicated in previous public determinations that they would be willing to look at this issue but, currently, their jurisdiction does not extend to be able to look at things for former members. They can only, by definition in the Act, look at entitlements and conditions that affect current members. By definition, they can't look at this issue of transition payments. They have indicated that if there was a legislative change to give them the authority to look at that, they would be willing to do it. I would say that the advice I've given in this forum, and others before, is that having an independent tribunal looking at that is probably the best way of handling it. But it does require a change in order to give them the authority to do that.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Is it true to say, Mr Webb, that ex-staff get better separation services than ex-members?

MARK WEBB: Better separation payments, absolutely. We try to provide good service to everybody, but ex-staff do get separation payments.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Maybe not so much "service"—let's say "support".

The CHAIR: Order!

MARK WEBB: We do also try to provide good support for members, but—

The CHAIR: I'm mindful that we're using Mr Nanva's time.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Mr Nanva can have some of my time.

The Hon. WES FANG: He's just killing time so I can't use it. That's all he is doing.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: That's okay. We can finish this answer and then—

MARK WEBB: I would mention that this is an area that we took very seriously at the last election for the first time. We did look at post-separation support services for members, so all members got options to either work with a high-profile recruitment firm to help them work through how to best position themselves in the ways that I was talking about before, or some people sought support for either qualifications or post-employment transition that would help them build skills to take on new roles et cetera—things like the Australian Institute of Company Directors, for instance. Also, some people hadn't written a résumé for 20 years, so there's some basic stuff around what it takes to write a résumé, say, in the 2020s versus the last time they were looking for work. We have tried to enhance the services that we provide. We also have extended the Employee Assistance Program so that all former members get access to it for 12 months after they've been employed here, to try and help with that aspect of the transition too. I'm conscious that the bell rang, so I'll stop.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: There's a message there for the Government.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, you will recall that on 7 February this year you placed me on three calls to order and removed me from the Chamber. Is that correct?

The PRESIDENT: I can't remember the exact date, but I take your word for it.

The Hon. WES FANG: In doing so, you cited rulings from 1888, correct?

The PRESIDENT: I made a comment about a ruling that was made in Westminster in 1888, absolutely.

The Hon. WES FANG: You also cited rulings from the House, including from previous Presidents, including President Fazio, who recently described the Jewish population as a "race of whingers", in order to support your position. Is that correct?

The PRESIDENT: I ensured that there were previous Presidents within the House who had made it clear that the dignity and the authority of the President needed to be upheld and shouldn't be impugned.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Can I take a point of order? I do so reluctantly, because of the interesting response from the President in relation to procedural matters.

The Hon. WES FANG: Don't waste my time, Peter.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: But budget estimates very specifically, in the motion that establishes these estimates, relates to items to do with public administration to do with the budget, not items of procedure that occur within debate within the Chamber. So I believe that this question is out of order.

The CHAIR: You're entirely correct, Mr Primrose.

The Hon. WES FANG: No—

The CHAIR: I'm ruling.

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order: I'm establishing a number of conditions before I get to the subject of the matter that I'm addressing. In that context, Chair, I think the questions are well within order.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Further to the point of order: The conditions, in fact, are a series of discrete questions. If the member wishes to proceed to a matter that is a legal question in terms of the motion that established these matters, then I would have no objection.

The Hon. WES FANG: Don't waste my time, Peter.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I refer it to you.

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. Yes, the discrete questions were outside the remit of this inquiry. I ask Mr Fang to concentrate on questions that relate to expenditure in the area of The Legislature.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, you've stated that you will not tolerate members reflecting adversely on the impartiality of the President. Do you believe that you act in an impartial manner?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: The member is flouting your earlier ruling.

The CHAIR: Mr Fang, that has nothing to do—

The Hon. WES FANG: The wide remit of—

The CHAIR: —with expenditure in the area.

The Hon. WES FANG: Why are you running cover? Are you running cover for him as well?

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: The questions will come out no matter what, mate. Either he can answer them now—

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Fang, be quiet.

The Hon. WES FANG: You can run cover for him all you want, mate.

The CHAIR: Order! You are flouting a previous ruling.

The Hon. WES FANG: you can run cover for him all you want. They're going to come out anyway.

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: It's going to come out. Let him answer it.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: Give him the opportunity to address them in—

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Fang, behave yourself.

The Hon. WES FANG: Give him the opportunity to address this.

The CHAIR: Act with decorum and dignity.

The Hon. WES FANG: I am. I'm giving him the opportunity to answer these questions in estimates.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Point of order: We're used to robust debate in these estimates but we don't quibble with the Chair. It's very important that all members recognise the authority of the Chair or this place will just become a zoo. I would ask the honourable member to refrain from arguing with the Chair.

The CHAIR: I uphold Ms Boyd's point of order. You should not be cavilling with the Chair or hectoring the Chair or hectoring anyone—

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order—

The CHAIR: I'm ruling on the point of order.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Can I speak to the point of order, Chair?

The CHAIR: The rules for procedural fairness adopted by this Committee and by these Committees—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: —require us to be guided by the—

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: I'm ruling, so be quiet.

The Hon. WES FANG: Point of order—

The CHAIR: I'm ruling on the previous point of order and that is we're guided by—

The Hon. WES FANG: You're all just wasting my time.

The CHAIR: —the practices of the Chamber. I know you're well aware of those, Mr Fang. So please treat the witnesses with courtesy—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. WES FANG: Which is why—

The CHAIR: —and treat the Chair with courtesy.

The Hon. WES FANG: Stop wasting my time, Chair.

The CHAIR: Please discontinue from talking over the top of me while I'm making a ruling.

The Hon. WES FANG: Chair, you're just wasting my time.

The CHAIR: So, please, Mr Fang, operate with some decorum.

The Hon. WES FANG: Chair, I will ask you to cite the rules and standing orders that I've broken in these questions. So far, neither the Hon. Peter Primrose nor you have actually cited where I'm not upholding the rules under the standing orders. It is established on motion.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: It is established on motion, isn't it?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: It's obvious, isn't it?

The CHAIR: The establishment motion says the matters for inquiry must deal with expenditure in the area of The Legislature. Your questions had nothing to do with that and were out of order. I ruled on that, and then you cavilled with it.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'll invite you to bring evidence of that after the break. I'll move on to other matters.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I've got it here.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Paragraph 9 of the procedural fairness resolution.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: You're now wasting more of my time.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: Why are you running cover for him?

The CHAIR: Mr Fang, at the beginning of my introductory statement—

The Hon. WES FANG: Why are you running cover for him?

The CHAIR: Order! Be quiet.

The Hon. WES FANG: Hurry up.

The CHAIR: I beg your pardon!

The Hon. WES FANG: Hurry up. I've got questions to ask. You're covering for him. Stop wasting my time.

The CHAIR: You are acting in a disgraceful manner.

The Hon. WES FANG: You are running cover for the President.

The CHAIR: This is not befitting of a member of this Committee.

The Hon. WES FANG: Because you want the numbers on the floor.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Sorry, Chair, if the member wishes to move a motion to dissent from your ruling—

The Hon. WES FANG: No, I just I want him to stop talking so I can ask some questions.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: You're more than able to do that, too.

The Hon. WES FANG: Have you finished?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: There are mechanisms available.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President—

The CHAIR: Order! I'm going to talk to the secretariat.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm going to start asking questions while you do that.

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: No, you're not. Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: The clock can stop.

The CHAIR: You've behaved disgracefully.

The Hon. WES FANG: The clock can stop. Why are you running cover for the President?

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: It's just because you guys want the numbers on the floor, isn't it? You don't want me to ask questions about the numbers on the floor because you want the numbers.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: What a disgrace.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: What numbers? What are you talking about?

The CHAIR: Order! You are acting disgracefully.

The Hon. WES FANG: Are you going to waste the time now? Can I ask a question?

The CHAIR: You are going to be quiet. I am going to talk to the secretariat about what how we deal with your behaviour.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, you discussed the idea of becoming President with a number of your colleagues. Is that correct?

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Fang, I am the Chair of this hearing and you will be quiet while I talk to the secretariat.

The Hon. WES FANG: Well, how about you hurry up. Hurry up.

The CHAIR: I beg your pardon!

The Hon. WES FANG: Hurry up. You're wasting my time. You can go to a crossbencher and then we'll come back to my time if you're going to waste it.

The CHAIR: Order! We will talk about what has just happened in a private deliberative.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: Thank you to all the witnesses for returning. We're just waiting for the audiovisual to be back on. We're now back on. We will resume with questions from Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you. Mr President, when—sorry, let me rephrase. Prior to becoming the President last year, did you indicate to members of the National Party that you would seek to use the President's role and the President's dining room for fundraising?

The PRESIDENT: Let me say this about the use of the President's dining room for fundraisers. I have a view that was the same view as my predecessor: that if any political party would like to utilise the President's dining room in a legal and appropriate way for a fundraiser for them or their political campaigns, then I'm comfortable about that.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, did you confirm with the National Party members that you would seek to raise funds for the National Party, using your position as President and also the President's dining room?

The PRESIDENT: I find it quite challenging to see how this falls under the remit of the questions that have been asked.

The Hon. WES FANG: We'll get there. Don't worry.

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Fang!

The Hon. WES FANG: Did you commit—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, did you commit to raising funds for the National Party using the President's role and the President's dining room?

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: I wrote a letter to the chair, I think—I can't remember—basically saying that, as a member of the National Party, I would consider all appropriate fundraising requests made of me as a member of the parliamentary party.

The Hon. WES FANG: Are you sure that that was the content of the letter that you wrote?

The PRESIDENT: I remember the letter that I wrote. I can't remember if it was to the chair or the State director, but it said that I would absolutely consider all appropriate fundraising requests made of me as a member of the National Party.

The Hon. WES FANG: You did not commit that you personally, using the role as President and the President's dining room, would raise funds for the National Party. Are you denying that?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Point of order—

The CHAIR: A point of order has been taken.

The Hon. WES FANG: Don't run cover for him either, Cameron.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I feel like I need to take this point of order because we've had a previous ruling from you, as Chair, about this issue.

The Hon. WES FANG: Stop running cover, Cameron.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I've listened carefully. We're now some four questions in and they don't seem to have anything to do with the purpose of this Committee, which is estimates.

The Hon. WES FANG: Well, they do.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: The previous ruling was that these questions were out of order. These questions likewise should be out of order on the same basis—that they have nothing to do with the estimates function that this Committee is inquiring into.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order and further to the point of order—

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order: Is the expenditure and use of the President's facilities, including the dining room and the role of the President and the expenditure that's attached to it, somehow become excluded from these estimates? Are they not questions that I'm entitled to ask?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: To the point of order—

The CHAIR: I'll rule on the point of order. The point of order was that you asked a previous question in that regard, which the President answered. Then you started asking—

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm seeking clarification of that question. Stop running cover, Jeremy.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WES FANG: You know where I'm going.

The CHAIR: Order! Show some good grace, please, Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: Show some impartiality.

The CHAIR: Mr Murphy's point of order related to your last question, which did not relate to that.

The Hon. WES FANG: You guys are looking like a joke running cover for him.

The CHAIR: It related to a letter, so I ruled it out of order. Please ask a question that is in order and within the remit of this hearing and inquiry.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, how much money have you raised for the National Party in your role as President, and how much money have you raised for the National Party with the use of the dining room?

The PRESIDENT: I haven't hosted, personally, any political fundraisers for the National Party in my dining room that I was responsible for.

The Hon. WES FANG: Have you raised any funds at all for the National Party in your time as President?

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: No. I answered the question happily. No, I mean, I haven't—

The Hon. WES FANG: You haven't raised any funds at all?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Point of order: We're back to this again, Chair. These are questions that have nothing to do with this estimates hearing. They're questions about the internal machinations of a political party, and they don't have anything to do with what this Committee is inquiring into. They're clearly out of order.

The CHAIR: The use of the Parliament's dining room does fall within that scope. But Mr Fang's question—the last one—was, "So you've raised no money for the National Party?", which had nothing to do with the dining room. Mr Fang, if you could focus your questions on the—

The Hon. WES FANG: You're going to have to explain why you're running cover for him on this.

The CHAIR: —expenditure—

The Hon. WES FANG: You're going to have to explain why you've run cover for him on it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: You need to write better questions.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Talk to the Electoral Commissioner, and not the President.

The CHAIR: We will now turn to questions from the crossbench.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I'll ask one quick question. It follows on from Mr Fang's question. President, could you please tell us how many fundraising events and how much you raised for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party?

The PRESIDENT: I haven't attended any fundraising events for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, nor have I held a fundraiser for them, Mr Borsak.

The Hon. WES FANG: He's not a member of yours.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Thank you.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Outrageous.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Outrageous!

The CHAIR: We have slightly reduced time for crossbench questions. We have approximately 12 minutes. We will start with Ms Boyd and then we'll go to Mr Latham. You'll get approximately six minutes each.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Good morning.

The PRESIDENT: Good morning, Ms Boyd. Welcome.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I wanted to pick up a few of the things that we discussed in the last estimates. One of them I actually put through as a supplementary question, and the response I got back was interesting. It is in relation to lobbyist passes. I understand lobbyists at the moment are given a black pass. Is that correct?

