

# **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 1**

**Tuesday 14 September 1999**

**Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area**

## **THE LEGISLATURE**

**The Committee met at 7.30 p.m.**

### **MEMBERS**

Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile (Chair)

The Hon. Patricia Forsythe  
The Hon. A. B. Kelly  
The Hon. I. M. McDonald

The Hon. P. T. Primrose  
The Hon. J. M. Samios  
The Hon. Dr P. Wong

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### **PRESENT**

**The Hon. Meredith Burgmann**, *President of the Legislative Council*

#### **The Legislature**

**Ms L. Lovelock**, *Acting Clerk of the Parliaments*

**Mr G. McGill**, *Financial Controller*

**Mr S. Bennett**, *Manager, Parliamentary Building Services*

**Mr R. Brian**, *Parliamentary Librarian*

**Mr D. Draper**, *Manager, Food and Beverage Services*

**Mr M. Faulkner**, *Acting Editor of Debates*

**Ms M. Ganesan**, *Acting Manager, Parliamentary Information Technology Services*

**Mr G. Spindler**, *Acting Manager, Education and Community Relations*

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<1> **CHAIR:** Madam President, we welcome you and the officers attending. We especially thank the financial controller for his attendance and co-operation. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the portfolio area of The Legislature. Before questions commence, some procedural matters need to be dealt with.

Members of the media should be aware that Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council states that any evidence given before this Committee and any documents presented to the Committee which have not yet been tabled in Parliament "may not, except with the permission of the Committee, be disclosed or published by any Member of such Committee or by any other person". Accordingly, the Committee has resolved in this regard to authorise the media to broadcast sound and video excerpts of its public hearings held today. The Committee's resolution conforms with the guidelines governing the broadcast of proceedings adopted by the Legislative Council on 11 October 1994. The attendant on duty has copies of the guidelines.

I emphasise that only members of the Committee and the witnesses before them may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery are not considered to be part of the proceedings and therefore may not be included in sound and video broadcasts. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee, as with reporting the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament, members of the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation is placed on anything that is said before the Committee.

While there has been provision in previous years' budget estimates resolutions for members of a committee and substitute members to refer directly to their own staff at any time, there is no such provision in the current resolution. Members and their staff are therefore advised that any messages should be delivered through the attendant on duty or the committee clerks. For the benefit of members and Hansard I ask departmental officers to identify themselves by name, position and department or agency before answering each question.

I will now outline the proposed allocations of time agreed to for questioning. As a general guide, the Opposition will have 30 minutes and there will be 15 minutes for Dr Wong and 15 minutes for me. If members have further questions the same allocation will apply in the second hour of hearings. I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Madam President, I refer to page 1-7 of Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1. Under the Operating Statement for the Legislative Council, Retained Revenue, Other revenue, the figure of \$37,000 in 1998-99 was revised to \$57,000. Can you account for the \$20,000 difference in the figures?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes. The \$37,000 is the amount that was estimated in the budget process last year. The \$57,000 is the revised budget amount which was estimated again three months before the end of the budget period. I am told that the \$20,000 difference is explained by some equipment being sold.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Do you know what that equipment was?

**The PRESIDENT:** It involved the trade-in of computers and members' old photocopiers when the upgrading occurred.

**The Hon. A. B. KELLY:** So that is actually an increase in revenue?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is an increase on what was estimated at the beginning of the year.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Why is there a huge increase, \$378,000, in the allocation budgeted for 1999-2000?

**The PRESIDENT:** We have decided to charge Ministers rent for their offices. There is an ongoing program of looking at ways in which rent can be charged for people who are not actually members of Parliament but use this building. So that is an increase in revenue.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** And that would include the Premier?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes, it certainly includes the Premier.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I refer you to page 1-9, dealing with the Legislative Assembly, Retained Revenue.

**The PRESIDENT:** I do not answer questions on the Assembly. The Speaker would get very cranky if I did.

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**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Is the Speaker here tonight?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. This is a Legislative Council estimates committee.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Of your own knowledge, you do not have any understanding about the Speaker's figures?

**The PRESIDENT:** No.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I refer to Budget paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 1-6. Why are the maintenance costs for the 1999-2000 budget for the Legislative Council only \$2,000, when the proposed budget for maintenance in 1998-99 was \$11,000 and the revised estimate climbed to \$26,000?

**The PRESIDENT:** The estimate was \$11,000. The revised estimate, which happened three months before the end of the budget period, did go up to \$26,000. That was because of the changes to the room next door, room 812; it was to do with the committees. However, because that was a revised estimate it did not actually end up that much. So, although that was what we estimated, it did not end up being \$26,000. The reason that only \$2,000 is estimated for the following year is that we are not expecting to have to do the level of work which we have done in the past few years.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Mr Chairman, may I seek clarification. As I understand it, this is a legislative estimates committee. May I ask on what basis we only deal with the Legislative Council, and not the Legislative Assembly? If we only deal with the Legislative Council, is it proposed that we can put other questions on notice?

**CHAIR:** I do not think there is anything to stop members putting questions on notice. It will then be up to the Speaker whether he answers them.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** On what basis are we only dealing with the Legislative Council?

**CHAIR:** We cannot compel the Speaker to attend the Legislative Council estimates committee hearings.

**Mr SAMIOS:** As a matter of good grace, for example, the Premier has attended these meetings.

**CHAIR:** That was in relation to a portfolio area.

**The PRESIDENT:** It is the same issue that we dealt with in the privilege and ethics committee some years ago about whether Mr Greg McGill, the financial controller, can attend these hearings, in that there is some dispute as to whether he is a joint officer or a Legislative Assembly officer. That has been solved in the way in which things are always solved in this place: as a matter of good sense, he gives me advice but does not answer directly to questions asked by the members.

**CHAIR:** As well, the Premier attended following the issue of a summons to him. A question could be asked of the President, and she could ask the financial controller whether he wishes to advise the President, if there is a simple answer. If the question relates to joint services there may not be a simple answer.

**The PRESIDENT:** Joint services are fine, but I cannot answer questions in relation to the Legislative

Assembly.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Earlier in one of your answers an issue was raised about rent being struck for people who use the facilities. Does that mean that it is intended that the media who use the facilities on level 6 will have to pay rent?

**The PRESIDENT:** My understanding is that in other parliaments, and particularly at the Federal level, the media is charged rent. Certainly that is an issue which has been under debate for three or four years now. I first remember it being raised four years ago.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Is that under discussion at the moment?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is always under discussion, yes.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Are any proposals currently before the Government or the Parliament.

**The PRESIDENT:** Not that I know of. But it is continually under discussion.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** What was the total cost of the opening of Parliament on 7 September?

