

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 1

Wednesday 2 September 2015

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

THE LEGISLATURE

The Committee met at 12.15 p.m.

MEMBERS

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

The Hon. S. G. Farlow
The Hon. B. C. Franklin (Deputy Chair)
Dr J. Kaye

The Hon. T. J. Khan
The Hon. S. Moselmane
The Hon. P. T. Primrose

PRESENT

The Hon. Don Harwin, *President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales*

CHAIR: I welcome everyone to the public hearing for the inquiry into the budget estimates 2015-16 for the Legislature. Before I commence I acknowledge the Gadigal people who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay respect to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals who may be present. I welcome President Harwin and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Legislature.

Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside their evidence at the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that witnesses could only answer if they had more time or certain documents to hand. In these circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or members of staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Chamber and support staff, or the Committee secretariat. I remind the President and the officers accompanying him that they are free to pass notes and refer directly to advisers seated at the table behind them. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. I ask everyone to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. The President does not need to be sworn as he has already sworn an oath to his office as a member of Parliament.

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STEVEN REYNOLDS, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Council, affirmed and examined, and

ROBERT STEFANIC, Executive Manager, Department of Parliamentary Services, and

JOHN GREGOR, Director, Financial Services Branch, Department of Parliamentary Services, sworn and examined:

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I intervene at this point to present the apologies of the Clerk of the Parliaments for not being able to be here today. I believe all members have been advised. The Clerk is on personal family leave all of this week as it is with great sadness that I must advise the Committee that his mother passed away on Monday evening. He will not be with us at all this week, as I am sure everyone understands. So he is being capably represented by the Deputy Clerk, Steven Reynolds.

CHAIR: If there is a question that only the Clerk can answer, will you take that on notice?

Mr REYNOLDS: I will.

CHAIR: You have 21 days to confer with him to get the answer. I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Legislature open for examination. As there is no provision for the President to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questions, we will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Before I begin I think I speak for all members when I ask you to pass on our best wishes to the Clerk of the Parliaments. On 13 April this year you advised the Opposition Whip that you had decided to withdraw the use of the level 7 office that had previously been allocated to Opposition whips. This overturned the arrangement that had been in place for many years under governments of both political persuasions and was done without any consultation with the Opposition Whip. Will you consider reviewing your decision?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: In the past an office on level 7 was allocated to the Opposition because the Opposition Whip did not have a standard office on level 11 and the work area used by the Opposition Whip's staff could not accommodate a full-time equivalent of two staff. That was the situation that pertained, for example, at the commencement of my service as Opposition Whip back in 2003. Following the establishment of a stand-alone office of a high standard on level 11 for the Opposition Whip in 2007—thanks to your generous decision while you were President—usage of the level 7 office by the previous two Opposition whips, one of whom was me and the other of whom was my successor and the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane's predecessor, has been negligible.

Given the low usage, a number of alternative uses for the space have been advanced in recent times. These are currently under consideration in the context of capital works, scheduled for this financial year, to configure and renovate other areas on level 7 to increase the spaces available for meetings, hearings, seminars and functions. It should be noted that, unlike his counterpart in the Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the House in the Legislative Council does not have office space on level 7. Arguably, the greatest need for office space near the Chamber, after the Presiding Officers, is a space for the Leader's staff to meet with departmental advisers at Parliament House for legislation.

It should also be noted that the Government Whip does not have an office on level 7. Now that some degree of equity has been established between the offices of the Government and Opposition whips on level 11, it would not be fair for the Opposition Whip to continue to be allocated an office on level 7 when it is not possible to allocate a space to the Government Whip as well, although I have not ruled out doing as you have asked in your question, which is the possibility of returning the space to the Opposition Whip at a future time. But all of the decisions relating to the future of level 7 are still under active consideration. The matter is not concluded. Deputy-Presidents and the Assistant-President do not have a full office suite on level 7 either. Many potential avenues could be explored, none of which I have closed off at this stage. It is still under active consideration, but I think it is only fair to put the history of the situation in context, which largely relates to level 11 offices.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Research by White Ribbon Australia shows that offering specific supports to staff who are victims of domestic violence plays a "pivotal role in shifting the attitudes and

behaviours that allow this violence to occur in the first place." Many local councils, for instance, have adopted specific policies that include leave for medical treatment and they also request changes to work arrangements such as phone numbers or email addresses to avoid harassment. Would you consider establishing a working group within the Department of Parliamentary Services [DPS] to examine the possibility of developing such a policy within the Legislature?

The PRESIDENT: It is an excellent suggestion but, rather than giving you a detailed response, I would like to take that on notice and discuss it with the Executive Manager of DPS. I am happy to respond in full.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: What was the efficiency dividend required of the Parliament last year and what is it for this financial year?