The PRESIDENT: I'm going to throw to Mr Webb. I know that lobbyists aren't required to disclose that they're lobbyists on the current iteration of the pass application, but I will throw to Mr Webb for more specifics on this issue.

MARK WEBB: Yes. They're part of the authorised visitor pass, so there is nothing that would distinguish them as a lobbyist as per any other authorised visitor pass holder. As the President said, we don't require, at the moment, anybody to declare their occupation as part of putting that application through.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Back in mid-2021, as part of the Parliamentary Advisory Group, we got this briefing from security basically about the different types of passes and what each of them would include. At that time we were told there were just over 1,500 passes that were of this black pass category, and that included members' spouse and family, former members, long-term contractors, parliamentary interns, New South Wales special constables, heads of New South Wales Government departments—and lobbyists. Do we have any visibility over how many of those are lobbyists, or we just don't because we don't ask for it?

MARK WEBB: We don't ask for it. From memory, I think six people had indicated—

The PRESIDENT: Voluntarily.

MARK WEBB: —voluntarily that they were lobbyists, so we know six people are lobbyists. But, beyond that, I could not guarantee you one way or the other.

UNCORRECTED

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In Canberra, in the Federal Parliament, I know they have a special—I think it is a bright orange pass for lobbyists so that they can be easily identified. Has that ever been considered for the New South Wales Parliament? Have we ever done any work on that?

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps this now is an opportune moment to provide the following information to the Committee, and that is that the PEG, the Parliamentary Executive Group, consisting of the Speaker and I, the two Clerks and the CEO of DPS, have determined to have a full review into the parliamentary pass system. There will be an open—obviously, we're conscious of what's happened federally, and that's been partly the reason for this. There have also, however, been a range of different concerns raised and expressed about the parliamentary pass system, including not least by the Speaker himself. Both of us have concerns about potential security implications at this time but also more broadly. So a review has now been approved by the PEG, and it will start to roll out, and there will be a component whereby we'll ask for feedback from members and all other members of the parliamentary precinct. I guess this is the long way of saying the sort of excellent suggestion that you just make or valuable suggestion that you just make is exactly the sort of thing that will be considered in this review.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is there a time line for that?

The PRESIDENT: No. We literally only—I think it was at the PEG meeting last week—approved this review. When that happens, we'll make sure it's very clear and transparent to all members.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's great to know. Thank you. Another one I asked in supplementary questions is in relation to exemptions from the Smoke-free Environment Act. I was told that, under the Smoke and Cigarette Free Parliament House Policy, it is permitted to smoke on members' office balconies. I know it's bit of a running joke that we can all smell cigarette smoke on the offices near that Level 9 garden, but a lot of that is coming from balconies, as opposed to from the garden itself. How does that fit in with the modern expectations under the smoke-free environment policy?

The PRESIDENT: I'll ask Mr Webb to speak to that.

MARK WEBB: You're quite right. The current policy allows—there are a couple of designated areas in the precinct on Level 9, in the garden, as you say, and there's an area along Hospital Road, just at the back there. Plus members' balconies are designated as allowing smoking in them. The policy that that is based on is up for review. We review it once per Parliament, so it is up for review. It was last Parliament that it was last looked at. At times, where a particular member has requested that their office be moved to be away from potential smoke, we have accommodated that wherever we can. But the policy is as it is at the moment. It's up for review in the next little while.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Mr Webb, how many HR staff do we have now? Take these on notice if you like.

MARK WEBB: I can take it on notice, but I do have—actually, I'll have to take it on notice. The HR team is in with the property team and the security team. I only have the—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Staff performing HR functions.

MARK WEBB: Yes. I can take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I asked previously for the job descriptions of the new 11. Can I get the salary bands as well, for each of those?

MARK WEBB: You can.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thanks. What's been the cost of the Broderick process to date?

MARK WEBB: In 2023-24, as of January—I don't have February figures yet—the total cost associated with the review implementation has been \$1,249,380.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Prior to that? It's been going for years.

MARK WEBB: It has another year before that—I don't have the prior year in front of me.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You can take that on notice.

MARK WEBB: I'll take that on notice. Absolutely.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Given the expenditure and the different consultants that have been used, how do you explain that we've ended up with a two-tier system of eligibility for harassment?

MARK WEBB: This is related to your previous questions about the independent complaints—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes. If you haven't got certain personal characteristics, you can't be judged to be a victim of harassment. How did that ever come about?

MARK WEBB: The Parliament's administration's approach to dealing with people that are within our jurisdiction—of course, that does not include members, and I do grant you that—does not make such a distinction. So if a member's staff was to come to us with a claim of harassment, the distinction that you're outlining is not one that we make.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Are you sure? Have you read rulings of the Independent Complaints Officer?

MARK WEBB: I'm saying the ones that are within—this is about members staff and parliamentary staff. We do not make such a distinction.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The ICO is quoting parliamentary policy.

MARK WEBB: I will take it on notice; I have not seen that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If you can check that and take it on notice and ask as to where that ever came from?

MARK WEBB: I will have a look at it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It's discrimination on its own or discrimination to solve discrimination, apparently.

MARK WEBB: I understand where you're coming from.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It's very peculiar, indeed. What's the status of the self-nominating committee of MPs—I call them the behaviour committee—that drove the Broderick process? Does that committee still exist and what's their role?

The PRESIDENT: The Parliamentary Advisory Group, the PAG, yes. That's been re-established with an independent chair and I believe that the first meeting will be held on 18 March, in two weeks' time.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Is the membership of the committee still self-nominating?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, there was a communication put out to all of the previous members of the Parliamentary Advisory Group who were still in the Parliament, or in the parliamentary precinct, asking if they were interested to remain as a member and, if they were, that they would be able to continue. An EOI was put out—I want to say in the first sitting week of 2024—to join the new PAG, which was published in *The Legislatist*, which is the newsletter that I put out in the Legislative Council, in *speakermail*, which obviously the Speaker puts out, and in *Parli-News*. The deadline for people applying was 23 February and the candidates are currently being reviewed by the PAG secretariat. This isn't just members of Parliament; this is all members of the parliamentary community. There are staff and electoral office staff and so forth.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Can I ask about the process by which approval is granted for the staff of MLCs to work away from this building in regional New South Wales or interstate?

The PRESIDENT: I'll throw to Mark or David—whoever's more appropriate—but my understanding is that staff members of MLCs are able to work as per the direction of their member and that's basically where we are. Obviously they have to comply with appropriate legislative requirements but the assumption is that it will be mostly in this building but that doesn't necessarily mean that it has to be. Mark or David, would you like to add anything further?

MARK WEBB: I think that pretty much covers it from my point of view. The Members of Parliament Staff Act clearly indicates that the direction of members' staff is a matter for the member so directing where they would work would fall under that area.

DAVID BLUNT: Over the years there have been a very small number of occasions where members have located their staffer offsite, if not permanently then for more than 50 per cent of the time. In those circumstances, that's been formalised with appropriate approvals and WHS compliance requirements in relation to the ergonomic status of the workplace et cetera, but that's in a very small number of cases. For a member to have their staffer work offsite occasionally, that's something that would be quite normal and we wouldn't have much visibility with that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I've got a document here entitled *Members' Staff Conditions of Employment Determination of the Presiding Officers July 2023* and signed by Speaker, Mr Piper, and our President, Ben Franklin. At page 9 it states:

UNCORRECTED

The principal place of work for Secretary Research/Assistants is at Parliament House or another office location approved by the President of the Legislative Council or Clerk of the Parliaments.

The PRESIDENT: Indeed, which is in line—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In your time, or since the last election, have you, as the President, or have the Clerks, approved any such location away from this building, in particular, interstate?

The PRESIDENT: I haven't personally either seen or approved a request for a principal place of work to be outside the Parliament. I note that is in alignment with the point I made before, which is the word "principal" implies the majority and, of course, from time to time, as the Clerk said, there will be a direction to travel.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: If someone is living interstate, that's obviously going to be their principal place. They've got to commute to Sydney.

The PRESIDENT: If they're living interstate, that's clearly not their principal place of work.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Do you regard that as appropriate for people to work—for principal place of work—interstate?

The PRESIDENT: I believe the policy, as you read it out, is appropriate.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr President. We'll now turn to questions from the Government.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: If I could return to the duties and responsibilities of MOPS staff—Mr President, I might direct these questions to Mr Webb—

The PRESIDENT: That's fine.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: —given that you weren't the President at the time of the Edwards review. Mr Webb, you mentioned at a previous estimates hearing that the Edwards review would be made available after some consideration was given to any impact the Broderick review would have on it. Could you advise why that hasn't been released?

MARK WEBB: The Edwards review came to the PEG after that period of time that you're talking about but was not accepted by the PEG. It was not an accepted report. In particular, the consultation that had occurred had been quite narrow and not balanced across the parliamentary community.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Not accepted by the PEG—so the previous PEG?

MARK WEBB: Yes, the previous PEG. Then we were in the election period. Obviously, doing anything through the pre-election period wouldn't have been appropriate. When the new Parliament was established and the new Presiding Officers were on deck, we made a proposal to do further consultation using Sharon Bent, which has now occurred. That was a focused piece of consultation, but it was one that took into account a broader range of opinions and perspectives. That is the work that is due to come to the PEG in the next couple of weeks that will inform the next piece of work.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: My concern is that there was a view in September of 2022 to wait and see what the Broderick review came up with with respect to those issues. In actual fact, the Broderick review put even more impetus on clarifying roles, duties, responsibilities and conditions, which I would have thought would hasten a speedy conclusion to the work. On what basis did the PEG not accept the Edwards review?

MARK WEBB: I'm hesitating slightly because I don't want to speak on behalf of all other members of the PEG, but the general basis was that, firstly, the consultation had not been sufficiently broad, so we were not seeing different perspectives reflected—

The Hon. BOB NANVA: What led to that conclusion?

MARK WEBB: The consultation of that process was voluntary and, when we looked at who participated and from what perspectives, it was not representative of the entire parliamentary community. The second was that the conclusions drawn were, generally speaking, quite broad, so we didn't have the level of specificity. You talked about, for instance, getting to the point where you have a clearer definition of the roles of members' staff et cetera. We didn't have that clarity in the report. It hadn't been that specific. The work that we've asked Sharon Bent to do is covering both of those issues. It has both targeted a broader range of perspectives and we have required a much more specific set of responses coming through. That's what we're anticipating seeing in the next couple of weeks.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: What would have been a sufficient threshold for a sufficient proportion of staff to have participated in the Edwards review for it to have been accepted?

UNCORRECTED

MARK WEBB: It's not so much the quantum of staff. For instance, we try to make sure, in our consultation, that we get staff from different political parties and persuasions looking at it—the Government, Opposition and crossbench perspectives. The work that Sharon Bent did, it's not that we went out to hundreds of people; it's that we deliberately and specifically sought out a broader range of opinions coming through and that we asked for recommendations that were more specific than the previous ones. We want to get to the point where we can say, "Here is a position description for roles that reflects the modern standards for that next round of consultation." There's no arbitrary decisions. It's more about what we put out to everyone as this is what we think this next phase could look like.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Could you provide—I'm happy for you to do this on notice—a greater level of specificity as to the reasons why the Edwards review was not accepted, whether that's a lack of cross-section of staff that were consulted, and what part of the recommendations were too general to have been of use with respect to the decision-making?

Am I right that there was, concurrently with the Edwards review, a Mercer review that was being undertaken as well?

MARK WEBB: We engaged Mercer to do—once a position description is in place, generally across the public sector, the Mercer methodology has been used to evaluate the salary that should be associated with that position description. We have Mercer involved from that perspective, to make sure that—we wanted to make sure that the evaluation of the salary side of things is done not by us internally but with an independent lens on it as well.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Has that work been undertaken?

MARK WEBB: That will be what is done as part of what's coming to us in a couple of weeks time. We will get the information from Sharon Bent and then we will look at evaluating those position descriptions so we can come out with some very specific things to people, rather than generalities.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: How much was spent on the Edwards review?

MARK WEBB: That's a good question. I do have that, if you give me a moment.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Just to be clear, it wasn't the number of staff consulted?

MARK WEBB: No, it was the range. As you said, I think you used the phrase "cross-section".

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Cross-section, yes.

MARK WEBB: It was the cross-section of staff. The Sharon Bent work—we didn't go out to hundreds of people. It was a focused piece of consultation, but it was a focused piece of consultation that brought in those broader perspectives as well.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Okay. If you can take the cost of the—

MARK WEBB: It was \$50,000.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Okay. Noting the footnote around concerns around, I suppose you could call it, the methodology of the Edwards review. Could that still be released for the information of members?

MARK WEBB: Look, that is something I'd be happy to bring to PEG for consideration. It probably wouldn't be my recommendation because I don't think the report was of sufficient—I don't want to say quality. It is what it is, but it was not something that we accepted, so I would struggle to recommend its more broad release because—

The PRESIDENT: It wasn't appropriately representative.

MARK WEBB: Yes, it was not appropriately representative.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Is the Bent review going to consider those parts of the Edwards review?