**The PRESIDENT:** As you can imagine, because it is very recent, only estimates are available. The total estimated cost of the opening on 7 September was \$15,830. The total cost of the last opening of Parliament in 1997 was \$66,192. However, this was reduced by a \$25,000 sponsorship from Qantas and the write-off of \$7,670 from the catering costs by the House Committee, leaving a cost of \$33,522. The cost of the previous opening, in 1994, was \$27,977. So it is approximately half the cost of the previous openings.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Do you have an estimate of the number of people who attended the opening in September?

**The PRESIDENT:** There were more than 400 guests.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** As opposed to how many at the previous opening?

**The PRESIDENT:** My understanding is that at the last opening of Parliament there were more than 800 guests. But that was reduced by not inviting all the public service heads and all the vice-chancellors, and all the diplomatic corps, but doing it on a roster system, as had happened at previous Parliament openings.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** After you assumed your position as President, did you conduct a stocktake of furniture, glassware, silverware and the artworks in the President's office and dining room?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am informed that there was a stocktake. I did not realise a stocktake had been taken, but I am informed that our very efficient Clerks have done that.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Including a stocktake of the artworks?

**The PRESIDENT:** Absolutely, yes.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Do you have any idea of the value of the artworks?

**The PRESIDENT:** The art on the walls, like most of the offices in Parliament, is the property of the New South Wales Art Gallery.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Not all of them?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. The artworks in some offices, such as the Speaker's office and the Premier's

office, are the property of and on loan from the Art Gallery of New South Wales. I am informed that the Queen's portrait, which was not considered a work of art, is actually the property of The Legislature.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Although, the Queen's portrait was done by Mrs McGregor, who was regarded as an artist?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is a print. Are you referring to the large Queen's portrait in the fountain court area?

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Yes.

**The PRESIDENT:** It is still there. The Queen's portrait in my room was a relatively inexpensive print, and it belongs to The Legislature.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** If there were 400 people at the recent opening of Parliament, compared to about 800 at the previous opening, has a per-head costing been worked out to compare the cost of this opening and the last opening? I have in mind in particular the afternoon tea.

**The PRESIDENT:** The cost of the catering would reflect 1999 prices. I am informed that it was a little scaled down from the afternoon tea of 1997 but not greatly.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Overall, what was the cost on a per-head basis of this opening compared with the cost of the previous opening, based on the number of people who participated or attended?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am told that food and beverages cost \$22,670 in 1997, and the estimated expenditure in 1999 was \$14,327. If one takes into account inflation, that is about half the cost of the opening two years ago.

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**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Is funding earmarked by The Legislature and the Government in the budget for the possible visit to Australia of the Queen next March? One assumes that the Queen will visit New South Wales. Is there any money in the budget set aside for that? What do you consider would be the role of the President during that visit?

**The PRESIDENT:** We do not set aside specific amounts for specific visits. Visits to the Parliament, such as the visit by the Crown Prince of Thailand, come at fairly regular intervals. Nothing is specifically set aside. It is not exactly to do with estimates, but my role in respect of a visit by the Queen will be exactly my role in respect of the Governor: polite and dignified.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** So you will be there to meet the Queen?

**The PRESIDENT:** If my role requires that, that is where I will be.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Madam President, I ask you about the funding that is allocated to supply accommodation that will meet the occupational health and safety requirements of the five staff members currently employed by The Legislature. What budgeting is allowed there?

**The PRESIDENT:** Could I seek clarification? Which five staff members?

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Is it five staff members that you have in your office?

**The PRESIDENT:** In the President's office?

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Yes.

**The PRESIDENT:** No, there are four.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** The question is: What funding is allocated to supply accommodation that will meet the occupational health and safety requirements of those four staff members?

**The PRESIDENT:** No funding is set aside. There are serious occupational health and safety issues for the four staff. One member of staff is now in a small, windowless room next to the bathroom, a room that used to be a bedroom for previous Presidents but which I have had to convert into an office. One member of staff is in the entryway to the dining room. When the dining room is being used for the functions of other people, which happens a lot because I have an open-door policy on the dining room—

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** For everyone?

**The PRESIDENT:** For everyone who undertakes to accompany their guests at all times. It is exactly the same rule as applied in the Parliamentary Dining Room: you must be with your guests at all times. My door is open to anyone who undertakes to abide by that rule, and it will continue to be open to them. That is a real problem for that office staff person because, when there is a function in the office, the staff are frequently used as servants. Guests do ask for toilet rolls. They do ask, "Why has the dinner not come?" or say, "My meal is cold." It is very disruptive. Then there is a small room that is part of the corridor. In that tiny room I have two staff. That accommodation is unsatisfactory, and they are fairly cranky about it. It means that documents go missing.

**The Hon. A. B. KELLY:** Is that the disabled access corridor?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is the disabled access ramp, which was built by a previous President. It is the problem of having a big President's office and no office space at all. It is a problem of working in an old building and trying to do a modern job. We are trying to work our way through it, but there is no real answer.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Was the reason for the transfer of Legislative Council members from level 12 to level 11 also for occupational health and safety reasons?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes, and also for practical reasons. As we all know, Legislative Assembly members were there for a small amount of the year with totally empty secretaries rooms.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** What sort of occupational health and safety issues were raised that led to that transfer?

**The PRESIDENT:** It was to do with lack of privacy, insufficient work space, and I understand open electrical cords and so on going from one computer to another.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Given those reasons, and given that you have just referred to a windowless room in your own office, where does that leave members of the press gallery who are working in the space allocated to them on level 6? Is there any proposal to improve their conditions?

**The PRESIDENT:** If they bring their problems to me, I will discuss them with the Speaker. I seriously believe in the right of staff members and people working in this building to have good working facilities. I am very happy to talk to them about that.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** What was the total cost of the transfer from level 12 to level 11 in Parliament House?

**The PRESIDENT:** The total cost was \$662,039.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** After members were relocated from level 12 to level 11, and due to the fact that after the election a number of offices to which members had been moved had to be converted to accommodate the additional staff for crossbenchers and Independents, what was the cost of converting offices at that time?

**The PRESIDENT:** It was \$139,989.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** How much of the original \$600,000 of that work had to be, in a sense, wasted in the redesign of some of the offices to accommodate the additional staff?

**The PRESIDENT:** Quite seriously, it would be hard to answer that question because some of the changes that were made did not undo any of the work that previously had been done. In fact, some of the work that I can think of did not necessarily undo previous work. You want to know how much of that \$139,989 worth of work actually undid some of the previous work?

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Yes.

**The PRESIDENT:** I will take that question on notice.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Is there money in the budget to relocate the One Nation member from level 9 to level 11?

