



DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2021 – BRIEFING NOTES

March 2021 Session 1

Supplementary and Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates – The Legislature

Joint Department of Parliamentary Services and Legislative Council Response

Supplementary and Questions on Notice

President: The Hon John Ajaka, MLC
President of the Legislative Council of NSW



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Claims forms

1. Claim Forms are still listed under 'forms' on the Members Entitlement site. But DPS is refusing to accept them. Now that the chamber has largely reverted back to a paper based system, how long will this continue?

Suggested Response:

During the past 18 months Members have been moving from paper-based claims forms to the online expense management system, Zeno. There are currently 116 out of 135 Members using Zeno.

The remaining Members who have not as yet transitioned to Zeno continue to submit paper forms. The paper forms will be removed once the remaining Members transition to Zeno, which should occur by 1 July 2021.

a) *What consultation took place with members?*

During October and December 2018, DPS facilitated a number of briefings and established a pilot group consisting of Members and staff with a view to testing the system and to provide feedback to support further development. During January to March 2019, DPS undertook a second intake of pilot group users.

Since April 2019, DPS has continued to transition Members to the online system as well as develop user guides and training videos. During this period, the Members Entitlements' team has continued to offer customised training to each Member's office and ongoing support, where required. Communications have been sent to remaining Members not currently using Zeno, most recently on 15 January 2021 and 10 March 2021.



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We will continue to contact the remaining Members over coming months as we approach the cut-off date for paper based claim forms on 30 June 2021.



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Capital Works

2. What is the next tranche of capital works planned over the next financial year?

Suggested Response:

NSW Treasury has approved funding for the following building projects at Parliament House:

- Continuation of the Ceilings and Building Services and Tower Block Roof Membrane
- Within the minor works program there will be some smaller projects undertaken around the precincts such as upgrading the accessible public lift and department accommodation.

The Parliament has submitted a business case to NSW Treasury for capital funding to undertake essential works, for example upgrades to the following:

- Passenger and good lifts
- Internal mobile phone antenna system
- Division bells system
- Emergency lighting

As part of the State Budget process the Parliament will be informed by NSW Treasury in June 2021 on the outcome of the business case.



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Local Government

3. The Member' Staff and local government policy is listed as being current at November 2016. It is supposed to be reviewed every four years prior to each local government election. The next round of elections will be held in September this year. Has it been reviewed?

Suggested Response:

The policy is currently under review and will be updated by 30 June 2021.



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CCTV

4. When will the NSW Parliament House Closed Circuit Television and Security Access Control Systems Policy be reviewed?

Suggested Response:

The commitment is to review policies once a parliamentary term. This policy is scheduled to be reviewed within this parliamentary term.

a) How will Members be consulted?

Suggested Response:

Any required member consultation will be coordinated through the Presiding Officers.



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Work Health and Safety / PCBU

5. Do the provisions of the Work Health and Safety Act extend to cover Members of Parliament in their work?

Suggested Response:

Yes, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* applies to Members, their staff and all Parliamentary staff.



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6. Who is the Person Controlling the Business Unit (PCBU) for the purposes of members of staff for MLCs, in relation to work undertaken within the parliament or in the community?

Suggested Response:

There is not a single PCBU for members of staff for MLCs. Members as employers, the Presiding Officers and officers of the Parliament, including the Clerks, Chief Executive and others responsible for making decisions about Work Health and Safety matters are considered to be persons conducting a business or undertaking within the Parliament.



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7. Who is the PCBU for the purposes of guaranteeing a safe working environment for Members of Parliament?

Suggested Response:

a) When working in the parliamentary environment?

There is not a single PCBU for Members. Members themselves, the Presiding Officers and officers of the Parliament, including the Clerks, Chief Executive and others are responsible for making decisions about the way work is performed, or work health and safety matters. Duties of officers may be joint with other parties.

b) When working in the chamber?