MARK WEBB: Yes. One of the things we did for the Bent review is take the information that was generated as part of the Edwards review. Sharon Bent was not starting from scratch. She was starting from especially the themes that came out of the Edwards review, but she did the more specific work we needed to take these next steps.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: If I could just turn briefly, before throwing to my colleague, to the Independent Complaints Officer, is it correct that the Broderick review took into consideration the relatively recent reforms in the Parliament, including the complaints officer, in the preparation of her recommendations and report?

UNCORRECTED

MARK WEBB: Yes. Early in her review Elizabeth Broderick had identified, generally speaking, that there needed to be some process for managing complaints against members that didn't exist. Towards the end of the review is when the Independent Complaints Officer process was going through, and so her final report did reflect that work that we had done in that space. David, you might want to add something to that.

DAVID BLUNT: My recollection of the timing is that the Broderick report was released in August 2022. If I recall rightly, the Legislative Council passed the resolution to establish the Independent Complaints Officer in February or March, I think, of 2022, and the Legislative Assembly soon afterwards.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: It existed.

DAVID BLUNT: Yes, the resolution had been agreed to some four or five months prior to the Broderick report being published. But there was then, in the resolution of the two Houses, there was sort of a timetable or a sequence of events established around the appointment of the ICO. The appointment was made, I think quite coincidentally, about a week before the Broderick report was published.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: My understanding of my reading of the Broderick report and the implementation guide to the recommendations—Mr President, I think what you've done there is important for the Parliament, just having a schedule of implementation of the key recommendations. My reading of that is that there were still concerns around perceptions concerning the ICO and the structural authority of the ICO to handle sensitive workplace matters which were the subject of the Broderick review. Accepting the Privileges Committee is going to look into all of this, some of the recommendations out of Broderick were mechanisms for an independent management of those matters, for principles and protocols to be developed regarding external investigations and for reporting pathways to be redefined. What changes were made to these reporting processes, particularly to the ICO role and processes, since those observations from Broderick? Were any changes made to those reporting pathways and to the functioning of the ICO in light of the concerns that she raised?

DAVID BLUNT: Perhaps I can start to answer that question, and then I'm sure Mark can add something further. In terms of the specifics of the ICO, no changes. The resolutions of the Houses from March and thereabouts in 2022 stand. Subsequent to the Broderick report, I think in late 2022, both privileges committees agreed to and recommended the adoption of—I will ask for the precise term but, in effect, a protocol for investigations. So the privileges committees recommended those and those were adopted. Those protocols followed after the Broderick report. The resolutions themselves remain as is, as they were agreed to in early 2022.

The CHAIR: Just before we break, Mr Webb, do you want add a contribution?

MARK WEBB: I will very briefly mention that, as the Independent Complaints Officer built those protocols, we did work with her to make sure—we've been calling it the "no wrong door" approach. Basically, if somebody approaches us and it turns out it's an issue for the Independent Complaints Officer, rather than rebuffing them, we say, "Fantastic, you've given us this information. It is a matter for the Independent Complaints Officer." I think they call it a warm referral. We then make sure that referral happens over to the Independent Complaints Officer. Similarly, she has on occasion received complaints that are not actually about a member but are potentially about a member's staff or some other situation. She will warm refer those referrals over to us so people don't feel that they're being rebuffed when they raise potential issues. So we have cooperated to that extent, obviously not stepping over the bounds of what the Independent Complaints Officer can do but making sure people's ability to navigate the system is as easy as possible. Chair, I do have two answers to two questions that were raised earlier if you want me to quickly go through those.

The CHAIR: Sure.

MARK WEBB: Three answers, actually. Mr Latham, I said earlier that I would get my crack squad to tell you how much money the roof membrane—I made a guess at it. I was out by a couple of million. It was \$20.411 million spent from 2016-17 through to 2022-23. It was a significant body of work that we did progressively across the roof. You asked how many HR staff numbers. There are 27 people in the HR team.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It goes up to 38?

MARK WEBB: No, it's 27 including the new 11 people who have gone in.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Sixteen goes to 27.

MARK WEBB: Sixteen goes to 27. And I've got a report back from the security team about the drone incident that you mentioned before. When it was reported to us, the special constables took action immediately. They went out onto the Domain. It was a gentleman with a new drone that he had received as a present that he was flying around the Domain and then decided to come up to the building. The special constables indicated that that was not appropriate and the man removed the drone immediately.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. WES FANG: Did you get the man's details?

MARK WEBB: I don't have that in front of me.

The Hon. WES FANG: Because you should have, in case it's actually not—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Was he from the A-Team?

MARK WEBB: Possibly—Hannibal maybe.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Webb, for those answers. We will now have a break and reconvene at 11.15 a.m.

(Short adjournment)

The CHAIR: The time being 11.15 a.m., we will commence. Thank you for returning. For those people online, thank you for tuning back in. We'll now turn to 20 minutes of questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, you would agree that I wrote to you on 18 December 2023 raising the issue of parliamentary media summaries—correct?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. I can't remember the exact date, but you absolutely did write.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm pretty good with my dates, yes.

The PRESIDENT: Sure.

The Hon. WES FANG: You would agree you provided no response to that email? I suspect that, given you don't recall it, that's the case?

The PRESIDENT: I can't remember.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay. You didn't reply either to my 25 January email, did you?

The PRESIDENT: I don't remember the time frame, but I know that there was an email was sent specifically to me asking for some answers to questions about the issue—the media monitoring issue—which I then absolutely provided an answer for. If I didn't respond earlier, I apologise about that, but there was no intent not to respond.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes. You finally responded on 2 February after I raised it for a third time that it was an issue. You only responded after you became aware that the media were making inquiries. Is that correct?

The PRESIDENT: No, absolutely not.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay. You weren't aware that the night previous to your response to my third email the media had made inquiries to you about the media summaries?

The PRESIDENT: I'm not aware of that, no.

The Hon. WES FANG: You're not aware of that. Okay. Can I table these emails, please? There are five copies here so there should be one for the President, one for the Chair and one for the Government and the crossbench.

The CHAIR: Mr Fang, what are they? These are emails from you to the President, regarding the media monitoring issue.

The Hon. WES FANG: Correct. Also included is an email from Mr Webb as well, who also did provide a response.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Can we have a chance to have a look at it?

The Hon. WES FANG: I believe you've already got them, Mr Primrose, so you will have already read them.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I read everything you send me, but I'd like to look at these, too.

The Hon. WES FANG: No, that's fine, but there's no requirement that I have to provide you with a copy. I only have to provide a copy to the President.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: There's no reason—I can't deny you leave. I'm simply asking for the courtesy of reading it, that's all.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. WES FANG: Sure. Mr President, you indicated in your response to the third time that I inquired that you agreed the provision of media summaries is important for holding the Government to account, and accordingly you wrote to the Premier. Is that correct?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can you outline what you wrote to the Premier?

The PRESIDENT: I don't have the letter with me but I said, basically, what you've just contended there, which is it is important that all members of Parliament have appropriate access to media monitoring, that this service has been ceased and that anything that can be done in order to rectify that situation, I would be grateful if that could be done. But I can't remember the exact words.

The Hon. WES FANG: You'll note that I did ask you for a copy of that letter and that hasn't been provided as yet. Now, in relation to the media summaries themselves, by the point that you had replied to my email the Parliament had been without media summaries for two months—correct?

The PRESIDENT: There had been—let me go back a step. This came as an absolute shock and surprise to me. I didn't know this was happening; none of us did. In fact, I said to Dave Smith, one of my staff members, who is here with us today, "For some reason I seem to have—I don't seem to be getting the media summaries anymore. Can you please work out how to fix that and make it fixed?" So I was keen to have them myself.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can I ask about when that was, Mr President, that you asked Mr Smith to look at the issue of media summaries?

The PRESIDENT: I don't know—when it became apparent that they weren't there.

The Hon. WES FANG: Early December?

The PRESIDENT: I don't know—a day or two, or three, or whatever after I didn't get them. But it was that sort of time. Mr Webb and I certainly have had discussions all the way through about the need to provide an alternative service. That's why the library has done their best—and Mr Webb might have more comments on this—to provide a service after it became clear that the re-establishment of the old service wasn't going to happen. That service has been—I understand from you and from others that it's not ideal. The Parliament is working very, very hard to provide a better curated service which will provide that sort of media monitoring product. The aim is three times a day. It won't be exactly the same as the product that had been received before because we don't have—(a) the Government has made it clear that that won't be reinstated to the Parliament, and (b) we don't have the exact parameters. But, after the Speaker and I wrote to the Premier, Mr Webb has met with Premier and Cabinet or whatever it's called now—

The Hon. WES FANG: The Premier's Department.

The PRESIDENT: —to talk about this issue and to see if, for example, there could be any assistance in terms of providing some assistance in terms of parameters and so forth. Mr Webb might have more comments to make.

MARK WEBB: As you quite rightly point out, on 1 December a service that we had been receiving stopped abruptly. We were, in a broad sense, aware that the Executive was retesting the market for media monitoring, but we'd received no indication or notice that the service that we'd been purchasing separately from Meltwater would stop at that time. It just stopped. Just for the benefit of the Committee, the history there is that when Meltwater was engaged—in fact, if you go back to 2017, it used to be that the Premier and Cabinet media team used to produce a media summary. That's back in 2017. That stopped when they moved over to Meltwater as a media summary provider. The Executive set up this media monitoring summary that came out. When we asked if we could get a copy of it as well, they said contractually no, because it is a contract with the Executive, so we entered into a separate contract with Meltwater to provide exactly the same service—so, basically an identical media monitoring summary. We have been paying separately for that all the way through.

At the very least, from a contractual point of view, I would have expected to be contacted by Meltwater that a service that we were paying for was going to stop, and that didn't happen, so it was a shock. As the President said, we immediately—using Stream, our media monitoring service, we immediately set up an automated version. That uses keywords to try and create a daily media summary several times a day. We sought feedback on the keywords we were using, getting feedback from the parliamentary community. We refined that over the course of December. The feedback we got towards the end of December was that an automated service that had no curation as part of it would not be sufficient for the needs of members.

Then two pathways were in front of us. One was to convince the Executive that they should provide an exact copy of what they provide for the Executive to parliamentarians more broadly as well, and the second was

UNCORRECTED

to create our own curated summary that was—the parameters were set to meet the purposes of the Parliament rather than the Executive. We did pursue the first option, but the Premier's Department have indicated—did and have—

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm going to interrupt you there because that's basically leading to my next question. I'll just stop you so I can actually cover off that. Is it the case, given that the previous Department of Premier and Cabinet under the Coalition Government effectively permitted Meltwater to have a separate contract for the provision of the same media monitoring service that was provided to the Executive to be provided to the parliamentarians—given that that was the case, is it not then appropriate that the Premier's Department provide consent for Isentia, which is the new media monitoring service, to enter into a contract with the Parliament to provide the same media monitoring service that is provided to the Executive? That should be provided to parliamentarians. It is a case of equity here that under the previous Government there was a permission for Meltwater to provide the same service. A three-time-a-day service is certainly not what we were provided under the previous service with Meltwater. Why isn't the Premier's Department permitting the Parliament to receive the same media monitoring that the Executive does?

The CHAIR: Could you restate that question? There were parts of that question that were seeking an opinion of Mr Webb. So, if that was who the question was to—

The Hon. WES FANG: I'll put it to the President, then.

The CHAIR: That's what I was going to suggest.

The PRESIDENT: We just had a quick chat. We obviously can't answer a question which is asking why the Premier's Department has done something or hasn't done something. Our job is to look at the—

The Hon. WES FANG: Let me rephrase—

The PRESIDENT: One moment. Our job is to look at the current situation and to try and rectify it. We have. We tried to get the original product back. The Government made decision that wouldn't happen, and therefore our job now is to do what we can in order to provide a service to members, and that's exactly what we're doing.

The Hon. WES FANG: I appreciate that, Mr President. However, in effect, the provision of those media summaries has to come through DPS. Correct? You are, effectively, in charge of DPS. It's your job to ensure that members have the resources they require to do their jobs. I would contend that that would also mean that, where there is a better service or an equal service to what we used to receive, it is the job and role of the President and the Speaker concurrently, given that it affects members of the Houses, to advocate for that. What have you done to see that the Premier's Department permits access to those Isentia media summaries so that we have equity across the Parliament?

The PRESIDENT: I hear the question. It's a valid question. I make a couple of points. The first is that's exactly why the Speaker and I wrote to the Premier about this issue, and I suspect part of the response to that was when the Premier's Department or Department of Premier and Cabinet—what is it called now?

The Hon. WES FANG: The Premier's Department.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you—then sought to meet with Mr Webb to discuss this issue. That's the first point. The second point is I'm not 100 per cent sure I accept the premise. Yes, of course my responsibility is to, along with the Speaker, provide the support and services, to members, that are going to ensure that they can do their job, and that's providing a good platform in terms of media monitoring. When I say "the premise", I'm not sure that the new service will necessarily be less helpful than the old, because there will be a whole range of other issues, for example, relevant to the Parliament, that will be captured in a way that probably may not have been captured in the other one. So that may be of more relevance to other members of the Parliament. That's the first point. The second point is that the Stream platform that we have is currently under-utilised, and I have to say the library is doing an extremely good job here in doing everything that they can. I think we'd all agree that.

The Hon. WES FANG: And I would echo that position.