**The PRESIDENT:** Nothing in Parliament House can occur unless the two Presiding Officers agree. There is an element of disagreement in our discussions about the member's office facilities. My belief is that it can be solved by simply taking down part of the wall of the office that he is already in, and he would be happy with that. However, the Speaker has taken the view that the member should not be on that floor at all. So we are trying to find facilities for him upstairs. It is a structural problem in this place: you have two CEOs, and, if they disagree nothing happens. As the member knows, it took us 3½ years to get to level 11.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I do not know whether you can answer for the Legislative Assembly, but how many members' offices still have the original wallpaper from the early 1980s? When is it proposed that that will be replaced?

**The PRESIDENT:** Could I take that on notice?

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Absolutely.

**The PRESIDENT:** It is a serious question?

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** It is a serious question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Some of the wallpaper is horrible.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Given that the cost to government of the court cases *Egan v Willis* in 1996, *Egan v Willis* in 1998, and *Egan v Chadwick and others* in 1999 was \$308,717.99, what were the additional costs to the President? In that regard, might I refer to the reply notice dated 23 June 1999 saying that the costs of the President of the Legislative Council are not yet known, and that this is a matter for the Legislative Council. I pass that notice to you so that you might see that statement at the bottom of the document.

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**The PRESIDENT:** The amount paid out by the Legislative Council in legal fees during 1998-99 relating to the *Egan v Willis* and *Egan v Chadwick* matters was \$100,076. I do not think that the President is separately represented. The Legislative Council pays the President's court costs, and those of the Clerks and the Usher of the Black Rod, who was, of course, charged with assault.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** There was reference in the newspapers on the weekend to the offices of various members of Parliament being swept for bugs. Have the offices of members of the Legislative Council been swept for bugs and, if so, how many?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am assured by the Parliamentary Building Services manager that none has. The first inkling I had of this matter was when a reporter came to ask me whether my office had been bugged. I

said that I have a totally transparent policy, and that people are welcome to know about everything I have done—which they do.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I know that you cannot give me precise details about security arrangements; however, this is a serious issue relating to the protection and security of members. What measures are in place to ensure that members' offices are secure?

**The PRESIDENT:** If members request security measures, such as a sweep for bugs, the Parliamentary Building Services manager assures me that we have the full facilities to do that.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Most of us who use the car park are frustrated by the growth in the number of designated car spaces. In total how many designated car spaces are there in this Parliament compared to the number in the previous Parliament?

**The PRESIDENT:** I will take that question on notice. Because only office holders get a designated car space, the suggestion is there has been a slight growth in office holders. That might be part of the problem.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** You will take that question on notice?

**The PRESIDENT:** Definitely.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Does the Legislative Council have a property insurance policy to cover damage to antique furniture and paintings?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes, through the Treasury managed fund.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Do you have any idea what the premiums cost the Legislative Council?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is a whole-of-Parliament premium, which also includes the property in electorate offices.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Has there been any attempt to divide the cost of the premium?

**The PRESIDENT:** No, it is a whole-of-Parliament cost.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** What is that cost?

**The PRESIDENT:** I will take that question on notice.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** To whom would the bill be sent in the event of a claim, and who would be responsible for approving the payment?

**The PRESIDENT:** For an art work?

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Yes, or an antique.

**The PRESIDENT:** It would go through the office of the Manager of Parliamentary Building Services.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** What is the seating capacity of the President's dining room?

**The PRESIDENT:** My understanding is that it is 32, but the Food and Beverage Services manager prefers it to be 30.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** At times even 28 is regarded as more comfortable.

**The PRESIDENT:** I think 28 is the appropriate number.



**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** How many matching antique balloon-back chairs are available for use there?

**The PRESIDENT:** There are 28 matching balloon-back chairs.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** My colleague the Hon. J. M. Samios asked about antique chairs. When you say 28, are you referring to both antique and replica chairs?

**The PRESIDENT:** That number includes antique and replica chairs.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** When there are 32 members, where do the other four chairs come from?

**The PRESIDENT:** What happens in the President's office—and I feel this has confused some people—is that when a leaf or two leaves of the table are taken out to make it suitable for either a small or not so large gathering, the leaf or leaves are put in my office, which is sometimes a bit of a chore, and the extra chairs are put in various offices where they are out of the way and do not look unsightly. If there is a function for 28, the other four chairs would be put sometimes in my office or sometimes out near the bathroom. They are put in different places. Sometimes we get chairs from the Speaker's suite and sometimes we lend chairs to the Speaker.

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** How much money was spent in 1998-99 on study assistance for permanent employees of the Legislature?

**The PRESIDENT:** Are you referring to page 1-3?

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** Was study assistance for tuition fees for employees previously available and, if so, why was it discontinued?

**The PRESIDENT:** That is probably a reference to the fact that study assistance is available when requested by staff members.

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** Is that still available?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is still available. However, if there are no staff members doing extra study and they do not request it, it does not appear as a budget item.

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** Is it still available?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is still available. From time to time the Legislative Council newsletter lets people know that it is available.

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** Should a general purpose standing committee accept a reference to examine persons, papers and records, make inspections within the State, publish submissions received and evidence taken, and report its proceedings and recommendations, what resources would be made available to it to complete these tasks?

**The PRESIDENT:** There is an intention that a specialist senior project officer be employed on a temporary basis for each inquiry. Anna McNicol's recent appointment to the position of committee director means that one of the most senior and most competent committee directors has been assigned to the general purpose standing committees in a co-ordinating role for those more temporary positions.

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** Are those resources equivalent to the resources provided to parliamentary standing committees such as Social Issues, Law and Justice and State Development?

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**The PRESIDENT:** I will take that on notice because it requires a complex answer. Staffing is not

exactly the same, but once we appoint Anna McNicol other senior project officers will be appointed.

**The Hon. Dr P. WONG:** Did you recently approve the establishment of the General Purpose Standing Committee secretariat?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes. I table my letter to the Treasurer asking for funding.

**Document tabled.**

**CHAIR:** What steps are taken to publicise the fact that Parliament is open to the public, such as advertising, or the provision of an attendant at the main entrance? I have often noticed visitors confused at the main entrance as to whether they can enter Parliament. I have invited them in. There is no face of the Parliament outside the building. In fact, security guards are the first people visitors meet and they do not usually give visitors any information. The attendants are further inside the building.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am happy to answer that excellent question because Parliament does not advertise. Parliament House has a brass plaque which states that visitors are welcome and the hours the Parliament is open. I love the fact that Parliament is very open and that schoolchildren are always walking around.

I totally agree with you that the demeanour of some of the security guards makes it quite uninviting. On occasions I have spoken to the security manager about that matter. One of the problems is that security is contracted out without an understanding of Parliament House being a public building.