The PRESIDENT: The efficiency dividend in 2014-15 was \$360,000 and the efficiency dividend in 2015-16 is \$1.065 million.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What saving measures will the Parliament implement this year, what are the expected savings to be achieved for each measure and will they require a reduction in staffing?

The PRESIDENT: Let me start by saying that there is nothing new about efficiency dividends. I am advised that efficiency dividends were first applied to the Parliament back in the 2005-06 budget by Treasurer Michael Costa. They have been fairly consistently applied since then by governments of both political persuasions. They are imposed at a Federal level by the current Government and were also imposed by the Federal Labor Government. The philosophy of an efficiency dividend is that if you can do something at the same level of service delivery while maintaining quality but doing it more cheaply and therefore saving the taxpayer money, you should do it. That is the philosophy of an efficiency dividend, which I think or at least I hope both the Opposition and the Government would still regard as appropriate. If we can save the taxpayer money we should.

That is what we have been continuing to do under my tenure and Speaker Hancock's tenure here at the Parliament. Obviously, efficiency dividends are a decision of the Executive Government. Under this Government and under the Labor Government, as I understand it, the way that decisions about funding for the Parliament are made is that the Executive Government decides the amount of money that we are given and then it is a decision for the President and the Speaker to decide how it will be spent at Parliament. What we have done over a series of years is to find ways to do things with the same level of effectiveness but at a cheaper price to ensure we meet our efficiency dividends. The second strategy that we have also applied is to increase revenue.

In regard to your question as to how we intend to meet them in 2015-16, a number of things will be advanced as strategies. For example, we will be continuing more closely to align service delivery to peak operating periods. We will be exploring the increased use of temporary, part-time or casual staff for peak workload periods. For example, we have started to do that already with Hansard with enormous support from the Hansard staff for the direction we have been going and that will continue in the year to come. We have invested in technology to improve efficiencies and reduce labour costs—for example, the Mediportal and the SAP system that we brought in. The SAP system very much changes our cost structure and the way we manage our finances, and there are benefits for human resources as well.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Given our time, can I move on to the next question?

The PRESIDENT: Of course. There are several other things. I was not trying to—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I appreciate that. A lot of people are unhappy with Mediportal; they would be happier with EClips. In any event, that would be another question.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is it a question or editorial comment?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It was just a comment in response.

The PRESIDENT: In regard to Mediportal, since you raised it, that was done after extensive consultation. The functionality improvements that it has given are extraordinary in that you can now search 400 newspapers instead of four with one request. There was a lot of consultation before Mediportal was brought in. I know there are one or two members who have been to see me who are unhappy, but I think if they completely understood its functionality many of those concerns would go away.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Following on from your explanation about the philosophy of efficiency dividends, I know of a situation that falls right into that. A few weeks ago I hosted a lunch on a non-sitting day. The dining room was divided into two sections, one for a function and one for the lunch. There were around six tables or perhaps more but only one waiter was taking orders, serving drinks, serving food and clearing the tables. Is there a staffing issue or was that a one-off? Was it as a result of staff reductions?

The PRESIDENT: I do not believe that is the case.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I was there, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: I was not questioning your facts; I was just questioning the explanation you gave. If you have a specific concern about a specific day could you supply me with the details, because I am happy to follow them up. Our manager of parliamentary catering keeps detailed service logs—I think is the correct term—about what happens each day in the Strangers Dining Room and what happens with each of the functions. When there are specific concerns he likes to be told about them so that we can follow them up.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: He is always obliging.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think he might even be taking notes up the back.

The PRESIDENT: By all means, either raise them with me or with him directly and we will be happy to sort them out. Obviously, it needs to be understood that when you are operating something like the Strangers Dining Room it is difficult to predict demand. People decide at the last minute to come in and sometimes people are caught short, but they respond as quickly as they possibly can. I am advised there has been no change to staff ratios. They try to do their best, but if there is a problem on a specific day, just come and see us and we will work it out.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Mr President, I would be grateful if you would take this question on notice. What savings measures were implemented by the Parliament for each of the last three financial years? What actual savings were achieved by each strategy? What reduction of staff occurred as a result of each strategy and at what cost?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: As a gesture of goodwill I am happy to take that question on notice, even though I am rearing to go all the way through.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I am happy if you wish to, but I have two minutes. I note when I come in and out of this building, as I regularly do, frequently at least one of the gates at the front does not open, and at the device at the back, referred to colloquially as the "carbuncle of the Parliament", frequently officers need to stand out in the rain to swipe cards and do all sorts of things. Please comment on whether you believe that that security operation, in terms of the external precinct access, is operating satisfactorily.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: In terms of the latter part of your question, I will take the same attitude you took while you were President to commenting on the adequacy of the security arrangements in relation to this place and the safety of all the people in it. Obviously, the Department of Parliamentary Services [DPS] and the security manager have my full confidence in terms of their handling of security. There were a few legacy issues that I inherited when I became President in relation to the arrangements that have been put in place for the perimeter. I have discussed some of them on a previous occasion. There have been various improvements, I believe, that have been made. Obviously, the perimeter security is a matter of the greatest importance and we keep those arrangements under constant review. I am sure the Executive Manager and I would be very happy to give you a fuller briefing, outside a public hearing, if there are any specific matters you want to bring to my attention.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Mr President, I fully appreciate and respect that I do not want to compromise security in this place. My concerns are for the administrative arrangements that are clearly there for