The PRESIDENT: But that platform is currently under-utilised. And, basically, members can set up filters and custom search settings for each member to ensure that they're getting the information that they want. So I strongly encourage members to do that too. Obviously, at the end of the day, I can't reverse a decision of the Government. I can't do that. I've tried. I've written. I can't do that. What I can do and my responsibility—

The Hon. WES FANG: You seem to have pretty good relationships with the Government, though.

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: What we can do and my responsibility, alongside the Speaker, is to ensure that there is an appropriate service given to members, and that's exactly what we're trying to do.

The Hon. WES FANG: Have they provided you an update as to the situation, Mr President?

The PRESIDENT: No. The—

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President—

The PRESIDENT: One moment. Let me answer the question. The Premier's Department has discussed the situation and has talked to Mr Webb, and so my assumption is that they are looking through the prism of the fact that, if they talk to DPS, in effect, they're talking to the Parliament. So I think that's appropriate.

The Hon. WES FANG: In the Premier's estimates, in the hearing on 21 February 2024, Ms Kate Meagher indicated the Premier's Department had written to you, Mr President, with an update from their perspective, and that's on the transcript on the top of page 56. You just denied that they've provided you advice. Why have you not provided that advice to LC members?

The PRESIDENT: I didn't receive that letter.

The Hon. WES FANG: So, under oath, Ms Meagher gave false testimony. Is that what you—

The PRESIDENT: No, I'm not saying—she may well have thought that it was sent. I don't know. But I haven't received that letter, and I—

The Hon. WES FANG: She said she wrote to the Presiding Officers.

The PRESIDENT: I understand the point, and I'm telling you under oath I've just spoken with the head of DPS, and I'm telling you I didn't receive that letter.

The Hon. WES FANG: This is the problem that's happening with this system—that the Premier's Department's saying it is falling with DPS and falling with the President. In fact, I put questions somewhat tangentially to Mr Draper in another estimates to try and get some answers, because we're not getting any as to why we are now almost—actually, we are past—three months and having no curated media summary still. Everyone seems to be passing the buck. When can members of the Parliament expect proper media summaries so that we can do our jobs in holding this Government to account?

The PRESIDENT: So we, as I talked about before, are in the final stages of curating this new product. I'm not sure of the exact time line. Mr Webb?

MARK WEBB: In the next couple of weeks. We are very close to finalising a curated stream-based product for members of the Parliament. It will go out three times a day. As you say, the reason the old Meltwater thing went out more than three times a day is that they had separate emails for radio summaries versus newspaper summaries. We are combining those into one summary so you get both in the one thing three times a day—morning, lunchtime, night—covering all those areas. It will be a curated product. We will be coming out and seeking feedback on that curation. If it's not covering things you'd like to see covered, we'll be asking that question to make sure that we're continually improving it. As the President said, and the Speaker has agreed, the intent is to make sure it is a product that is dedicated towards the Parliament as opposed to the Executive so we are looking at making sure it's covering issues in relation to parliaments—for instance, things happening in other jurisdictions that are affecting parliamentary practice as an example of that.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can we rule a line under this and say that we can expect that media summaries will be delivered by the start of April?

MARK WEBB: Yes, you can absolutely. I can 100 per cent commit to the start of April—hopefully before that, but I can 100 per cent commit to that.

The Hon. WES FANG: I will be holding everybody to account.

MARK WEBB: I would expect nothing less.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm going to move now to another issue. Mr Webb, question 5B in the questions taken on notice in the last session states, "DPS Security conducted a security audit of the President's office". Would a security audit typically occur without you being aware of it occurring?

MARK WEBB: They can do. It depends on the nature of the audit. A formal review—as in, a formal report—would come up through me, but going and doing a walk-around and checking on security-related issues any member can request that of my security team. As you would expect, my security team does not come and talk to me about the security concerns of every member.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. WES FANG: Who from DPS Security conducted the audit?

MARK WEBB: It is not my practice to name individual officers but people in my security team did the walk-around of the President's area.

The Hon. WES FANG: What records were kept of this audit?

MARK WEBB: It was a walk-around so we did not write a formal report out of it—

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr Webb, I'm now going to stop you. You've indicated in your questions on notice that a security audit occurred—the word audit was used by you. It's being indicated to me now that it was a walk-around of the President's office. You won't indicate who did it. There has been lot of conjecture about this rumoured security audit, but this Parliament—these members of this Committee—have been unable to identify a single document, a single person that conducted it or any record of it occurring. Mr Webb, is that how we operate in this Parliament?

MARK WEBB: I'm not sure that I fully understand the premise of the question.

The Hon. WES FANG: It seems to be—

MARK WEBB: Any member can request my security team to come up and review settings around their office. Anyone can do that. If it's requested that we undertake some kind of formal process that could involve external bodies et cetera, that goes down one path. If it's a walk-around, that is still an audit.

The Hon. WES FANG: I appreciate that. In your answers to question 5C, taken on notice from the last session, you indicated that there were recommendations coming from that security audit. What were those recommendations? Were they documented? Mr Webb, what was the cost of that security audit?

MARK WEBB: I don't have costs associated with it, as we did not hire an external body or anything along those lines.

The Hon. WES FANG: Where your security department makes recommendations, I imagine they are put in writing. Is that correct?

MARK WEBB: The recommendations were—

The Hon. WES FANG: Given that it changed the access to—

The CHAIR: Order! Mr Webb was in the middle of answering the question.

MARK WEBB: Thank you, Chair. The discussions around access to that section were delivered both verbally—and, of course, as part of that, one of the requests, and many members make this of us all the time, is, "Who has access to my office? Who can swipe in? Who can swipe out?" That information was provided in writing.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: At the outset, I would like to say that I don't give a stuff who conducted the security review in the President's office or in his dining room or anywhere like that. At the end of the day, if that was done, it was probably needed. I think Mr Fang's questioning around the curation of the media reports is a good line of questioning. It's probably the first we've had out of him today. Who is actually going to curate the topics now that you've decided that you've got something that could work? I've had a lot of trouble trying to curate that for myself.

MARK WEBB: There's a couple of levels of that. For the product that will come out three times a day, the library is working with Stroom, our provider. They start with a series of key words, and then somebody sits down, looks at the results of what comes out of that and goes through and curates based around the parameters we set for them. One of the areas where the Premier's Department is providing us with information is for things like an up-to-date list of all of the various agency names. As you might imagine, since the election there have been quite a few changes to government agencies—Homes NSW, for instance, and the split of the Premier's Department from the Cabinet Office. Making sure we keep up to date on ministerial titles, agency names et cetera, that all feeds into it. Stroom will be doing the curation, which will then get sent out to you automatically. The thing we'll be engaging back with you about is, if it isn't hitting the mark, then we will be looking to refine both the key words and the expertise of the people in Stroom that are doing that curation for us to try to make sure it improves over time.

The other thing I did want to mention, which the President mentioned earlier, is that the Stroom product is quite a versatile and powerful product, but we recognise that setting it up can require a certain amount of expertise. We are happy for experts from the library to come to any member to help you set up specific searches and alerts that might go to your particular area of interest. If you're a shadow in a particular area and you have particular policy interests because of that, or if you are a crossbencher who is taking a particular dimension on

UNCORRECTED

things, you can set up your own tailored search parameters that provide you with alerts on a regular basis that really get to the heart of those things that you are interested in. The library is available to come to any member and provide that set-up for you.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Thank you very much for that answer. We will see how it goes in the end and see what we get.

The PRESIDENT: We welcome the feedback, by the way, when members do get it.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That's good. I'm certain you will get it. What has been happening is far from adequate. The other thing that I'm having some problems with—and I don't know whether other members are—is the system of automatic blocking of what the system thinks is spam. I'm having a lot of trouble with that. My emails have gone from being unbearable remotely because of the way the system, 365, works, to now I'm lucky if I'm getting one or two emails a day. As an example, this morning I was trying to search for the notification in relation to this particular inquiry on my remote device, my Apple iPad, and when I searched for it, I could not find it. I had to go back to my parliamentary computer, search for it—and obviously it popped up straightaway. So there are issues around that. I'm not saying that that is what is causing it but there are issues there now after the implementation, perhaps, of that particular system with remote downloading of emails. I think the calendar probably works okay. And the system periodically asking me to re-sign in—I don't have an issue with that. But even when I do re-sign in, I don't seem to be getting a better service. I'm missing an awful lot of emails. So maybe you need to have a close look at that because it didn't operate that way under the old system.

MARK WEBB: I will get somebody from the IT team to come up and work through your issues specifically but I would say, generally, you're quite right. As part of the cybersecurity work that we've been doing, we've been trying to improve the capacity of the email system to stop spam coming through. We are seeing incidents of phishing, which is when people try to pretend to be someone else and get stuff out of you, and whaling, which is catching a big fish, according to the tech people. I don't think the President would mind me saying—emails with people pretending to be the President coming through and saying, "I'm really busy. Don't call me but if you could just go to this link and do this thing for me, that would be really great." That usually involves transferring money or the like. We're seeing increasing incidents of that.

One of the things that has happened around the world recently is that people started to do more work to validate the domains of email addresses. I imagine you've all received Hotmail. Anyone can set up a Hotmail account or the like. What it has meant is that a larger number of emails are coming from what they're calling unvalidated email addresses, where the domain is not secure. That is causing those emails to get caught in our spam filters. Essentially the reputation of the email address doesn't pass the filters. One of the things we've done recently is change the product that we're using so that you get visibility of that. So if our system captures emails that fall into that grey zone, rather than you never seeing them, you should get an email that says, "The following emails have been caught. Do you want to release any of them?"

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Without interrupting you too much, I'm getting those and I'm hitting "Tell me what they are", and quite often I get a reading that says, "This doesn't work."

MARK WEBB: That's good feedback for us.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: So I don't know. And there are still some emails that, to me, are spam coming through. People are entitled to message their politicians and canvass politicians and we shouldn't be chopping those ones out even if they're annoying and even if we're not interested in them and all that sort of stuff. We shouldn't be seeking to try to exclude a lot of those. I'm finding that some of those are coming through and a lot of other stuff isn't coming through.

MARK WEBB: Yes. One of the things that the new system allows you to do is what they call whitelist particular email addresses.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I haven't got to that stage yet. I can't get there.

MARK WEBB: We will definitely have somebody come and talk you through. I would say to the whole Committee that we do recognise that as we try to increase our response to cybersecurity threats, sometimes those are seamless and you never see anything to do with it, but sometimes it can have impact. If any of you are having those kinds of troubles, we do want to work with you to make this work as best as we can, while protecting the Parliament's technology environment. I will make sure that somebody comes to see you as soon as your estimates requirements—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: I think there are lot of members who've got similar problems.

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: I was about to make that point, Mr Borsak, if I may. I, myself, have had a couple of challenges as well in this space. I think it would be worthwhile for us contacting all members and asking for their feedback about what's happening in terms of their emails and if they have had any issues.

MARK WEBB: Will do.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It's not just me.

The PRESIDENT: Exactly. We'll do that. We'll communicate with all members, asking for that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In my last round of questioning, President, you said it's correct policy regarding principal place of work that if it's away from Parliament House, it requires approval of the President of the Legislative Council or the Clerk of the Parliaments. Would you give approval to someone working interstate?

The PRESIDENT: I'd need to look at each situation on its merits. If somebody was the primary caregiver of a person, for example, and the only medical treatment they could receive is interstate and, therefore, they needed to be there for two months, but they could potentially be able to their job—my point is there are individual situations which would require an individual assessment. But my predisposition would be exactly as the policy says—that people's principal place of work should be within the Parliament and, to me, it would seem odd if people were principally working interstate. Unusual, perhaps, is a better way of putting it.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I received a complaint about an MLC staffer to that effect. I don't want to invade the privacy of the individual. Where do I take this type of complaint? Is this for the Independent Complaints Officer, or do I go to you or the Clerk? Because it seems like approval hasn't been given. The circumstances you outlined about medical and relative care don't apply, to my knowledge.

The PRESIDENT: That was only an example.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Where do I take this complaint in private quarters, please?

The PRESIDENT: Just give me a moment, Mr Latham. I'll ask the Clerk to address this.

DAVID BLUNT: The remit of the Independent Complaints Officer is not just about complaints about bullying and harassment but also complaints about the alleged misuse of entitlements or inadequate disclosure of interest. Staff are an entitlement of members under the PR Act and determination so, yes, that is a place to take complaints. I think I am aware of the circumstances to which you're alluding, Mr Latham, and I'd be happy to talk to you about the particular circumstances of the matter. I'd be happy to come to see you about that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you. I appreciate that. Turning to MPs' electoral allowance, am I right in saying it's for the efficient performance of members' parliamentary duties and for that alone?

The PRESIDENT: I can't remember what the specific form of words in the PRT is but, from memory, that sounds right. I think that sounds right.

MARK WEBB: Yes. For the performance of your parliamentary duties, yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Am I right in saying if the electoral allowance is not spent in full, the remainder is taken as salary and taxed accordingly?

MARK WEBB: That's correct.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Is it a legitimate use of the electoral allowance to spend it on matters relating to expenses before you even became a member of Parliament?

MARK WEBB: It's hard to speculate on generalities, but the allowance is provided for your parliamentary duties.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Right. You can't have parliamentary duties if you're not an MP.