I had complaints from women members of staff that they were being improperly approached by the officers. I also had a complaint from Aboriginal women who were bringing in a giant Aboriginal flag to decorate the Jubilee Room during a function being held by the Attorney General and the Minister for Community Services. The security guards tried to take the flag from them because they said it was not a flag recognised by the New South Wales Government. I agree that there has been a problem with a lack of welcome at the entrance. We are trying to address that by training security staff better.

**CHAIR:** I know there is a shortage of funds for staff but perhaps an attendant could stand at the front fence.

**The PRESIDENT:** Or just a sign saying "Public welcome". In the past we have always found that attendants, especially ones with a long employment record with us, really understand how we welcome people to Parliament House.

**CHAIR:** The only time one sees attendants at the front gate is when they are stopping demonstrators from coming in.

**The PRESIDENT:** The security guards do that.

**CHAIR:** Attendants often go down to the gate and stand there. I think attendants should be more family friendly—

**The PRESIDENT:** I totally agree with you.

**CHAIR:** I have seen Asian people at the front gate who can probably not read the sign that says that they can enter.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am told that there is a sign saying "Visitors welcome".

**CHAIR:** There is a small sign but overseas visitors and others hesitate as to whether they can come in the gate.

**The PRESIDENT:** I will take up that important suggestion. I am also told that we have a home page on the Internet for people who are totally computer literate.

**CHAIR:** You have probably noticed that when the two Houses are sitting, or when the upper House is sitting on its own, only one notice appears in the *Daily Telegraph* with the times of the Legislative Assembly. The notice says that the Legislative Assembly is sitting and lists the times but does not refer to the Legislative Council.

Sometimes when the upper House is sitting the notice says the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, and because it does not mention the Legislative Council it gives the impression that the Parliament is closed. Is that advertisement free or does the Speaker authorise it? Is it part of the *Daily Telegraph's* campaign against the upper House?

**The PRESIDENT:** That is a shocking state of events but the Deputy Clerk has an answer.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I used to send a fax every day to the *Daily Telegraph* advising it of our sitting patterns, and what was on in the Legislative Council. Occasionally the *Daily Telegraph* would include that if there was room but most of the time it chose to ignore the information. Since it was taking up staff resources and my time faxing it and it was ignored, eventually we decided it was not worth the effort. At that point I literally stopped sending it; that is what it came down to. I used to send it in but when it was not published it seemed to be a waste of time.

**CHAIR:** Apparently we will have to pay for an advertisement.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** It was not paid for; it was a free service that the *Daily Telegraph* was offering but I do not think it was particularly interested in the sittings of the Legislative Council. I stopped sending it about two years ago.

**CHAIR:** Maybe we should consider putting Legislative Council advertisements in the *Daily Telegraph* until it gives us a free space.

**The PRESIDENT:** I will think about that.

**CHAIR:** On page 1-2 in Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, reference is made to:

- undertaking cost savings opportunities to reduce the current cost of operations. This is likely to include changes in current sitting hours to reduce the overtime, travel and energy costs incurred when the House sits outside of normal business hours.

Madam President, in the past I know that you have raised family-friendly or mother-friendly hours that should operate in the Parliament, but do not operate at the moment. Has there been any further consideration of those hours, based on economic requirements, in view of that statement?

I refer particularly to members who have children. Should there be some approach to have the upper House particularly—we cannot correct the Legislative Assembly—sit from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and only sit at night with the leave of all members of the House? The Government would seek leave of members to extend those hours and if only one member objects it would not happen. Obviously if it came down to a vote the Government would have the numbers.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am pleased you have asked that question and in fact that was the only Dorothy Dixier I had arranged. If the Parliament was not to sit after 6.00 p.m. the savings would be: Legislative Council \$120,000; Legislative Assembly \$136,000; Library \$37,000; Hansard \$52,000; Catering \$250,000; and security \$25,000 in one year—a total of \$620,000. It would certainly be an enormous saving if we took on board family-friendly hours. However, as you know, this is a difficult battle, but I will continue to advocate family-friendly hours. Now that we have these costings, I believe it is a strong weapon. Thank you for asking the question.

**CHAIR:** I am sure those costings could be given to the Premier, the Treasurer and so on.

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** In relation to some of the discussions about reforming the upper House, I know it has been proposed that the number of members be reduced from 42 to 34. What effect would such a reduction have on the operation and efficiency of the Legislative Council as a House of review if it occurred at some future date?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am on record as saying that it would cause an enormous problem for the committee system in that Government backbenchers are already overworked with committees. Also, finding time for committees to sit when the House is not sitting would be difficult. It is my view that some of these committees would have to disappear because we simply could not staff them appropriately—not staff them but man them; we could not "people" them appropriately with members! It would create a problem.

**CHAIR:** In budget papers Nos 1 to 3 The Legislature's budget is reduced by about \$1 million—from the 1998-99 budget of \$76 million to the 1999-2000 budget of \$75 million. However, last year's actual costs were \$104,594,000. Why did The Legislature's budget blow out by \$27,827,000 last year? Does the cutback reflect library services to members? How much is the total library budget? How does it compare to previous years? Does this budget reflect a decrease in library funding? Has the library identified ways to save money in its operations?

**The PRESIDENT:** That is a paper figure. The building was revalued last year at \$26 million, which is less than its value five years earlier. Every five years the State Valuation Office has to value the building. Last year it was revalued down by \$26 million, which explains that enormous difference.

**CHAIR:** Is it depreciation?

**The PRESIDENT:** No, it is not depreciation. Depreciation comes up separately. The office just valued it incorrectly. It is a paper difference. You have to account for that revaluation through the operating statement. It explains many of the odd figures. As you go through, it is that \$26 million that explains it, and it is all on paper. The library's budget has decreased over the budget year by about \$90,000. That reflects the \$1 million reduction we were asked to make by the Treasurer, which is an overall reduction of our operating costs.

**CHAIR:** Therefore the library budget was reduced and that has led to a reduction in staff. How would that reduction in staff affect members' services? Has the library identified how it will meet these staff reductions?

**The PRESIDENT:** The argument about the library is that much of what used to be labour-intensive is being covered by advances in information technology. I understand also some of the functions of the library information technology area are replicated by an information technology [IT] section in the Parliament generally. Sad as I am to see the library lose staff, and it is an area we must always fight for, it is mostly explained by the enormous increases in the efficiency of IT.

**CHAIR:** According to New South Wales law, all heritage collections in New South Wales must be valued. Has the library had its collection valued recently? What is the value of the library collection of heritage items?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes, the library has recently had its collection valued. You will be pleased to know that it was valued at \$11,116,466.