This response has been provided the Legislative Council

When the chamber is sitting the situation is complex. Although the President and the Clerk could be identified as PCBUs, perhaps the most significant WHS issue is fatigue with late sittings. Both the President and the Clerk are very concerned about this issue but have no control over the hours in which the House sits, this is a decision of the majority of members of the House. Any legal advice obtained regarding this needs to consider the way in which decisions are made in the chamber which affect working conditions.



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8. Who is the PCBU in the event that a Member is injured as a direct result of travelling home after a late sitting?

Suggested Response:

There is not a single PCBU for Members. Members themselves, the Presiding Officers and officers of the Parliament, including the Clerks, Chief Executive and others are responsible for making decisions about the way work is performed, or work health and safety matters. Duties of officers may be joint with other parties.

See also answers to Q.7 & Q.9.



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9. Has the parliament received any legal advice on these questions?

Suggested Response:

The Parliament is guided by its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, and the guidance issued by SafeWork NSW.

a) If not, will the parliament undertake to obtain advice on this question?

Suggested Response:

Separate legal advice is currently being sought.



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Technological Improvements

10. When will the Parliament website be engineered to render properly on mobile devices and tablets?

Suggested Response:

The Parliament website was engineered to render properly on mobile devices and tablets using 'responsive design', meaning that there are different layouts according to the size and orientation of the device. Any specific problems with this can be reported to our IT Service Desk for investigation.

Having said this, the design is some six years old and we acknowledge that it is not always the most user friendly compared to more modern websites. We are about to begin a project as part of the Digital Parliament program to review, consult on and redesign the website to modern design standards which should improve the experience on all devices. At this point we have no definite completion date for this.



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11. When will the Legislature develop an App for members and staff, which would be much more amenable to mobile phone access and speed of access?

Suggested Response:

The Parliament provides a wide range of computer systems to members and staff and, having recently received significant funding for the Digital Parliament program, is determined to improve many of them in various ways including mobile phone and tablet access and speed of access. In some cases, an app will be made available as part of the solution, but this will not always be the best or most cost-effective way to deliver improvements.

In line with most other organisations, Parliament does not currently plan to develop a single app to cover all its many different systems.



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12. Has the Parliament prepared a Business Continuity Plan to provide for the functions of the Legislature over the medium to long term should the Parliament be unable to meet in-person for an extended period of time?

Suggested Response:

Yes. The Parliament has a comprehensive suite of business continuity plans developed in conjunction with industry experts and aligned to the latest business continuity management standard.

The documents include:

- a Business Continuity Policy;
- a Business Continuity Management Program;
- a Business Interruption Response Plan;
- IT Services Disaster Recovery Plan; and
- Business Resumption Plans for all key functions within the Parliament.

There is a page on the Parliament's intranet that details its Business Continuity Policy and Program. All aspects of the Parliament's business continuity plans have been implemented.

The scenarios included in the planning provide for the possibility of a loss of the Parliamentary Precinct buildings and alternative plans for the meeting of Parliament at appropriate locations with Memorandums of Understanding in place.

a) *What are the barriers to that being implemented?*

The Parliament's Business Continuity Plans have been implemented and a business impact analysis is conducted annually to update plans to meet changes in business requirements.



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13. In a future pandemic or if there was some significant natural disaster, how would the Parliament deliberate on legislation and continue to function?

This response has been provided by the Legislative Council

The Parliament has developed a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) which makes provision for off-site sittings of the Parliament. The BCP includes plans for sittings at alternative locations if the building is affected by a natural disaster. The details of the Parliament's BCP is confidential, but we could arrange for a briefing to provide further information, if required.

The response to the current pandemic with the holding of virtual and hybrid committee hearings and deliberatives shows how parliamentary processes can continue under revised conditions. For the House to sit virtually will require amendment to the Constitution Act 1902 (NSW).



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14. What is happening with the project to modernise divisions by recording electronically?

This response has been provided by the Legislative Council

Electronic divisions were introduced into the Legislative Assembly in February 2020. The application has been designed to allow it to be modified to suit the Legislative Council. At present, however, there is no proposal to introduce e-divisions in the Council, but could be examined by the Procedure Committee at a future date should members wish to do so.