MARK WEBB: Yes, but again, without understanding the detail or the specifics, it's hard to make a generalised point. But, generally speaking, the premise that the allowance should be spent on things that you do as a member in your parliamentary duties is what the allowance is for.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Is it a parliamentary duty to spend the electoral allowance on legal costs in a preselection dispute with members of your political party that was heard in court before you even became an MP?

The PRESIDENT: I think we'd probably take that question on notice just because none of us are experts in terms of the PRT determination on electoral allowance. I don't think that the line of questioning is an invalid one at all, but we're happy to take that on notice and provide you with as full an answer as we can. If there are any

UNCORRECTED

other specifics, you're welcome to either raise them now or put them in supplementary questions as well on these issues.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes, I've got specifics because I've received a specific complaint arising from the matter *Johnston v The Greens NSW*, judgement delivered on 6 March 2019. The Greens have an interesting practice of requiring their MPs to account for the use of their electoral allowance. The complainants have sent to me their claim that Ms Abigail Boyd has used the electoral allowance to cover these legal costs in documents that I'd like to table, Chair.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Point of order—

The CHAIR: A point of order has been taken.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just if it would assist the witnesses, I'm quite happy for them to reveal the results of the investigation into this, if it's helpful.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Was that a point of order or a separate question?

The CHAIR: I don't think it was a point of order.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just to help. Feel free; otherwise, it's just mudraking, isn't it?

The CHAIR: I think you're at liberty to raise that when it comes to your questions, Ms Boyd. Mr Latham, you were—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Yes. I'm seeking to table the documents that have been provided.

The CHAIR: You don't have to seek leave to table them.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Point of order—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I do table them. They can be circulated.

The CHAIR: A point of order has been taken.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Under the procedural fairness rules, we are not to use privilege, as Mr Latham loves to do, to hide behind in order to make adverse reflections about other members of Parliament.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: To the point of order: That's not a point of order, Chair. It's an opinion.

The CHAIR: Well, it's true that—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It's an opinion.

The CHAIR: The point that Ms Boyd has said is true: We're not to make adverse mention of people, I think, who are not other members or are not participants in the inquiry—but I don't think he had done that at this point.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Further to the point of order: He's about to, Chair. He's trying to smear my good reputation in this place, again, under the cover of privilege, again, because that's the only way he can do it. He lacks courage.

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am suggesting that it is not appropriate to use estimates to basically try to smear a political opponent. We have to be better than this as a Parliament, surely.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm not an expert on The Greens' finances, but two members of The Greens party have given the documentation that has been tabled.

The CHAIR: The member was seeking to table a document. I don't—Order!

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, it's nonsense.

The CHAIR: Order! Please. The member was seeking to table a document, and I don't know what it says, so that may—I don't know what he is going to say in his next round of questioning, but that is concluded now.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can I take a new point of order for you to consider? It is also just not related to expenditure on Legislature. This is ridiculous.

The CHAIR: I don't uphold that point of order because it did relate to—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You accounted for it—\$35,000 of public money. Of course it's expenditure.

The CHAIR: The question did relate to the use of members' entitlements.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: It is completely false and incorrect, and you know it. Step out from behind privilege and actually face me like the man you reckon you are, and stop this smearing.

The CHAIR: Order! Ms Boyd, please.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Don't give me the masculinity line. You don't like masculinity, as a rule.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Oh my god. Hiding behind privilege, constantly.

The CHAIR: Order! Please. We have had some unedifying exchanges this morning and we need to uphold some standards and the functionality of this Committee, so please desist. It's now time for questions—

The PRESIDENT: My apologies, Chair. Would you mind if I just answered Mr Latham's question?

The CHAIR: Please do.

The PRESIDENT: I just have two points to add. The first is this: that I'm very happy for you to put any of these questions on notice and happy to deal with them if we can, but I note there may be a limited remit that we have to be able to deal with them. But, nonetheless, I will have a look at anything you send through. The second thing is: If any member has any allegations about misuse of entitlements, the ICO would be an appropriate path for consideration on that matter. They are the only two points I wanted to make.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: My first question is directed to Mr Blunt. Mr Blunt, could you confirm that these disparaging allegations were already the subject of a review in this Parliament, and that I was held not to have anything to answer for, please?

DAVID BLUNT: Ordinarily, I'd be extremely reluctant to provide any information in relation to any individual member's use of their entitlements or any correspondence with external agencies, for instance. But, given the invitation that the member concerned has provided and essentially has just released me from that obligation of confidentiality to her, I can indicate that last year—I think it was in July; I would have to check the exact date—the chief executive and I jointly received correspondence from the Independent Commission Against Corruption indicating that they had received a complaint about this matter. The Independent Commission Against Corruption had decided not to investigate it. However, they were writing to us providing the information about the complaint for our information and for any actions that we saw were fit.

It was not a referral for investigation, so we took that as meaning that the ICAC deemed that it was not of such gravity that it required an investigation or, indeed, a response from the Parliament. Nevertheless, having received the information, the acting chief executive and I, Mr Webb being on leave at the time, determined that we would write to the member—yourself, Ms Boyd—to seek a detailed response to the complaint. Having received your response and having considered it thoroughly, we concluded that no further action was required. There was no evidence of any breach of the rules for the use of entitlements and we wrote back to the ICAC and informed them accordingly.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you, Mr Blunt, and I will put on record that any reference to legal fees in the statements that I have made to The Greens do not relate to the very unfortunate case that was something I was subjected to prior to the election, but was actually something that has been connected with future legal cases. And anyone who is a woman in Parliament knows full well the amount of harassment you get from men, from the moment that you even put your hand up. That is another issue. Can I take us back to something else? I understand that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are having their conference here at the end of this year, in November, which is—

The PRESIDENT: They are 4 to 8 November. You're all welcome.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That is fantastic. I wanted to ask if you're aware of the Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines that they put out in 2020. It's something that they first put out in 2001.

The CHAIR: Ms Boyd, could you repeat that? What was that that they put out? I didn't hear that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That is the Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines put out by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. What this is is effectively best practice for the 160-odd Commonwealth parliaments around the world. Many of the parliaments have subsequently requested the CPA to do a bit of a review to help them to become more gender sensitising. Have we done anything in New South Wales on this? And I just wanted to note that a lot of the fantastic work

UNCORRECTED

that was in the Broderick report is also in this information that applies to Commonwealth parliaments around the world. So we're a bit far behind. What have we done? And is there any interest in making sure that we are compliant with this checklist prior to that conference?

The PRESIDENT: I'll make three points in response if I may. The first is to talk more broadly and to say that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association does do excellent work in terms of providing advice and resources for parliaments and parliamentarians across the 56 Commonwealth nations around the world. I have had the opportunity to see a number of the opportunities that they provide, including, for example, there is a parliamentarians' academy where they provide training and support for parliamentarians across the Commonwealth. I think that's excellent. This is clearly part of the very good work that they do. The second point I make—and, as the President of the CPA, I'm mildly embarrassed to say this, but, no, I don't know the document to which you're referring. I haven't seen it. I obviously will make sure that I see that shortly, but I have no doubt that it is at the same standard of an excellent quality document of all of the other CPA documents.

The third point is in terms of what we're doing in this place. Obviously, if I don't know about the document I can't say that we've actually utilised it at this point, but I don't know if either Mark or David have any comments that they'd like to make. Otherwise, I'm happy to examine the document and to look at how it may be relevant to this place. Because the sort of issues that you raise are ones that are relevant to all Commonwealth jurisdictions and, in fact, all parliamentary jurisdictions all over the world—that we have a way to go in some areas, and we'll do what we can to implement appropriate outcomes.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: My next question again is just in relation to the reporting pathways, informed a little bit by some of what's occurred this morning, but largely from some of the conclusions, again, of the Broderick report, where complainants felt that there was a degree of futility in pursuing complaints: "Easier to keep quiet. Wouldn't have changed anything. I thought my career would be damaged." Has there been any monitoring or evaluation work that's been undertaken with members and staff in relation to complaint reporting and handling, including but not related to the ICO?

The PRESIDENT: We might ask the Clerk to go first and then Mr Webb.

DAVID BLUNT: Each year, the three parliamentary departments participate in the People Matter Employee Survey process that operates across the public sector. There are questions each year about the incidence of bullying and harassment and also confidence in grievance mechanisms and the like. Those reports for the three departments are available online. We always make them available each year. So I'd refer you to that data, which is, indeed, more current than the Broderick report, which was from August 2022.

The PRESIDENT: So for the clarity of members, the three departments are obviously the department of the LA, the department of the LC and DPS. That doesn't, obviously, cover members' staff, though—for information.

MARK WEBB: Yes, this is a very important area. Earlier in the session I talked about the fact we were getting some additional staff into the HR area. One of the areas that we'd identified as a result of Broderick was a deficiency—was our capacity to support both members and staff through processes that can be challenging at times, including reporting pathways. I'm pleased to say that the team—we have bolstered resources in that space and we've been able to provide much better support for people over the last 12 months than perhaps we had in the past. Keeping in mind that the Broderick report came out when the ICO had been created by resolution but was not yet in operation as yet, so I think some of the commentary in Broderick was relating to the fact that, prior to that, there was no pathway for dealing with certain areas. So our focus over the last 12 months has been on making sure that those pathways exist, as I said before, with the "no wrong door" approach—for instance, making sure people can navigate those pathways to reporting as well. That's for both members' staff and staff of the Parliament more broadly, or indeed members themselves, depending on the circumstances.

DAVID BLUNT: If I can come back to the People Matter Employee Survey results, for instance, in relation to grievance handling, there's a score of 80 per cent. That's a reflection that 80 per cent of our staff feel that the grievance handling systems and mechanisms that are in place are appropriate and are systems they have confidence in. I don't have the benchmark against the rest of the public sector but I'm pretty confident in saying that's a good result and that's better than we'd see in many organisations.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: What was the take-up of responses to the People Matter Employee Survey?

DAVID BLUNT: I'm embarrassed to say that, for the Department of the Legislative Council, it was something like 104 per cent.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: That's a good response.

UNCORRECTED

DAVID BLUNT: Everyone participated and I promise neither the Deputy Clerk nor I completed the survey twice. We had a 100 per cent take-up this year.

MARK WEBB: About 90 per cent or 80-something per cent for DPS, so statistically valid.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: In light of the fact that some of the matters raised in Broderick probably were acutely felt by members' staff as opposed to departmental staff, would there be scope for monitoring and evaluation surveys to be conducted with members and their staff just so any review into some of these processes, including the Privileges Committee review into the ICO, can be informed by that data?

The PRESIDENT: It's a very good point, Mr Nanva. Once again, it highlighted the unique work environment in which we operate. The fact that the three departments are all captured appropriately and, clearly, deeply engaged in the process whereas another group of key stakeholders are not, is something that should be looked at. I'm certainly happy to give a commitment that we'll look at what we can do in order to pursue that outcome that you're looking for, which is a perfectly valid and reasonable request. Mr Webb, do you have anything else to add?

MARK WEBB: No, just than to say that I'm very supportive of that. We are trying to build in evaluation frameworks to make sure that we are providing good services and people are feeling supported so having some way of looking at that is an excellent suggestion and one I'm happy to take on.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: These are probably best directed to Mr Webb. What extent of the workforce in the building are on labour-hire agreements?

MARK WEBB: I'd have to take an exact percentage on notice. Probably the two main areas where we have labour-hire arrangements are our catering area for ramping—we have a core catering team who are permanent members of the Parliament workforce but then we have labour-hire arrangements for when we have a lot of events on one night, where we can bring additional people in and out, coming through. The second area—actually, probably three areas—is in the cleaning team. Again, we have to backfill positions in cleaning when people are ill or otherwise unable to perform their duties, so we do have a significant labour hire in the cleaning area. The third area, we actually moved away from labour hire. Traditionally, the other area of labour hire was the audiovisual space, where we used to use labour-hire arrangements for people to run the cameras, the audio and the like. As a part of the move to the new audiovisual system, we have brought a lot of that in house. We have a casual pool of people that can be drawn upon to do that work, so we have moved away from labour hire.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: If you're taking it on notice, can you give me a dollar value of full-time equivalent staff, as well as a percentage?

MARK WEBB: Yes. That's no problem at all.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: In the newly refurbished building, can the Committee be assured that Hansard staff will have adequate space in which to work?

The PRESIDENT: Before I throw to you, Mr Webb, not only that, but I had the opportunity to tour the level 8 section of where Hansard is going to go. If you haven't had the chance to have a look, I encourage you to do so. It really is lovely. I think it will be a beautiful place to work. I think that will be ready to go in April. But, Mr Webb, you might have other comments to make.

MARK WEBB: Across DPS, we have taken an approach to flexible work that includes some people working from home, so most people don't have a specifically allocated desk. They come in and use a desk based on who's in and who's out on any given day. For Hansard, we have allocated specific desks for each Hansard person in the new fit-out. That is reflecting the fact that on a sitting day or a committee day, it's entirely possible that the entire Hansard team could be in the building. We recognised that, so we've taken this different approach than the rest of the building to ensure that everyone in Hansard has a specific, dedicated desk in the new fit-out.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Given the rise in technology like generative AI and some of the developments across that space, can you confirm that the adoption of that technology will not result in the loss of full-time equivalent positions amongst DPS staff?