**CHAIR:** What are some of the items that make up that heritage valuation?

**The PRESIDENT:** We have a complete run of the Sydney Gazette, valued at \$500,000; Her Majesty's speech to both Houses of the New South Wales Parliament is valued at \$8,000; and the Report upon the

Progress Made in the Roads from 1827 to 1855 by Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General, is valued at \$300,000.

**CHAIR:** So they are original historical documents?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes. We have the Settlers Muster Book of 1800 valued at \$1.5 million. It is really interesting. You should have a look at it.

**CHAIR:** I trust that is all covered by the insurance policy we spoke about earlier, especially for fire or water damage?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is in a fire-proof safe. Presumably it is covered by insurance—the Financial Controller hopes so.

**CHAIR:** You might take that question on notice.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am assured by the Financial Controller that it is definitely covered.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I return to an issue that was being discussed earlier when time expired. If a member wished to hold a function tomorrow for 32 people in the dining room are 32 chairs available from what I describe as the presidential suite? You said there was a maximum of 32 chairs.

**The PRESIDENT:** No, there is a maximum of 32 placings.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** But not 32 chairs? What is the maximum number of chairs normally in the President's office?

**The PRESIDENT:** There are some matching chairs. There are some chairs with the same balloon back and some slightly different chairs. Currently there are 28 matching chairs and we borrow four chairs from the Speaker's suite when there are 32 people at lunch.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Are all 28 chairs currently available?

**The PRESIDENT:** This is a strange series of questions. We might conduct a little pageant for you later.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I have seen the props in the back of the room. We probably do not need them.

**The PRESIDENT:** I was asked by a journalist to count the chairs on whatever night it was that this horrific story first broke. I counted them and there were 28 identical chairs.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Are the chairs that are brought from the Speaker's dining room identical?

**The PRESIDENT:** We are not sure. We should all go down and sit on them, like Goldilocks.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I am interested in the issue of the chairs. I would like to ask the Deputy-Clerk some questions through the President. Today during question time the Leader of the Opposition asked a question which resulted in a memorandum being provided by the Leader of the Government at the end of question time. May I ask whether you were asked to provide an answer to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition?

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**The PRESIDENT:** Yes.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Who asked you to provide the answer? Were you asked to

provide it in writing? If so, will you table the letter?

**The Hon. I. M. MACDONALD:** Mr Egan tabled it.

**The PRESIDENT:** He read out the letter.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I am referring to the request for information, not the letter that was provided in response.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I was requested by the President to write a memorandum to the Treasurer outlining the situation because I had previously provided advice to Madam President in relation to that matter.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Is there any precedent for the Clerk or the Deputy Clerk providing the answer for Parliament as opposed to the President?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** Yes, I believe so in relation to operational matters. As Acting Clerk at the moment I frequently write to members in relation to the operations of the Parliament, and this was an operational matter.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** In response to a question during question time?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** No, I would not give a response like that during question time, but I would certainly do so if I was asked to do so, as I was here. I was giving a response to the Treasurer in relation to a request from the President.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Will you take this question on notice and advise whether there is a precedent for the Clerk or, in this case, the Deputy Clerk as the Acting Clerk, providing an answer to a question asked during question time?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I did not provide advice about the question asked during question time; I provided advice on direction from the President in relation to the chairs in the dining room.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Of course, that was the question that was asked.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** Yes, I know, but I provided advice to the Treasurer under instruction from the President about a matter that related to the operations of her dining room.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Is there a precedent? It is unusual that a presiding officer would provide the information, the answer, that was then used by the Government.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I am not sure whether it has been used by the Government before, but it is certainly not unusual for the Clerk to provide advice directly to members.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Or to the President?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I provide advice to the President, but I also write directly to members in relation to matters that affect the Parliament.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** But not normally in answer to a question without notice in Parliament.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** As I said, I did not supply that as an answer to a question; I supplied that as information from me to the Treasurer on request from the President.

**CHAIR:** It was done prior to the question being asked.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I had already supplied that information to the President and the President simply asked me to put that in writing to the Treasurer, which I did.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I return to questions to the President, and the Deputy Clerk may need to provide some assistance as she has provided the information. The letter that was tabled today or read in the House refers to the fact that the President's dining room chairs are a mixture of antique and replica balloon-back chairs valued at approximately \$600 each. What is the actual value of the replica chairs and the antique chairs, not at their approximate value when bought together? Separately, what is the value of the antique chairs and what is the value of the replica chairs?

**The PRESIDENT:** We will take that question on notice.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** The letter goes on to refer to the chairs having a history of a design fault requiring ongoing repairs. It then refers to the fact that as they are antiques they require additional care. With regard to the ongoing repairs, what work is done to strengthen the chairs? Is that something that happens on a regular basis?

**The PRESIDENT:** It might become clearer if the building services manager shows you the chairs.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** We all know about balloon-back chairs and design faults.

**CHAIR:** Some members of the Committee would like to see the chairs.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** It is an extraordinary use of our 30-minute question time. I can assure you that we do not need to do that.

**The Hon. I. M. MACDONALD:** We would like to go down and have a look at the chairs now.

**The PRESIDENT:** We have one here. Mr Bennett will show honourable members the chair.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** As I understand it, this is the Opposition's 30 minutes of questions. If Government members need to see the chairs they should also request an allocation of time.

**The Hon. A. B. KELLY:** Out of your time.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** No, not out of our time.

**The PRESIDENT:** Mr Bennett explained the issue to me. I was totally unaware of all this until Thursday.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Anyone knows that balloon-back chairs have potential for a design fault but that is not the issue.

**The PRESIDENT:** I am serious about this. If you propose to ask a considerable number of questions about this issue, I shall ask Mr Bennett to explain where the fault is and we will lay this matter to rest.

**Mr BENNETT:** I realise we all know the basic weakness of the chairs, but the question is: What are we doing about the design weakness over time? I can report that this problem goes back about 20 years in this building, as far as I can remember. These chairs are used in the President's suite and in the Cabinet office and they do not "break" but loosen at this joint here. This is one of the chairs in question from the President's suite; in fact it is the worst one. We are looking at that movement there.

**CHAIR:** For the benefit of Hansard will you include all the detail, instead of merely pointing to the chair.

**Mr BENNETT:** I am pointing to the joint of the horizontal seat piece where it meets the vertical back

piece. That joint fails. Over 20 years we have tried several different methods to repair the chairs but they are limited as the chairs are antiques. The people who repair these chairs will not make any large structural changes such as steel brackets and so forth, but they have genuinely tried various types of new-age glues, adhesives and so forth. One particular very heavy member of Parliament continued to rock back on the chairs. I have to report that we have not been able to solve this problem. The only thing we have been able to do over the years during which this has happened is continue to repair the chairs at an average cost of about \$104 a chair.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** That is \$104 every so often?