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15. Is the current project that is looking into making the parliamentary processes more accessible including a process of keeping track of amendments and legislation being debated more accessible?

This response has been provided by the Legislative Council

A range of projects (including website redesign, e-petitions and the development of an app for members to send and receive chamber documents and notifications) have been identified to facilitate access to information about the parliament for both members and the wider community, as part of the Digital Transformation Project. While a specific tool to allow for tracking amendments is not currently in scope, it could be examined as part of the roll out of the Digital Transformation Project



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16. Has there been an investigation in to having a digital swipe card available on mobile phones?

Suggested Response:

Digital swipe card on mobile phones is not in scope for any current project activity.



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Parliamentary security

17. The United States Capitol Riots and invasion by domestic terrorists should give all Legislatures pause for thought about their security arrangements – what consideration have you given to the potential for rioters to overcome the physical security of this building?

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.



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18. We are only protected by glass sliding doors at the Macquarie Street entrance and to the ramp access point from Level 6, is this considered adequate?

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.



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19. Has a fresh risk assessment been undertaken?

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.

a) *If so, when?*

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.



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20. Have the Special Constables received any additional training or a briefing on how to handle a similar scenario?

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.



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21. Apart from the driveway upgrades, have any projects been planned or undertaken to improve the physical security of the Parliament?

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.



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22. Have you come up with a way to screen visitors to the Parliament who arrive by car through the carpark elevators?

Suggested Response:

As per long standing practice, the administration does not comment publicly on security matters relating to the Parliament. The Chief Executive DPS would be happy to brief committee members privately on security matters.



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Staff

23. How many times has Mr Webb met with staff and their union representatives through the quarterly meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) process in the past 18 months?

Suggested Response:

As is standard across the public sector, the senior executive in charge of HR is the management representative at the JCC (Director of People, Property and Security).

One of the Department Heads attend each meeting to give a chance for issues relating to senior leadership team to be discussed. Mr Webb has attended every JCC meeting he has been scheduled to attend.



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24. How many staff positions within the Parliamentary Library are vacant?

Suggested Response:

- Library Reference Team - 1 position (maternity leave vacancy, currently recruiting for a contract librarian up to 30 June).



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25. How many staff positions within the Parliamentary Library have been abolished or restructured?

Suggested Response:

No positions have been abolished or restructured in the past 12 months in the Parliamentary Library.



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26. What percentage of departmental staff have a disability?

Suggested Response:

The number of staff who have identified as having a disability either requiring an adjustment or not is:

- DPS has 4 staff members who have identified as having a disability
- LC has 1 staff member who has identified as having a disability



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Parliament Newsletter

27. Who produces the monthly Parli-News newsletter?

Suggested Response:

The 'Parli News' newsletter is produced in-house by the DPS Communications, Engagement and Education team.

a) How many people open and read the newsletter each month?

Suggested Response:

The newsletter 'open rate' has ranged from approximately 700-1680 readers, with an average of 940 readers per month.

b) How many people click through a link?

Suggested Response:

On average, approximately 28 links are clicked for further information for each edition of the newsletter.

c) How many replies have you ever received to these newsletters?

Suggested Response:

During this time, 14 people have written an email response or query to Parli News. DPS welcomes feedback from members and staff on Parli News, including frequency and information to include in the newsletter.



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Procurement and local jobs

28. Is there a firm target for local procurement?

Suggested Response:

The Parliament utilises period contracts and prequalified schemes established by NSW Procurement to source its procurement needs wherever possible. Suppliers that are small and medium enterprises, regional and aboriginal business are given special consideration within the procurement framework.

As an example, our capital works program aims to use Australian-Made products, in particular products sourced from New South Wales, wherever possible.

Recent Australian-made procurements include:

- Tower Block membrane – pipework, storm water pits and adhesive
- Building and Ceiling Project – air conditioning fan coil
- Accommodation - sit stand desks



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29. Apart from Catering, where there is a conspicuous effort to buy from NSW suppliers, what other guarantees do we have that you're supporting local suppliers and workers?

Suggested Response:

The Parliament must conduct its procurement within a framework of probity and fairness and select suppliers based on an evaluation criteria.