MARK WEBB: You're quite right that the rise of generative AI, particularly in the last 12 to 18 months, has probably been a lot faster than people had originated. This is not the first time these kinds of questions have been asked in estimates. Probably my only alteration to previous answers is that I am conscious that that improvement in the technology—or the pace of change in the technology is, perhaps, a better way of putting it—has accelerated over the last 18 months. I think I said this in a previous estimates hearing, but the phrase that I've heard most recently used, which probably reflects my view, is that while AI is not coming for your job, it could be coming for your job description—i.e., it could change the way that we go about doing our work at the moment.

UNCORRECTED

Our intention at the moment, as I've said in previous estimates, is that it doesn't result in anybody being made redundant. But, of course, it is an area that I'm keeping an eye on quite a lot. It has implications for, as you say, the Hansard team, but it also has implications for how the library does its work and the research team does its work. There are all kinds of implications for the Parliament.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: What about Hansard specifically? Are those people going to keep their jobs even though AI moves into that space?

MARK WEBB: As I say, it might change the way they do their job, but I have no intention of removing any jobs at this stage at all. I'm hesitating slightly because it's hard—

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: So you can't guarantee?

MARK WEBB: —to predict what's going to happen into the future with this stuff. If you'd asked me two years ago, I would have said the kind of stuff we're seeing today is a decade away. So it is hard for me to predict exactly what's going to happen and what the implications are. But that's not specifically directed at Hansard; that is generally across the board. If you're asking me to predict what impacts on the workforce AI is going to have more broadly, I'm afraid I'm not in a position to give that general prediction.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: This is one you may need to take on notice, but can you provide the number of full-time equivalent positions within each subdepartment of DPS each year for the last five years?

MARK WEBB: For the last five years? Sure. Yes, I can. We had an organisation restructure in the last five years, so it won't be—

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: It won't align?

MARK WEBB: Yes, it won't align fully. But, yes, I can do that.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Okay, thanks. Moving to another area, I understand that there was some discussion about a members' hub phone application in the past. Where's that up to?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: That was Mr Buttigieg.

MARK WEBB: Yes. It hasn't been that long since our last estimates, so we haven't progressed much further than the comments I made last time. Where our focus has been is on building the underlying infrastructure that would underpin such an application. One of the things that has been really clear to us is that any such phone-based application would have to be reliable—like, very, very reliable. It couldn't be the kind of thing that stopped working when you're in the Chamber or whatnot. So we've been working on the underlying infrastructure of what's called PIMS, the Parliament Information Management System, and how we move that to a more robust, reliable framework that would allow us to then build on top of that. That includes things like a members' portal, which is essentially the kind of stuff that you were talking about, so that you can look at information related to you and how that works.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Counting down divisions, for example, and things like that?

MARK WEBB: Yes, they're the kinds of things that could go into it. Now that we've moved some of the timing system onto an internet-based thing, there's a possibility of that. It's not on the forward work agenda at the moment, but all those things are possible.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: In that development—

The PRESIDENT: Sorry. I might just add to that, if I may, and I'll ask Mr Blunt to make some specific comments. But we've actually progressed in this space already a great deal in terms of the committee area. We're trialling where individual members have access to all of their relevant committee information. Mr Blunt, if you could provide a few specifics on that?

DAVID BLUNT: Yes. If I could thank you, Mr Murphy, for the questions and the feedback that you've provided during the course of last year in relation to your experience with accessing committee information, because it was one of the things that influenced us to go ahead and implement a committee hub using SharePoint. It's great that having SharePoint rolled out across the Parliament provided the opportunity for our own staff in the LC, together with DPS staff, to develop and to roll out this hub whereby all the information you need about a particular inquiry is able to be accessed readily. I understand that that's now been rolled out so that every one of the current 27 committee inquiries are now using that committee SharePoint hub. Any feedback that any members have in relation to it would be gratefully received, and that will help us to refine it and perfect it for the future.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: In relation to the members' hub, is that going to include a consultation process with members?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: If so, when is that likely to occur?

MARK WEBB: At the moment we're working on the underlying technology, so not in the near future. But when we get to the point where we're building the overarching portal into the information for members, absolutely. I can't give you a specific time on it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: You haven't scheduled the date for that yet?

MARK WEBB: I haven't scheduled it, no. We start off by consulting with the Clerks, of course, and their team, just to make sure we're on the right track, and then we will open it up to consultation with members. But I can't give you a specific timetable for it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I've got one last question. This relates to something before my time in this place. I've been told by a number of members that the printers in Parliament were specifically procured in part because they were supposed to have functionality that allowed them to print documents directly from mobile phones. Is that technology available to members and staff?

MARK WEBB: I thought so, yes. Is the feedback that it's not working?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Yes, feedback from a number of people is that it just doesn't work.

MARK WEBB: Let me check into that. I don't have that in front of me, but I'm happy to look into it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: If you can take it on notice—

MARK WEBB: That was the intent, so I'll take it on notice and give you a fuller explanation of where that's up to.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Thanks. They're the only questions that I've got at the moment.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Thank you. Just one from me, if I may. When I moved my office on level 11 after the last election, right next to my desk there's a small pin board, a noticeboard, that I can use. Large blank wall—I asked if I could get another noticeboard, pin board, so I can put maps and things on there. I was told I'd reached my limit of the number of pin boards that a member was allowed. I could have a piece of artwork but I couldn't have a pin board. So I've currently got a blank wall. If I wish to look at a map, of course, I put it out on the floor, which leads to the obvious question: What is the limit on the number of pin boards that DPS allows members to have?

The PRESIDENT: I might deal with this if, I may, Mr Webb.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: And what's the name of the document in which that's detailed, please?

The PRESIDENT: Mr Webb may have a more specific and relevant answer, but can I say this, Mr Primrose: In the last budget estimates, you raised a view that all members should have access to the President's program. Because it was raised, it now happens. I give you this guarantee: You will be provided with a second pin board for your office, and that is another outcome you can add to your list. But I'm not sure if there is a particular pin board protocol, Mr Webb?

MARK WEBB: Not that I am aware of. I am happy to reiterate the President's commitment to you getting a pin board.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Only on the understanding that it's available to all members, regardless of political party, who wish to have an additional pin board for their office.

The PRESIDENT: Of course.

MARK WEBB: Of course. Through you, I extend the offer to all members both in the room and separately.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: If I'm at a meeting after hours and I wish to organise for someone to drive in the following day for an early morning meeting, how do I organise that after, say, 5.30 p.m. of an afternoon?

MARK WEBB: That's a good question. You're right, the security desk that normally deals with that does finish up around that time. You can send an email to them and they would exercise that first thing in the

UNCORRECTED

morning when they come in, which, from memory, is around 8 o'clock. But if you were trying to organise for someone to be in earlier than 8 o'clock, of course, that would be problematic.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Could you take it on notice?

MARK WEBB: I can take it on notice. The special constables are here, of course, but don't, generally speaking, deal with car parking matters. I will take it on notice and get back to you with what the right protocol would be under those circumstances.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: My final general one in the time available to me—and I have many more for the President afterward. In terms of DPS, for instance, if I'm making an inquiry, I'm forced to put them into a particular subgroup and it would seem to me that maybe having a final subgroup, which is something like "suggestion", rather than having a forced choice—I'll give you an example. A number of years ago when we had the sliding doors put in, on level 11 there was a small table which enabled members and staff to put down lunch, notices, folders and things when they had to get out their swipe card. That disappeared. I've tried to make the suggestion that maybe that could be returned simply for the convenience of members, but there was no direction for building services that allowed me to do that. I subsequently put it in, I think, as cleaning or something, so I presume it's being looked at now, but maybe having a generic section at the end rather than a forced choice is a suggestion.

MARK WEBB: That's an excellent suggestion. We created a general email address to try and capture that but, you're right, some of our systems do still push you down a particular choice. I'm happy to take the commitment here that we'll look at having a general option both from an email point of view and also from the systems where you can lodge your request point of view.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Thank you. They are small items, but thank you for your input.

The Hon. WES FANG: Before I start the questioning, I'm going to table this for the President to have a look at.

The CHAIR: Can you tell us what it is?

The Hon. WES FANG: It's from *Hansard*. It's a page out of *Hansard*—page 127 from 30 November 2023. It's available to all members. If we could pass that to the President. Mr President, I'll give you a little bit of time to have a look over it. I've highlighted the relevant pages. Can you confirm that is a page from *Hansard* from 30 November 2023—page 127?

The PRESIDENT: I assume that you haven't dodged it up, but it looks like that to me.

The Hon. WES FANG: I assure you I haven't, Mr President. Could you please indicate to me the name that is highlighted on the left-hand side of the page, approximately one-third down the page?

The PRESIDENT: That will be the lady sitting to your left, Ms Sue Higginson.

The Hon. WES FANG: It is. Correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It's me. I'm here.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, can you read aloud for me, please, the sentence that's highlighted, approximately halfway down the page on the right-hand side?

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What did you bring me here for?

The CHAIR: You can't direct the witness. You could read it out, Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm happy to. I'm just wondering if he might like to read it out.

The PRESIDENT: No, not particularly.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay. I'll read Ms Sue Higginson's words:

And thank you very much for giving us the numbers on the floor.

The CHAIR: Mr Fang, as long as it's leading to a question.

The Hon. WES FANG: It is.

The CHAIR: Good. As long as there's a question.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, what was Ms Sue Higginson referring to?

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: I assume that it was an amusing tongue-in-cheek reference to—

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Point of order: Could the context be a bit clearer? Was this during the—

The PRESIDENT: Felicitations.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —felicitations at the end of last year—

The Hon. WES FANG: Correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —when we were talking about the goodwill amongst all of us in the Parliament—

The Hon. WES FANG: Correct.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: —and on the floor?

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm not sure what the point of order is and what standing order this is.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm just trying to think of that as I speak.

The CHAIR: I'm not sure that's a point of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: So you've come now to run cover for Ben, like everyone else has been doing since we started.

The CHAIR: Order, Mr Fang!

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm not trying to run cover. I was literally just trying to understand what I was about to be implicated in, and now I understand. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: I don't think there's a point of order.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: No. I think the point of order was me trying to understand, and now I understand. Thank you.

The Hon. WES FANG: So you're running cover.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Chair, can I raise the same point of order I raised last time, without having any idea at all where the honourable member is going with this. But I would ask, before we proceed, if maybe he could at least indicate—because, again, this doesn't seem to me to be necessarily part of the resolution that established budget estimates. If the member can assure us, I won't take a point of order if this is actually a matter relating to the budget estimates resolution and relevant to this Committee.

The Hon. WES FANG: It has to be with the expenditure of the Parliament, yes.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Okay.

The CHAIR: If you assure you us of that, Mr Fang, please proceed.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thanks, Mr Primrose. That was my point of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: Well done, Sue. You got there in the end.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I knew there was something.

The Hon. WES FANG: I'll read the line again. Ms Sue Higginson, in her felicitations, says:

And thank you very much for giving us the numbers on the floor.

Do you recall Ms Sue Higginson—

The PRESIDENT: I do. I laughed, like everybody else in the Chamber.

The Hon. WES FANG: I didn't laugh.

The PRESIDENT: I laughed like the majority of other people in the Chamber.

The Hon. WES FANG: That's true. That is true. Mr President, was she referring to you?

The PRESIDENT: When she says the words "Mr President" in the previous line, I assume that's probably the case.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can you provide some context as to why she'd be referring to you in this manner?

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: Possibly it would be appropriate to ask the person on your left, who actually made the comments.

The Hon. WES FANG: No. Given that she's referring to you—

The PRESIDENT: Ms Higginson was the person who made the speech, and perhaps she's the most appropriate person to ask.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, I'm going to put some questions to you about the expenditure of the Parliament. I'm asking you why she might have indicated to you that you had given them the numbers on the floor.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Point of order: Do I need to make the point, Chair?

The CHAIR: No, you don't because that was not a question about expenditure in the area of The Legislature.

The Hon. WES FANG: I am getting there.

The CHAIR: Ask a question about expenditure.

The Hon. WES FANG: It's a long build-up. We're getting there.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Numbers are cost-free. They've got to fall one way or another.

The CHAIR: You've got nine minutes, Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Ask a question about the reason that we are here, and that is expenditure in the area of The Legislature.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay. Mr President, as the President, you receive an increased salary over the other Opposition members. Is that correct?

The PRESIDENT: There's a salary of office that goes with the presidency, yes.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Like Deputy Whip.

The Hon. WES FANG: Are you able to provide an indication of what that increase is and what the associated allowances are for that role?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. It's publicly available on the Parliament's website.

The Hon. WES FANG: That expenditure is approximately double a backbencher's salary. Is that right?

The PRESIDENT: If you say so, Mr Fang. I mean, the information's publicly available, so it's no great secret. I mean, I'm not sure if it's exactly double but it's—

The Hon. WES FANG: And there are other associated allowances and benefits of the office. Is that correct? Additional staff?

The PRESIDENT: Indeed, like there is as Deputy Government Whip or Deputy Opposition Whip, yes.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: He gets to come along here and answer your questions.

The PRESIDENT: Indeed.