**Mr BENNETT:** As long as they break. We cannot say that they break in relation to the amount of use they get. If there are a lot of functions and people get tired they rock back on the chairs, and that is what causes the problem.

**CHAIR:** That is very useful information.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I refer again to the letter from the Deputy Clerk that was tabled today. Estimates are given, I presume for repairs to chairs dating back to 1993. I am particularly interested in the figures for 1996, 1997, 1998 and early 1999. All the figures are given as estimates. Did we not pay the bill? Why are they not actual figures?

**The PRESIDENT:** The Clerk has the actual figures now.

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**Ms LOVELOCK:** Because the figures were estimates I requested the actual costs of the repairs. The figures I was supplied with show that in 1996-97 one of the jobs was for four chairs at \$180 each. Another job in that year was for three chairs at \$106 each. There was a further job: one chair at \$560, in the 1996-97 period. Is that the period you are requesting information on?

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** All of them. I am just surprised that you have estimate figures allowed for—

**Ms LOVELOCK:** That was the original material that was provided to me but subsequently I got the other material. In 1995-96 three chairs were repaired. The actual cost came out at \$1,260.

**The Hon. I. M. MACDONALD:** What date was that?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** That is the 1995-96—

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** It is our period of questions not yours.

**The Hon. I. M. MACDONALD:** I am just getting a clarification.

**The Hon. A. B. KELLY:** It was your period for presidency.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I have not yet matched these up with the earlier figures because one gives just the dates of the orders, and on the other I have job numbers and not the date of the order. I would have to sit down and match those up. In 1998-99 three chairs were repaired at \$153 each. I could take it on notice to match the estimates with the figures that I have subsequently been supplied with if that would satisfy the question. Would you like me to take it on notice?

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Yes, we would be interested in all those details. I note that in the dates given by way of example of when various furniture has been repaired 3 June 1999 is the last date you provide although over the page you suggest that there are three chairs currently being repaired as part of the ongoing program. Where are they being repaired, who authorised the repairs and what was the nature of the damage to the chairs?



**Ms LOVELOCK:** My understanding of it is that three chairs were taken out last week. We organise the work through Public Works and Services. The chairs are put out to a series of repairers that the department has. My understanding is that they have gone to a company called Anthony's Restoration.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** All three of them?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** I believe so. Again, my understanding is that the cost of repairing the three chairs will come to \$569. I think that they have been repaired now. They were minor repairs in relation to the backs again being loose and the need to reinforce the join.

**The PRESIDENT:** Might I add, given the implications of the questions in both Houses, that the "absolute wrecking" of the chairs was meant to have happened in June, however, they were obviously used until September before going out for their regular restoration and renovation.

**The Hon. I. M. MACDONALD:** Can we have the chair tabled?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am not certain that you can table a chair.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Madam President, you just mentioned that they were meant to have been damaged in June. At what function was that?

**The PRESIDENT:** My understanding is that the function that everyone—

**CHAIR:** They are allegations.

**The PRESIDENT:** The allegations referred to in the lower House last week and presumably in our House this week relate to a function I had for members of Parliament and trade union officials on 30 June. The function finished at 8 o'clock and was a very sedate function. There were Ministers and senior trade union people present. My memory is that people were not sitting on the chairs; people stood.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Could I ask you another question not related to the chairs?

**The PRESIDENT:** Take me by surprise!

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Has ICAC finished its investigation relating to travel of members of the Legislative Assembly and members of the Legislative Council?

**The PRESIDENT:** It has finished certain aspects of it. My understanding is that further investigations are continuing but there have certainly been interim reports.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** You mentioned provision for security. How many staff are involved in security?

**The PRESIDENT:** We have 12 security staff made up of five permanent and seven temporary employees, and there are 3½ contract staff.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** And the estimate of the cost?

**The PRESIDENT:** Of security?

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Yes.

**The PRESIDENT:** Our revised estimate was \$1,026,000.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** A year?

**The PRESIDENT:** Per year.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** That is the cost of security for how many security staff?

**The PRESIDENT:** It is 15½.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** And that would provide security for the building 24 hours a day?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Is that considered adequate?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. There are ongoing problems with security. We have had complaints from members about, for instance, trying to get visitors into the car park. It is certainly an area in which there are enormous problems but both the Speaker and I are very aware of it. Many of our discussions are about security.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** About how many school students visit the Parliament each year?

**The PRESIDENT:** That is a really interesting question. I am not even sure that we would know how to judge that.

**Mr SPINDLER:** Probably around 25,000 a year.

**The PRESIDENT:** I do not think that schoolchildren are the problem. I always see them behaving very well. The problem is more related to people on occasions wandering around floors 11 and 12 seemingly unattached to anyone. I think that that is more the issue.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** But given that security people also have to look after 25,000 students coming through the Parliament, it is one way or another a further burden.

**The PRESIDENT:** Students are mostly looked after by the attendants. Security staff look after the front doors and the back doors and the after-hours stuff. It is much more a job for the attendants to look after visiting schoolchildren.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** In view of your comments about complaints about people trying to get car parking and others wandering around, and in view of your comment that these seem to be perennial problems, when are we going to make a positive move to resolve them, and at what cost?

**The PRESIDENT:** We sought a supplement from the Treasurer for security but it paid only for the infrastructure that you now see at the entrance to the Legislative Assembly. It did not pay for the extra staffing, which is why we have this ongoing problem. I am still not sure that we cannot do it with the same amount of money but in a different way. As I said, I have been President for only 2½ months, but I worry about the problem daily. It is an ongoing issue that we have to resolve.

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**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I imagine it is particularly a problem for staff who want to work back late at night?

**The PRESIDENT:** And it is a problem for staff who might have an overcoat on over their badge and are hassled by a new security officer who does not know them. It is an ongoing problem.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** I refer to that "sedate little function", as you described it, which you had on 30 June for members of Parliament and trade union officials. Who paid for the function?

**The PRESIDENT:** I paid for it.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Out of the allowance you receive as President?

**The PRESIDENT:** I paid for it out of my personal catering account.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** Can you categorically rule out that any furniture was broken on that occasion?

**The PRESIDENT:** Absolutely. No furniture was broken on that occasion. As I have said, it finished at 8 o'clock, and I was in the office after that time. It was a sitting night.

**The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE:** There has been much discussion about the transfer of a portrait of Her Majesty the Queen from your office to the National Party office. As I recalled when I was in the President's dining room last week for a function, small, framed pictures of both the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh used to sit on the small table behind the dining table. They are no longer there. Where are they located?

