

DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES
BUDGET ESTIMATES – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Hon. FRED NILE (Chair): Thank you. In the budget papers, there is a statement that there is some pressure on the revenue side because of the reduction in catering revenue. Could you elaborate on exactly what is happening and why there is that reduction?

RESPONSE:

At the time then data for Budget Paper No.3 was submitted in April 09 it was evident that the estimated revenue for the Parliament's catering operation for 2008-09 would be less than the budget figure of \$3,400,000. This was mainly due to a shortfall in banqueting income. The revised figure for 2008-09 was \$2,800,000. Given the economic outlook at the time it was considered prudent to estimate catering income for 09-10 at a similar figure to the 08-09 actual, hence the \$600,000 reduction in revenue. It was considered that this shortfall in revenue could be offset by savings in the cost of goods sold and casual labour costs.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Following that through, the investment income was revised up from \$115,000 to \$235,000 for the 2008-09 financial year.

The Hon. FRED NILE (Chair): That would be actual.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes, that is an actual figure. Effectively, you are mentioning increased interest as a result of higher bank deposits. Is there any specific reason for higher bank deposits last year that is not being carried over to this year?

RESPONSE:

The higher revised investment income figure for 2008-09 was due to higher bank balances brought about by savings in Members' salaries and entitlements due to NSW Treasury funding an escalation for these amounts whereas there have been no increases granted.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: What were the capital works programs undertaken under the capital component of Parliament House building maintenance for which \$661,000 was allocated?

Mr WARD: It includes things such as the recent toilets refurbishment and the lift upgrades. We can provide the Committee with a more comprehensive list.

RESPONSE:

The Parliament was allocated \$642,000 in 2008/2009 to carry out upgrades to essential parts of the building, which include the following:

- Management and removal of Asbestos, Synthetic Mineral Fibres (SMF's) as per recommendations from the hazard materials experts;
- Refurbishment of 11 Ministers' and Members' rooms;
- Review of electrical distribution boards and emergency lighting throughout Parliament House;
- Refurbishment of Level 7 Strangers' Room toilet facilities to meet the disabled access code;
- Essential fire systems upgrade, including internal telephones and public address system;
- Disabled access design for the public entering the building including the Chamber for both Houses and security screens; and
- Upgrade of the theatrette lift to meet the disabled access code.

The allocation for 2009/2010 is \$661,000, which continues to pay for some of these projects. In addition, we have started work on the following programs and upgrades at Parliament House:

- Emergency Warning Intercommunication System (EWIS) installation in essential areas;
- Refurbishment of the historic chambers and the 1812 "Rum hospital",
- Fire systems upgrade VESDA and gaseous suppression system in the IT server room; and
- Confined spaces and emergency egress upgrade.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile was getting at the \$600,000 figure that is in the budget paper, although I think it was a reduction in overall expenditure of \$600,000 that you highlighted, and that was linked to an expected drop in catering revenue. In terms of that \$600,000 spending reduction, was it confined to the food and beverages section? If not, what specific activities are being impacted as a result of the \$600,000 cut?

RESPONSE:

The reduction in expenditure is entirely related to Catering Services. With the estimated fall in revenue, mainly in the functions area, it was expected that outlays to food and beverage suppliers would fall and savings would be made in agency staff and overtime.

The Hon. FRED NILE (Chair): The Parliament's budget papers show that the information technology Help desk, which does a good job, has had a dramatic increase in inquiries. Inquiries have increased from 7,989 to 9,586, which is a big increase. Does that indicate that members are having difficulty with their computers and programming? Do you have any explanation from information technology as to the category of inquiries? I have used the service.

RESPONSE:

The actual number of ITS Help desk inquiries for 2008-09 was 7,328, which is less than the inquiries for 2007-08. The 9,586 figure was based on a forecast made earlier in the financial year during a period when a higher number of calls were received. The forecast was included in the budget papers in error. There is no concern that members are having an unusually high level of difficulties with their computers. The highest number of inquiry categories related to GroupWise email (1,540), Network issues (1,335), Printing problems (714) and Administration/Project calls (626).