The Hon. WES FANG: Mr President, when did you have discussions about taking the role as President?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order—

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order—

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm getting there. We're establishing facts. Stop interrupting and stop running cover.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I'm allowed to raise a point of order and, again, it's my standard point of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: You're running cover for him because you, the Government, put him there.

The CHAIR: Order!

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. WES FANG: You put him there.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: If we've got this ongoing witch-hunt, that's a matter between the President and Mr Fang.

The Hon. WES FANG: And the Premier? Is that what you were going to say?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: However, I don't believe it has anything, if these aren't legal questions, in terms of the ambit of this inquiry.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Zero.

The CHAIR: I couldn't agree more. The question is out of order. It has nothing to do with expenditure in the area of The Legislature.

The Hon. WES FANG: It does have to do with it. To the point of order: It does have to do with expenditure.

The CHAIR: I have ruled on that point of order. You can take another point of order, if you want, but I've ruled on that. The question is out of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: I haven't had the opportunity, Chair. You continue to make rulings that are outside the scope of which the estimates process—

The CHAIR: Order! You're now cavilling with my ruling.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes, I am, Chair. That's correct, because I don't believe they're correct.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: The member can seek to dissent from your ruling, Chair.

The CHAIR: That is exactly—this morning we reminded you in the deliberative that—

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes. However, the numbers are stacked as such that it's not going to—

The CHAIR: —you can move dissent to my ruling.

The Hon. WES FANG: As much as I'd like to, I can count, unfortunately.

The CHAIR: You still can and lose—or win. But the point is that that is probably the appropriate process.

The Hon. WES FANG: You are indicating, Chair, that what I was saying was correct and that the numbers the Government and the crossbench will use to keep the President there are the same numbers you will use to stop any cavilling of your rulings. Is that correct?

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: To the point of order: The Chair gave both alternatives.

The CHAIR: I did.

The Hon. WES FANG: I will continue with my questioning. Mr President—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: There is no response for Mr Wang.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You've done it now, Deputy Chair.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Oh no! You've opened a new front.

The Hon. WES FANG: I suspect that that was deliberate, so I'm just going to let that one slide. Mr President, did you have discussions with the Premier in relation to taking the role as President?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order—

The CHAIR: Order! That question I have ruled out of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: Look, I'm going to put the questions. You can run cover for him if you like, but I mean—

The CHAIR: Then the President does not have to answer that question. It's out of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: Okay.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I would argue, Chair, that, because the question is out of order, it would be improper for the President to actually seek to answer that question.

UNCORRECTED

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To the point of order: Can I raise that there is a courtesy is meant to be flowing here, and I'm just not seeing it. There is really discourteous behaviour going on, and I've only just entered the room.

The CHAIR: That is an excellent point of order, Ms Higginson. The session this morning has been discourteous, unedifying and dysfunctional.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Oh, dear.

The CHAIR: Mr Fang, I would encourage you to use your remaining time to interrogate the areas of expenditure in the areas of The Legislature rather than this dry gully that you have run yourself up.

The Hon. WES FANG: I suspect, Chair, that the expenditure of the Parliament's money, including those people that take office in this place, is well within the remit and so my questions are within order. Mr President, I will put the question again. Did you have discussions with the Premier about taking the role?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order: This is an issue that is neither relevant under the procedural fairness resolution—it doesn't refer to the expenditure of funds as required—but it also traverses a period prior to the President taking office, which would also mean it is not relevant to his role as President and to the estimated expenditure of funds from the budget.

The CHAIR: Yes, another good point. I uphold the point of order for the previous points that were raised and for the one that Mr Nanva has raised. This is clearly outside the remit of the President's responsibilities. You are asking a question about something that happened before he was the President. As Mr Nanva has said, the question is out of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: I will turn now to things that are within the President's remit. Mr President, I've done a little bit of compiling of some statistics. As President, I believe you have called National Party members to order 92 times. You've called members of the Government to order 29 times. The Liberal Party members have been called to order 23 times, and the crossbench members have been called to order four times.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Point of order—

The Hon. WES FANG: I haven't even finished my question yet. I haven't even asked the question. How can you take a point of order?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: You're asking a question now.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I'm going to take a point of order because the question clearly is about—

The Hon. WES FANG: Can you stop running cover for him?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: —procedure and matters that occurred in the Chamber. It's very difficult to see how that could be about anything that is covered by the resolution that has set up the estimates Committee that deals with expenditure, matters of process and procedure of the department of The Legislature. He's asking about matters in the Chamber.

The CHAIR: I have a lot of sympathy with what you're saying, Mr Murphy—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: To the point of order: I'd like to ask the President whether he would confirm that I've complained to him that I have not been called to order enough times.

The PRESIDENT: The Clerk did just say to me he's surprised at the small number of points of order of the crossbench.

The CHAIR: Order! To the point of order: I have a lot of sympathy with what Mr Murphy has said, but I'll let Mr Fang conclude his question.

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you. Mr President, I accept that I was the highest number, at 40, of those calls to order. Removing me from the figures, the three Nats colleagues that I have have been called to order for the same amount of times as the Liberal and Labor Party members combined. They've got 25 members. Mr President, do you believe you are acting in an impartial manner in the Chamber?

The CHAIR: Order! That question is out of order. That has to do with the procedures in the Parliament, nothing to do with the expenditure. The points that have been made ad nauseam—

The Hon. WES FANG: The President might like to answer it.

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: He might not, either, and I would suggest that the question's out of order. I rule the question out of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: The President doesn't wish to answer? No.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Point of order: I haven't gone down this path yet, but the Legislative Council procedure or practice makes it very clear that, while the standing orders and the House procedure do not strictly apply, they do provide a guide for these proceedings. Obviously, we have standing orders around imputations and reflections. And, while they might not strictly apply and while there is wide latitude given during estimates, I would say we have well and truly exceeded that latitude, and these questions should now be pulled back, and questions should be asked that are within order.

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order: There's been conjecture and community concern around the way that the President took the role, the way in which he is conducting himself in the chair. And the matters themselves—

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Name them.

The Hon. WES FANG: —are, indeed, valid questions to be put to the President during estimates.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: To the point of order: I may simply say that, if these concerns are there, there are processes within the House to deal with them. It's not a matter for budget estimates.

The CHAIR: I highly concur, Mr Primrose. Mr Latham.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Thank you, Chair. To Mr Blunt, just to clarify what you mentioned earlier in answer to Ms Boyd. You received the material from ICAC and you wrote to Ms Boyd asking whether or not she'd done anything wrong. She said she hadn't. And there you closed the matter?

DAVID BLUNT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Did Ms Boyd produce any bills from the lawyers for the alternative legal action that she was claiming?

DAVID BLUNT: I don't have the paperwork with me or in front of me at the moment, but all I can indicate is that the acting chief executive and I were satisfied, on the basis of the material that was provided to us from the member, that there was no evidence of any breach of the member's entitlements rules.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Earlier Ms Boyd told the Committee that these electoral allowance claims reported to her political party, The Greens, relate to future legal action. So there couldn't have been any bills produced in the letter that was written back to you, could there.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Point of order: You'll no doubt think this is not a point of order, but I'm being verballed. It may assist. I did not say "future". I said "additional or other".

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Okay.

The CHAIR: That's not a point of order. I'm sorry, Ms Boyd.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Were these other legal matters accounted for in bills provided to you showing that what Ms Boyd reported to her political party in these electoral allowance claims, starting in the first half of 2019, related to the matter she's claiming, rather than the matter of Johnston versus The Greens?

DAVID BLUNT: As I said before, I don't have the paperwork in front of me. It's some eight or nine months ago that we conducted this administrative review of the matter and considered both the complaint and the material placed before us by the member. I'd have to take on notice anything more detailed than that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: You're referring to it as a review rather than an investigation. A proper investigation would ask for the relevant bills and clear up the matter, wouldn't it?

DAVID BLUNT: That's why I quite deliberately used the terminology "administrative review", because neither the acting chief executive or myself have the authority in relation to a complaint about members' misuse of entitlements to do anything more than conduct an administrative review. That, indeed, is one of the reasons why the role of Independent Complaints Officer was established—to provide for somebody who does have the authority to conduct such investigations of matters involving the misuse of entitlements that are something less than corrupt conduct.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So there's been no investigation of this matter as such, and the ICO would say, wouldn't she, that it happened too far back and it's outside of her jurisdiction because it goes back to the first half of 2019?

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: Mr Latham, if that's the question to the officials, you can't ask an opinion of the officials.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm asking for the remit of the—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Mr Latham, I'm happy for you to look at my accounts. You can look at all of my bills.

The CHAIR: Order!

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: You can look at all of my accounts. I have nothing—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm asking for the remit of the ICO. Can the ICO investigate this?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Oh, my God. Feel free. You can look at every bank account.

DAVID BLUNT: Mr Latham, the resolution establishing the Independent Complaints Officer clearly indicates that only matters that occurred after the date of the establishment of the office are able to be investigated.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: So there was a review but no investigation. The ICO has no remit.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm happy to voluntarily have an investigation.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In the review, what weight did you give to the fact that these expenditures coincide with the date of *Johnston v The Greens*?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Which one? The first, the second, the third, the fourth or the fifth court case I've been subjected to?

The CHAIR: Order! Ms Boyd, please.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: It couldn't have been mere coincidence that these expenditure claims helping with taxation matters coincide perfectly with *Johnston v The Greens*, the judgement delivered on 6 March 2019. Isn't that right?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Five cases. Five bits of litigation. Five years.

The CHAIR: Order!

DAVID BLUNT: Once again I don't have the paperwork in front of me but I can indicate that, having sought a response from the member, having considered the response that was provided, we came to the conclusion there was no evidence of any misuse of entitlements.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: God forbid you be a woman and preselected.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Mr Blunt, have you looked at the paperwork recently in response to other concerns raised about this matter?

DAVID BLUNT: Yes, I've reviewed the email communication that we received from the member. I haven't reviewed the attachments. But, at the time, all the material that was put before us was considered.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Are those attachments the relevant bills that coincide with these electoral allowances expenditures claim?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm happy to give them to you, Mr Latham. They're not a secret.

DAVID BLUNT: My recollection is that the attachments were—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Hundreds of thousands of dollars of legal bills.

DAVID BLUNT: —judgements from the Supreme Court.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Judgements? Not bills? Not expenses?

DAVID BLUNT: I would be deeply uncomfortable answering any of these questions without the release from my obligations of confidentiality to all members in relation to these such matters, had it not been for the member's explicit communications earlier in the hearing to release me from that obligation so I can say that, yes, the attached material was judgements from the Supreme Court.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Not bills? That's what I'm asking. Not bills?

DAVID BLUNT: No, I can't recall seeing any bills as such—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Not invoices?

UNCORRECTED

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, judgements talking about these bullying men who are attacking me in court.

The CHAIR: Order! Ms Boyd, please.

DAVID BLUNT: —just judgements from the Supreme Court which were attached to the explanation from the member.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Which case did that relate to?

DAVID BLUNT: I can't recall. That's eight months ago.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The fourth one.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But you've reviewed it in recent times.

DAVID BLUNT: Not the attachments—just the email from the member.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The judgement said that those claims were false.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And what weight did you give to the fact that David Shoebridge also made these claims at exactly the same time, using exactly the same lawyers for the exact same amount?

DAVID BLUNT: I gave no weight to that matter whatsoever.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: That wasn't considered by you at all? That wasn't put to you in the correspondence from Ms Boyd?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Where do you even get it from? His legal fees were \$5,000 in that case.

DAVID BLUNT: As I understand, that was not part of the—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Point of order: I can't hear the answer because of the interjections and the—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Point of order: This has gone on long enough.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —gendered harassment of me.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: This has nothing to do with The Legislature expenses. This is ridiculous that we're allowing it to continue to go on. I have said that I will give all of my information to Mr Latham. He is so obsessed with me. He wants to see all my bank accounts and all of my bills. I'm very happy to give it to him, if that makes him happy.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Point of order: I take offence to that. I have got no obsession at all. I've received complaints from constituents—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How many speeches and time have you—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —providing documentation—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —spent so far?

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —constituents who belong to Ms Boyd's political party. That's deeply offensive to say that I'm obsessed. I'm acting on the evidence provided to me—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How many minutes of—

The CHAIR: Order! I've heard enough.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: —by constituents that are very concerned about the matter.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: —privileged time are you going to use on me?

The CHAIR: We are now turning to questions from Ms Boyd.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will ask one for my honourable friend who was in here a moment ago, who wanted to know if there are any moves to put solar panels on this building.