**The PRESIDENT:** They were not there when I arrived as President. I assumed they were the personal belongings of the previous President and he took them with him. Certainly they were not there when I arrived. I have not touched any of the artwork in the dining room, except for the inexpensive print—I think it was the William Dargie portrait of the Queen; I think the 1954 one.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I again refer to page 1-6, which sets out the operating statement. Maintenance is shown as \$11,000. On the revised estimate the figure is increased to \$26,000. That is an increase of more than 100 per cent.

**The PRESIDENT:** As I said, the \$11,000 was the budget estimate. The \$26,000 was the estimate that we made three months before the end of the budget period. It did not end up being \$26,000, and it has to do with the conversion of the committee room next door.

**CHAIR:** Perhaps it should be "maintenance and renovations". That may be why it is causing confusion.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Yes.

**The PRESIDENT:** Also, it did not end up being \$26,000. That is simply a revised estimate which was done in about March.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** It must have been somewhere around that figure, I presume. Is that what you are saying?

**The PRESIDENT:** I will take that on notice. But my advice is that it ended up being less than that.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** Why was there no provision in the 1999-2000 year for any asset acquisition in either House, certainly in the Legislative Assembly?

**The PRESIDENT:** We decided to buy no equipment until after the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal delivered its determination, simply because we had no idea what that determination would be. However, the Treasurer has agreed to look at that situation after the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal brings down its decision.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I refer to page 1-2, which deals with total expenses and refers to the rationalisation of the Parliamentary Library collection with a view to disposing of publications not required under the Library's collection development policy. Are you able to give us an idea as to the cost and the detail involved in doing that?

**The PRESIDENT:** I will ask the librarian, Mr Brian, to give a more detailed answer. But that is a

program where some of the duplicate material we held was sold at very good prices. Mr Brian sells it on the Internet, which is very exciting. Some of the material that we do not need is being given to the State Library. Given the view that knowledge and books are universal, you do not sell it between public institutions, you give it. But certainly some sale of duplicate and unnecessary material is happening.

**Mr BRIAN:** To date, I have sold six items for a total of about \$7,000 net. As Madam President said, we use Bibliocity, an Internet network, where booksellers list their books. For listing with Bibliocity we pay 5 percent of the sale, which is cheaper than the \$US40 per month other booksellers pay. It is a special deal that I negotiated. At the moment we have a list of some 60 items, but the sales are not readily forthcoming. I hope shortly to submit another list to the library committee of some 1,850 items, which will be of lesser value. I hope to list those with Bibliocity and see what happens.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** The 1,850 would be books, magazines and gazettes?

**Mr BRIAN:** Books, monographs, mainly nineteenth century, a lot of scientific books that have no current information value for the Parliament but which may be of interest to a collector. At the moment the State Library is checking that list to see what they do not hold, and they would like anything they do not have.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I would imagine that probably one of the challenges you have is accommodation. As your space is limited, what provision is made to accommodate other important works you cannot sell? Are you going to lease out other space? How are we providing for that into the new millennium?

**Mr BRIAN:** Space will be a problem in our stack area. But we disposed of quite a lot of newspapers last year, for example, for which I got \$10,000, so that created a lot of space. Once we transfer the items that the State Library wants, that will create a lot more space. They will then stay in public hands and be accessible to the people of New South Wales, so it is a responsible action. They are books that in any other situation would have gone to the State Library. I am hoping that by these measures, even with an increase in material, we will have sufficient space.

We are also working on a process of weeding any superseded books that we do not want to keep. For example, we sent a shipment to a foreign language university in Beijing which had not received any English books since 1984, and they were very useful to them—novels and books that were of no great use to us but were very useful to them. So we are getting kudos by doing these things.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** I understand that one of the perennial problems over the years in relation to your costs has been the number of people using the library, including staff of members of Parliament, staff of Ministers, advisors, and so on. What efforts have been made to balance that situation to get your costs down?

**Mr BRIAN:** The technology that we have been given, at considerable expense over the last six or seven years, has enabled us to work more efficiently, so it now takes far less time than it used to. For example, the books that we receive on legal deposit and by way of purchase are now catalogued immediately and there is no backlog, whereas in the past there were probably 10 shelves or more of backlog that we were constantly trying to catch up with. So we are achieving economies

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In terms of staffing, I am working now without a deputy and without a secretary. It is only that I am reasonably computer literate that I can do my own production of memos, reports and so on, and by giving some of the tasks to other people. We are trying to cope. The strategy is to try not to reduce services to members but to save on the housekeeping, if you like, of the library and infrastructure. That is what we will continue to do.

**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** One of the impressive improvements over the years has been the provision of ethnic papers. Space has been set aside for them, but there has been the problem of delay in their availability. It takes two or three days for the paper to get to us; then I think you go through the process of

flattening the paper, which takes another one or two days; then the papers are put into their shelves. Therefore they are almost a week old by the time one has access to them. Are you finding staff that can perhaps speed up this process—perhaps by forgoing the process of flattening the papers, saving two days, and putting them straight into the shelves?

**Mr BRIAN:** It would cause a serious problem, with the limited shelf space, if we did not straighten the papers. We need to flatten them, and it is only economical to do so if they are in batches, rather than do them paper by paper. Of course, we are always prepared to make special arrangements for anyone with a special interest in ethnic papers. If anyone wishes to see them before they are straightened out, I think we could arrange for that.

**CHAIR:** Madam President, I follow up a question asked earlier about listening devices in members' rooms. The earlier question was about the checking of rooms that had been bugged, and so on. My question relates to the installation of listening devices. Did you or the Speaker give approval for listening devices to be installed in any members' rooms, or do you have to give such approval?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am sure, if it was to be done by the Legislature, both the Speaker and I would have to give approval. I, for one, have never given approval, nor would I ever give approval, for listening devices to be installed anywhere in this Parliament.

**CHAIR:** Has the Independent Commission Against Corruption asked you for approval, if it is ICAC that has installed them, because we do not know that to be the fact?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. As I say, the first I knew about this was when the reporter appeared in my room, obviously to search. I would never give approval for a member's room to be bugged.

**CHAIR:** Would it be of benefit to instruct all relevant agencies that they cannot install any listening devices in members' rooms without the approval of the Speaker and/or the President?

**The PRESIDENT:** Certainly, I will talk to the Speaker about putting out an instruction. But they must know enough about parliamentary privilege to know that it would not be a good idea.

**CHAIR:** Some people have tried to serve summonses on members within the parliamentary precincts. I understand that is not legal. If it is not legal to issue a summons to a member on these premises, it would seem questionable that an agency, either police or ICAC, would install listening devices in members' rooms, and apparently within telephone equipment, without someone giving approval.

