

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Question asked by the Hon. Don Harwin MLC

The Hon Don Harwin: Further to Mr McGill's answer, where he noted there has been a cost to the Parliament for "making arrangements for an additional Minister from the number of specialised ministerial suites that we currently have" what was the cost of the renovations involved in providing an office for the additional Minister?

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

No work has been undertaken to date although it is anticipated that expenditure of approximately \$5,100 will be incurred to remove 1 wall, place a doorway between two rooms and repair the carpet as a result of the abovementioned proposed modifications.

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The Hon Don Harwin: Indeed, as you mention, one of my colleagues raised the issue of residents of regional New South Wales having the opportunity to visit the Parliament at a time suitable to them. That is the reason I ask about it and obviously Parliament House in Canberra and the Queensland Parliament are potential models to consider. During the sesquicentenary year, two open days over a particular weekend were held and were successful. Are costings available for the cost of that alternative option to the Parliament and might that be considered also as perhaps a cheaper model?

The President: Historically, I presume that information in relation to the costing of the Parliament having been opened for that period of time, given that that was a particular event, would be available. But once again I ask the Financial Controller to provide the details.

Mr McGill: Yes, that information would be available: we just do not have it with us at the moment. But we can take the question on notice and provide that information to you.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

The weekend opening for the sesquicentenary year took place on Saturday 21 May and Sunday 22 May 2006. Both chambers and the Fountain Courtyard were open for inspection by the public on those days.

The cost to the Legislative Council and Joint Services Department (as they were known then) were:

LC staff labour costs	\$ 3,048
Joint Services labour costs	6,617
Energy costs Electricity and Air conditioning (LC Chamber and Fountain Court)	<u>1,116</u>
Total Costs	\$10,781

Apart from the abovementioned costs the Legislative Assembly also incurred labour and energy costs but that House has not authorised us to provide.

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The Hon Don Harwin: Mr President, have you approved the employment and payment of any additional staff to Government or crossbench members of the Legislative Council from the Parliament's budget, over and above their entitlements as set down by the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal, since your election as President?

The President: Not that I recall.

The Hon Don Harwin: As you would probably appreciate, under section 15A of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act you can do that. You cannot recall that, but perhaps you would like to take that on notice and check?

The President: Yes. Checking may be easier if you could make a suggestion as to -

The Hon Don Harwin: No there is no specific instance that I am raising. I know that it has taken place in previous Parliaments, under previous Presidents, and I was simply asking whether it has been done under your presidency.

The President: In the spirit in which it is asked, I will take that on notice and get you a definitive answer.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Since my election as President I have not approved the employment or payment of any additional staff to any member of the Legislative Council from the Parliament's budget, over and above the entitlements of members as set down by the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal.

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The Hon Don Harwin: Mr President, to move on to another area, we are in the third year of a project described in Budget Paper No. 4 as “Member’s Information Technology Replacement Strategy”. What structured consultation with members has been implemented to ensure that this strategy is meeting members’ needs?

The President: Mr Harwin, as you are probably aware there has been restructuring within the Information Technology (IT) section and we have had the departure of the manager. What I would like to do, so I can give you a comprehensive answer, is to take that on notice and we will provide you with those details.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Another meeting of the PTAG is being organised in part to discuss the Member’s Information Technology Group.

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Question asked by The Hon David Clarke MLC

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Also arising from Budget paper No. 4, are there any estimates available yet of the actual energy and water savings that have been made as a result of the \$3,449 million that has been spent on these initiatives?

Mr McGill: Mr Ward might be better placed to answer that question.

Mr Ward: At this point we can give an indication of the quantities but if you would like the dollar value of those quantities we can provide that later?

The Hon DAVID CLARKE: Yes, I would be obliged if you could provide those.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

The Department of Commerce Engineers had estimated a financial saving of \$295,000 per annum for the energy savings initiatives. The State Library, Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital will share savings of \$85,000 per annum from the project. This is due to the central air conditioning plant providing chilled and hot water to these buildings. The payback for the projects is estimated at 12 years, which has been taken across the savings of all three organisations.

It is estimated that 2,300 tonnes of green house gases will be reduced. The project is currently 90% completed. It will take 6 to 12 months of monitoring the energy use between the three buildings to gain an accurate picture of the savings.

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Question by Ms Lee Rhiannon MLC

Ms Lee Rhiannon: What other parliamentary jurisdictions, both here and overseas, allow officers into the parliamentary precinct? I do not mean the grounds but the actual Parliament House?

The President: Are you referring to the Chamber?

Ms Lee Rhiannon: I am referring to the Chamber and the whole parliamentary building, as distinct from outside the parliamentary building.

The President: I am happy to take that on notice and provide you with that information.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Each State and Territory of Australia has its own security risk profile and each parliament building has its own inherent risks. Consequently, the security needs of each parliament are unique. In Australia, no jurisdiction allows security staff into the Chamber nor will New South Wales.

It is impossible to ascertain the issue overseas. Officers will be allowed into the parliamentary building in accordance with the established protocols.

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Question by Ms Lee Rhiannon MLC

Ms Lee Rhiannon MLC: In response to an earlier question you talked about the savings that have had to be made. Has there been any cutback in the services provided by the Parliamentary Library because of savings that have had to be made?

The President: On advice, I am not aware of any at all, but I am happy to take it on notice. None has been brought to my attention and Mr Ward is not aware of any.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Library services have not needed to be cut as more information in the Library is provided efficiently especially with the use of new technology services. Any savings have not led to a reduction of service to members or other users of the Parliamentary Library.

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The Hon Don Harwin: I note the President's technology advisory group has not met for some time and I was wondering about it. Therefore an answer on notice would be helpful in elaborating upon what information technology has been doing to actually spend money that meets members' needs as opposed to just spending money.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

The Parliament makes a submission to Treasury each year for capital grants. These capital grants are required both to finance new projects and to maintain or refresh existing systems.

The next meeting of the PTAG has been delayed due to the departure of the ITS Manager. Another meeting is being arranged.

In recent years, Treasury has provided funds only for the maintenance of existing systems.

- Treasury has provided funds for the replacement of computers, notebooks and printers on a rolling basis. The prioritisation of the replacement is determined by the age of the device.
- Treasury provides funds for the replacement of ageing server systems. ITS has used these funds to ensure that network services to Members are maintained. For example, file/print and email servers have been replaced to ensure that these systems have the capacity required to cope with increased demand.
- Over the past 3 financial years, Treasury has funded the replacement of ageing cabling and network switch systems. These systems are extremely important as they provide the foundation for the delivery of data communications both within Parliament and externally (through the Internet) to organisations and community groups. It was critical that these systems were replaced as they were at end of life and represented a major risk to business continuity. The new systems increase the capacity of the network to deliver increased data capacity to members and staff.
- Training and Development: ITS actively participates in the provision of induction training for Members staff. In addition to this, the provision of special funding (made available for a period of 6 months) enabled the appointment of a training officer which allowed ITS to develop and run a series of training courses for Members and staff. The appointment of the training officer also enabled ITS to provide one-on-one training sessions for Members.