MARK WEBB: We have solar panels on this building on level 13 already. Obviously, with the passing of the legislative framework around net zero by 2050, we're about to kick off a piece of work to look at where we're at in terms of things like emissions to make sure that we can both meet and, hopefully, be ahead of the various interim targets that there are between now and 2050. That will include reviewing the solar panels, which are over 10 years old at this point. It's entirely possible that there are more efficient options available to us that weren't back then, so that'll form part of our review that we're undertaking. As you know, with the 50 per cent

UNCORRECTED

reductions by 2030, 70 per cent by 2035 and then net zero by 2050, we need to have a plan in place for all of that. This review will help set up what we can do in the short term. I have a bunch of stuff I can talk about that we're doing at a more micro level. But, as you can imagine, getting to the point where we're at zero emissions requires investment in infrastructure in the building as well, so that's what this next piece of work is to do: What investment is required and over what time frame to meet or exceed those targets?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I don't know how to work this into a question, so maybe I'll just do it as a statement. I just wanted to thank you, Mr Blunt, for your responses in invitation to my comments that you clarify issues in relation to these unfair attacks. I will, for everyone's benefit, point out that, of the five harassing court cases I've been subjected to for my preselection five years ago, on which I've spent almost \$200,000 defending myself, in that last judgement, these scurrilous claims were raised about my supposed misuse of entitlements—again, based on this complete misunderstanding of the idea that I would use electoral entitlements for a case that occurred before my election. The judge not only threw out that latest case from these pests who have been suing me for some time but also commented on that issue and said how ridiculous it was. Of course, I had not misused my entitlements in any way. To clarify that, hopefully that will put an end to this particular line of harassment and bullying from Mr Latham that I've been subjected to now for five years.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Point of order—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If I could also ask—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: There's no harassment or bullying. I have acted on documented complaints raised by constituents. It's not harassment to ask questions about what has been put to me as a terrible rort of public money.

The CHAIR: My apologies, Mr Latham—

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: In Boydland, everything is bullying.

The CHAIR: —I was in the middle of getting some advice—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, not like you. You're so, "Oh, I've got harassed."

The CHAIR: —from the secretariat. I didn't hear the exchange. I was getting some advice from the secretariat on members being disorderly in these hearings.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I'm raising a point of order.

The CHAIR: I missed the disorder while I was doing that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I'm going to move on to another question anyway.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In relation to something a lot more pedestrian—the food that we have in our cafes and restaurants—it is often raised with me that there seems to be a little bit of an ad hoc approach to the types of meals that we get on those menus. People who have certain dietary requirements or medical issues can find it hard to know whether or not they're going to get a meal of their option in the cafe, for instance. Is there a set of guidelines for how those menus get produced, and has any thought been given to maybe a survey of everyone in the precinct to see who has the main dietary requirements, for instance?

The PRESIDENT: I will throw to Mr Webb for specific comments on this particular issue but know that this is something that we are very conscious of and that the catering department, through DPS, is always trying to ensure that there are options available for everybody. It's clearly something that is a challenge and sometimes not possible to tick all the boxes that are necessary, particularly when you've got, for example, only five options of hot food on each day. Nonetheless, we are very conscious of the issue and it's something that we're committed to addressing. I'll throw to Mr Webb for further specifics on the issue.

MARK WEBB: In the broad categories—things like vegetarian, vegan and gluten free, for instance—we do make sure that there are always options in the cafe and in the restaurant. But we do recognise there are people with very specific requirements that don't always get captured by those broader options. So we do really encourage people to come and have a talk to catering when they have either very specific allergies or allergies more broadly. We can usually provide a version of various options that avoids the allergy or whatnot. We do encourage that to happen. In terms of surveying people, yes, we are absolutely happy to do that. I know the whole Committee reads Parli-News end to end—from the start to the very end.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Always.

UNCORRECTED

MARK WEBB: You would have seen in the last Parli-News that we did a soup survey. That's the start of our process of engaging with people to see what options they'd like to see in the cafe.

The PRESIDENT: It was a soupçon, if you will.

MARK WEBB: We will continue that work and are happy to include in that options around what restrictions and things we should be building into our standard menu.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand the Jubilee Room has been used for at least one estimates this round, but not for—

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: We have already asked.

The PRESIDENT: Is there a specific—when is it going to be open again?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Have we dealt with the mould issue?

The PRESIDENT: Please address the mould issue.

MARK WEBB: Yes, we have dealt with the mould issue. One of the other issues that you might recall that was affecting the Jubilee Room was that our water guttering system was backing up and water was getting into the Jubilee Room, which was causing some of the mould issues. We did a series of changes to address that. Unfortunately, our ability to test a deluge is relatively limited and so we had to wait for there to be another deluge to see if those measures worked. There was another deluge about a week and a half ago. I can say the measures we put in place mostly worked. It was significantly less, but there was some water that still got into the Jubilee Room, so we're making some further adjustments at the moment to make sure the conditions that caused the mould in the first place don't reoccur.

It is something that we're very conscious of. We're very conscious of the value of the material that's in the Jubilee Room as well as its use generally. As we mentioned earlier, the main reason it is offline for these estimates is so we can keep going with the Rum Hospital restorations. The room is ready to use, as evidenced by the one hearing that we had but, of course, we can't do any work in the Rum Hospital while there's a committee hearing going on. In order to make sure we met the early April deadline, we sought and got the indulgence of the estimates committees to use the Preston Stanley Room instead. But from next estimates onwards, it will be back to normal operation.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Presumably in the lead-up to the coming budget, you're looking at opportunities to review the resourcing you have currently and what the gaps are at the moment. Can you shed any light as to what your priorities might be based on current resourcing for the future bids?

The PRESIDENT: While I won't—and Mr Webb may want to speak more to this—speak to specific MPPs or PTAs that we're putting in for consideration via the Treasurer and the finance Minister, I will talk about a number of general areas of focus, which we believe need to be considered over the next few years. The first is that there's simply not enough space for committees and for meeting rooms. When that's combined with the fact that there's space at the back of the building—what's it called?

MARK WEBB: The southern pavilion.

The PRESIDENT: The southern pavilion could provide a new entrance, for example, for school students, which would be a much safer entrance for them rather than standing out on Macquarie Street and so forth, and potentially a more culturally appropriate entrance for Aboriginal people. Also, that would provide a lot more space for the committee system. That whole project is something that we're looking at needing to progress at some stage over the next few years. I'm happy to talk to the Committee about that in further detail, if you wish, but that's the first point. I have a view that's shared by a number of others that the AV requirements within the theatre aren't up to where they should be for the largest State Parliament in the nation, the oldest Parliament in the country. That's certainly somewhere where I believe that we should be focusing as well. Obviously, accessibility remains an ongoing issue. We are looking now at what needs to happen in terms of level two and the gym, also level nine and the garden and access to the garden, but there will be ongoing accessibility requirements that will continue to come up as the Parliament considers these issues. Mr Webb, you might like to continue to talk about other issues that I may have missed.

MARK WEBB: You pointed to where the gaps are. Broadly, we will be continuing to seek ongoing money where we have in the past for both House departments and for the Hansard team to deal with the current volume of activity that happens. That's been approved in the past and we'll continue that moving forward. I mentioned cybersecurity previously. An investment in cybersecurity is another area where we're putting things forward. I would say in IT more generally, the information technology costs are far outstripping our budget at the moment. Data volumes are going up et cetera, so we are looking at that as well.

UNCORRECTED

The PRESIDENT: There's another issue—I might just jump back in, if that's all right—that I've just remembered. I want to talk about the CEE team, the Communications, Education and Engagement team, who do an outstanding job—absolutely outstanding—in engaging with the public, both within Sydney and regionally. They do an extremely good job. But we had last week a commitment by NESA that there'll be a revised and updated draft of the history year 7 to 10 syllabus, which will make Australia: Making a Nation a mandatory subject. That's a subject that focuses on federation, the Legislature, the Constitution and so forth. What that will likely mean is that we will have a far greater engagement with schools and students across this State.

Already the CEE team is accredited to teach teachers and provide teachers with training and support for some of their accredited subjects, particularly in Legal Studies and so on, but this is likely to mean a significant uptick in terms of the number of students and schools who engage with the Parliament. It's extremely exciting. It's something that the CEE team has been working on for a long time. We expect, however, if that happens and if there is a significant uplift in engagement, that there may need to be more support provided in order to accommodate that. Julie will be happy that I addressed that.

MARK WEBB: Yes. Apart from that, we've covered cybersecurity and IT. The other bids are smaller, more specific bids around particular gaps where our staffing is at. For instance, the size of the Parliament has grown over the last few years and so payroll is now bigger than it's ever been and it's now straining the limits of how far the current payroll team can work, so we're looking at some small bids to try to redress some of those issues as well. Broadly speaking, they're the broad ones that we've put through. Could I just echo the President's comments about the CEE team. This is an area—I think, Mr Latham, you chaired a committee that looked at these curriculum issues that a couple of my staff came and gave evidence to, with the need for these subjects to be mandatory. We are very pleased with this outcome, and we do think it is going to provide wonderful opportunities for us into the future to engage with schools better. But, David, you wanted to—

DAVID BLUNT: If I could just add, from the Department of the Legislative Council perspective, there's one issue that I think Mark has covered off in relation to ongoing workload issues where we were successful in obtaining funding for a period of time to support the committee office and its ability to provide all the support that you require with your committee work. We're hoping to see that become ongoing rather than just year by year. There's a matter that is already on the public record via a resolution of the House in relation to the Regulation Committee and its new role that it is trialling this year. That does require resources.

Finally, if I can circle back to something I mentioned in answer to a question earlier, the inquiry that is before the Privileges Committee at the moment examining the new draft regulation concerning the disclosure of interests by members—that really is a matter that I suggest that all members should be turning their minds to and giving their attention to because it is a fundamentally different system that is provided for in that new regulation. That will also involve the establishment of a system of online reporting in real time, and that will cost some money. So there is a bid in for that as well.

The PRESIDENT: Was there anything specific that you think we should be focusing on, Mr Nanva?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: No, all of those are very worthy goals.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I've just got a couple of quick questions about the Cabcharges that are available for staff after 8.00 p.m. An issue has been raised where staff can't get the Cabcharges until 8.00 p.m. Would it be possible for them to be made available at the commencement of the dinner break at 6.30 p.m., because that's a period in which—after 8.00 p.m. staff are often busy and haven't been able to make arrangements to get down and get them, on the basis that they're then only able to be used after 8.00 p.m. in line with the guidelines. Is that something that can be looked at?

The PRESIDENT: That's a DPS thing—or is it Department of LC?

DAVID BLUNT: Yes, I think your staff obtain those Cabcharges from my team in the Procedure Office, and we just have to make sure that we're acquitting our responsibilities under the relevant award. Access to those Cabcharges to staff is an award condition and it is a condition that they're available for use after 8.00 p.m. Provided we can acquit that we're fulfilling our responsibilities, then I'm certainly happy to take that suggestion on notice.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I understand ministerial staffers have access to an Uber account that they can all use. Has any thought been put into whether it's possible to do that? That might make it easier to track when it's used, also.

MARK WEBB: That's a really great question. We've actually just started trialling something with Uber for our IT team who have to stay after hours, just to test to see whether it can work in the broader context. I haven't shared the results of that with the Clerk yet, but it is certainly something that we could look into.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Given that it is an award entitlement, I understand it's only available to LC staff. Is that right? It's not available to lower House staff—or is it?

DAVID BLUNT: I'd have to take that on notice.

The PRESIDENT: We'll have to take that on notice, Mr Murphy.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: If the reasoning behind it is about safety and the difficulty travelling at that time of night, then, if you're taking it on notice, could you explain if it isn't available to lower House staff, why not?

The PRESIDENT: We may not be able to explain why not, but we're happy to provide an explanation that is provided to us why not. Obviously, your fundamental point is valid. If that is the case, then that's a perfectly reasonable request.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: They're the only questions I have.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Mr President, you've already outlined a number of technology projects that are being proposed for the near future. Are there any additional ones that you can mention to us?

The PRESIDENT: There is. There's one that I did briefly want to touch on and Mr Webb might be able to add a little bit more detail, and that's around, basically, the payroll system and the SAP system. At the moment it's being held together with band-aids and baling wires—literally add-on and add-on and so on. If it doesn't get upgraded, then, frankly, no-one in this room will get paid within not too many months, but we're delighted to say that it is being upgraded and that the commitment, the extra funding that was given will ensure that that happens and that we're on track to do so appropriately, I believe, but Mr Webb might have some further comments on that.

MARK WEBB: Yes. First thing I'd say is I wish I had band-aids to hold it together. That would be marvellous. The system is very much at the end of life, well over 20 years old. The work on design is happening this year, and we'll be implementing it next year, which is fortunate because, I believe, the support arrangements for our existing system completely run out in 2026. So we will be working on it. Other than that and to Mr Murphy's comment before, the other major forward program is around the PIMS system, the Parliament information management system, and making sure that we are switching to a more reliable—the first version of that was built on premise and is probably a little shaky, so putting that into a more reliable, robust environment and then building out extra functions that will allow for things like members' portals is probably the other big direction, besides all of the—I think the President mentioned earlier a laptop replacement is coming up for LC members. We're probably a year out from having to replace printers again. So there's a rolling infrastructure asset upgrade process that's going on as well.

I just mention—because I know we're at the end of time—about 60 per cent of members have switched over to the new SharePoint process, rather than the shared drive. We've had really fantastic feedback from people. We've been making adjustments as we go on that basis. I know we've still got some more to go through, but I know the digital transformation team has wanted me to express their thanks for everyone's participation in that. I recognise we've still got quite a few members to get through, but we're over the halfway mark, which is fantastic.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Webb, and thank you to you, Mr President, and all the officials that have taken the time today to be here. I know there have been many questions taken on notice. The Committee's secretariat will be in touch with you about them and any supplementary questions. Thank you very much today. We will see you in the next edition.

The PRESIDENT: Lovely. Thank you all very much.

(The President withdrew.)

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.