**The PRESIDENT:** It might be an issue that should be referred to the Standing Committee on Privilege and Ethics.

**CHAIR:** Will you take that question on notice?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Perhaps your response might contain some suggestions as to what could happen. My concern is that someone might approach a staff person, such as the Manager, Parliamentary Building Services, and seek access to the building after hours. Obviously, these devices must be installed after hours, and one would think that would involve security and/or other personnel being aware of the presence of individuals in the building, otherwise we have no security at all.

**The PRESIDENT:** Anything like that would have to come to the Presiding Officers. Since I became President I have had one occasion on which a quite serious issue of security was referred to me. It made me realise that anything like that that went on would have to go to the Presiding Officers.

**CHAIR:** You have indicated that The Legislature has to practise economic housekeeping, and that that must affect its ability to pay accounts, wages and so on. What effect is there on The Legislature's ability to

pay such accounts and wages when a number of members have quite substantial outstanding House Committee accounts? I understand that those outstanding accounts are quite substantial. Would you or the Financial Controller know, without naming members, what that amount might be at any one time for members of both Houses—\$1 million or \$5 million?

**The PRESIDENT:** I might ask the Manager, Parliamentary Food and Beverage, Mr David Draper, for more details, but the House Committee did institute a policy of imposing a 24 per cent interest rate on overdue bills. I am told this has been very effective. Mr Draper has instituted other procedures that have made it much harder for members to build up a big bill. Would you like Mr Draper to elaborate on that answer? I gather that it used to be a problem, but it is not now because of various measures that have been put in place.

**CHAIR:** So you do not have any idea, in round terms, of what that amount would be this month?

**The Hon. I. M. MACDONALD:** Whatever it is, it would be a good investment at 24 per cent.

**CHAIR:** But it does affect the cash flow and the availability of money to run departments.

**The PRESIDENT:** I will take that question on notice. It is difficult to distinguish between long-term debts and debts that are just a few days overdue. The House Committee is separate from the rest of The Legislature. It has separate accounts. As members can see from the budget papers, it is not represented in those papers.

**CHAIR:** Where does the money that is paid to the House Committee finish up?

**The PRESIDENT:** With the House Committee, and from time to time the committee gives what is called a contribution to the Parliament.

**CHAIR:** In return for services provided to members, such as provision of meals?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. It is just a contribution to the Parliament from the profit that the committee makes during the year.

**CHAIR:** So there is no cash flow problem if a lot of money is owing?

**The PRESIDENT:** No. It is a problem, but there is no specific financial problem.

**CHAIR:** Madam President, you have stressed that you have been trying to reduce costs. Earlier you were asked questions about the cost of the opening of Parliament. When the traditional Australian Defence Forces guard of honour was dispensed with at this particular opening, what amount of money would that have saved the Parliament? I imagine, if there was a saving, there must be a bill sent from the Federal Government to this Parliament.

**The PRESIDENT:** We do not pay for the actual guard.

**CHAIR:** So cancelling the guard was not a measure to save money. Normally the Governor has a guard of honour of Army, Navy and Air Force units.

**The PRESIDENT:** It is not a cost to the Parliament. It would, of course, be a cost to the Federal Government to provide those units, but the Federal Government did not charge this Parliament.

**CHAIR:** So what was the purpose of cancelling the guard of honour?

**The PRESIDENT:** It was just a process of scaling down from that previous opening. The 21-gun salute probably did not cost all that much either. But I think generally people agree that the opening that occurred on 7 September was simple and dignified. Certainly, the Governor did not complain.

**CHAIR:** It may have been overdone the previous year when there were the extra items that you spoke about, but there has been a guard of honour for the Governor at every opening of Parliament since I became a member of Parliament. People have questioned why there was not a guard of honour this year, a reasonable question given that it does not cost anything.

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**The Hon. J. M. SAMIOS:** It is a great tradition.

**CHAIR:** Was the Governor going to inspect the police band?

**The PRESIDENT:** One of the major complaints about the previous opening of Parliament was that Macquarie Street was shut for a considerable period. When I asked what was the cause—was it the Governor's arrival or security arrangements?—I was told that it was the presence of the tri-service guard. The way to obviate the need to close Macquarie Street for upwards of 30 or 40 minutes was to do away with the tri-service guard, and because we are very keen not to put the public off side, that is what we did.

**CHAIR:** It was not a matter of economics?

**The PRESIDENT:** Not that part. It was to do with closing off Macquarie Street for the shortest possible time.

**CHAIR:** Has there been any expression of disappointment from the defence forces? It seems that very few opportunities present themselves for a guard of honour in the city. The opening of Parliament may be one of the few times when servicemen can feel the sense of pride that comes with wearing their uniforms as guards of honour in an important event.

**The PRESIDENT:** There has been no expression of disappointment. I am told that on the day the heads of the services could not attend because of the East Timor situation.

**CHAIR:** That emergency may have affected their availability to attend?

**The PRESIDENT:** It did. They were definitely coming; they had accepted the invitation.

**CHAIR:** The East Timor situation may have affected their availability? For example, they may have been stationed at Darwin.

**The PRESIDENT:** Perhaps.

**CHAIR:** I note that guests viewed the proceedings in the theatrette because there was nothing for them to watch them on in the forecourt. Were there negative reactions from those who sat watching the opening on the screen in the theatrette?

**The PRESIDENT:** Not that I have heard.

**CHAIR:** That would have resulted in a saving because seating that is usually set up in the forecourt was not required, is that so?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am told that when provision is made for guests to view the proceedings outside the major expense is the video equipment; it is very expensive to set up video equipment outside. It costs something like \$11,000.

**CHAIR:** We have only ever had that once. Usually the guests look at the guard of honour and then go into the dining room.

**The PRESIDENT:** We have always had video equipment outside. In 1994 it cost \$8,000.

**CHAIR:** So that guests can see the activity inside the Chamber?

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** In 1994 small television screens were set up so that people sitting on the balcony could see what was happening inside the Chamber. A large screen was set up for the opening in 1997.

**CHAIR:** That was the only time the large screen was used?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** Yes, only the once.

**The PRESIDENT:** We only had the large screen once. But the setting up of television sets outside is very expensive.

**CHAIR:** I note in Budget Paper No. 3, page 1-6, the budget figure for 1998-99 for salaries and allowances of members of the Legislative Council is \$3,605,000. The revised figure shows a decrease of \$155,000. There is then an increase again in the 1999-2000 budget. How do you account for the decrease? Was there a reduction in staff? I do not think there was a reduction in the number of members.

**The PRESIDENT:** Treasury allowed for an increase in members' salaries, but that did not happen. Federal parliamentarians did not get their rise, so we did not get ours. That explains the decrease.

**CHAIR:** That is so. If there is an increase in the salaries of Federal members, there is a flow-on to State members, but that did not happen.

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes.

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**

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