Where NSW suppliers meet the Parliament's procurement requirements serious consideration is given to engaging them.



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30. Where does the furniture you've purchased in the past four years come from? Example: desks in Members' offices, lounges in foyer, education centre renovations, theatrette?

Suggested Response:

Wherever possible, furniture is purchased off NSW Procurement schemes.



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Safety

31. Has a risk assessment been done for the potential crash or injury risk caused by pedestrians walking along the western edge of Hospital Road, where there is no footpath?

Suggested Response:

There is signage on the northern end stating “No Pedestrian Access beyond this point” and a similar sign will be placed at the southern end after current works are completed.



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32. During a recent evacuation the Fire Brigade were unable to get in via the new gates at Hospital Road. Has this been resolved?

Suggested Response:

Best to the department's knowledge, there has been no reports of the Fire Brigade having issues with accessing the building. The security team are on site 24/7 to assistance emergency services.



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Catering spaces and capital expenditure

33. How much is being spent on the renovations to Strangers/Members dining areas?

Suggested Response:

Strangers Function space and Member's dining room works are a combination of multiple projects delivered at the same time to provide one solution. The construction tender was \$2.15M, the scope of works for the project include:

- Refurbishing of existing timber ceiling panels
- Installation of new lighting and air-conditioning outlets
- Replacing the existing 40 year old operable walls that have been a WHS issue
- Installing new window blinds
- Installing a new glass sliding door to enhance management of the function spaces
- New audio visual infrastructure
- New audio visual server equipment room
- Restoration of the Country Tree tapestry

This is the first time since the building was opened 40 years ago that the above items have been either refurbished or upgraded in these spaces.



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34. How much is being spent and has been spent in the past 12 – 18 months on the renovations to the Public Café and Bar?

Suggested Response:

The only expenses spent on the Public Café and Bar has been the installed of a door between the café and fountain court, which is currently under construction. The cost to date for the new door is \$63,000.00



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35. Is there further commercialisation of these spaces planned?

Suggested Response:

The Catering team in collaboration with the Facilities branch and the Audio Visual Project team are upgrading the catering rooms and venues to provide state of the art facilities for use by members, community groups and other external clients.

In addition, renovations are underway to the public café, with the addition of a door onto the Fountain Court to improve public access.

There are no plans for any further commercialisation of these spaces.



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36. At the rising of the L.A. at the end of each sitting week and whenever the L.A. is not sitting - Members dining is unavailable for L.C. sittings. When will this be rectified?

Suggested Response:

The Presiding Officers are currently considering dining options for members on sittings nights, including the option of opening members' dining on a sitting night when only one House is sitting. The catering team is currently conducting an analysis of the staffing costs associated with this option.



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37. Will DPS consider expansion of the dining room food to be made available to staff?

Suggested Response:

The dining room is available to members, staff and the public in the Strangers Dining Room from Monday to Friday 12.00pm to 2.30pm for lunch.

On sitting days the Strangers dining room is also open for dinner for members and staff when both Houses are sitting into the evening.



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WHS

38. Was the WHS committee consulted about the information that was provided by email on 22 February 2021 regarding resources for any Members and staff affected by a critical staffing incident such as harassment, bullying or assault?

Suggested Response:

As the information provided to all Members and staff reflected current practice, the WHS committee was not consulted. However, it will be discussed at next WHS Committee meeting.



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39. Members and staff have found that the air-conditioning in the building is extremely cold. Many staff have been bringing in hot water bottles and other heating devices as it is intolerable for them. Can you please advise what can be done to ensure that the air-conditioning is not too cold?

Suggested Response:

The buildings air-conditioning is centrally controlled to produce the industry standard temperature of 22.5 degrees plus or minus one degree. This temperature range generally ensures the greatest number of people will be comfortable.

Where the help desk receives a request to check the temperature in a space the building maintenance staff will investigate and restore the space to this temperature range if required.

Where a complaint is persistent the maintenance staff have monitoring instruments and external controls experts to assist in bring the temperature into line with the standard.