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all to see. The fact is that usually at least one of the exit gates is not working and I have been here on a weekend when both gates are open at the front, and at the back I frequently see people in fluoro vests staring at relevant sections of the gates. If you do not wish to comment, I am—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The Executive Manager will, within the parameters I have discussed, make a few observations.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I am happy to take it on notice or do it informally.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Thank you for that, and we will keep moving on.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order: What concerns me—and I am not being critical of the member—is the member has made a series of assertions with regard to the issue, and we all understand what he is saying. The President and Mr Stefanic have indicated that they can give some response. Chair, I think it would be appropriate that there be a response.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Chair, to make this rapid, if Mr Stefanic could give us a quick answer to that, that might be a good idea.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think that would be appropriate, and frankly if we have to stay a minute or two longer to be fair to the crossbench, I do not mind.

Mr STEFANIC: The reliability issues are noted and we are continually working on them. There were some engineering limitations in certain components of the gates that have led to reliability issues. We have progressively worked on upgrading those components and reliability has improved. On occasion, delivery trucks in manoeuvring run into the gates and that affects their operation. Those things are beyond our control and sometimes the cause of the reliability issue is not immediately obvious. In terms of some of the other limitations you mentioned, there are ongoing issues which we are looking at, and we have been working with architects to rectify.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Mr President, on the MediaPortal issue, you are probably hearing from people who do not like it, not from people who do. Let me formally put on the record that I think it is a huge step forward and I really like it. Perhaps one thing to be considered is some training for members in how to use it, because it does everything that Eclipse does only better and faster. Perhaps I could ask you to take on notice that there might be an opportunity to train some members in the MediaPortal area.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I will take that as a suggestion—not even as a comment, just as a suggestion.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you. I go to the efficiency dividend, which is \$360,000 in 2014-15 and \$1.065 million in 2015-16. Why has it grown by a factor of three?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I refer to my previous answer in terms of the way that the Executive Government and the Parliament determine money. They make their decision; we have to live with it. Really this question is better directed to the Treasurer at her budget estimates hearings. The only thing I can say is it has been applied consistently across the Executive Government and the Parliament, so it is—

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is nothing we did?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is nothing we did. Honestly, while many things can be said about the fairness or otherwise of efficiency dividends, the reality is that in terms of their impact on the Parliament we have had a relatively easy time making the Executive Government understand that the dividend can only be applied to a limited part of our expenditure. A lot of our allocation is in fact members' staff and entitlements and members' salary, which is non-discretionary and which we cannot save money on. The Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal [PRT]—

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is not part of our calculation?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, it is not part. I think I have discussed that at previous estimates hearings, so I will not take any more of your time.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you, Mr President. On notice, will you provide us with the numbers of full-time and part-time casual staff employed in Parliament, leaving aside members' staff, for each of the last four financial years? This goes to the question you are taking on notice for the Hon. Peter Primrose but it also provides the base numbers for those. Earlier this year I was interviewed by somebody who asked my opinion of the finance department consultants to the Department of Parliamentary Services. Can you tell us what happened to that?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is the Financial Services branch restructure.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Yes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is basically at this stage: the consultants who did the work gave the Executive Manager a report. He then prepared a proposal for the Speaker and me to consider and we are currently considering that. No decision has been finally made on it.

Dr JOHN KAYE: When will you announce your decision?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is a complex matter and I am happy to say why it is not finalised. The Financial Services branch consists of staff who work on members' entitlements and our accounts staff. It is not finalised because I am still considering it. I am not prepared to make a final decision on it until I see what is in the PRT determination, which has not been brought down yet. There are some implications that follow from the particular model that the tribunal recommends. If the tribunal recommends very little change then it will be pretty easy to finalise the situation if that is the end of the matter. There is some suggestion that there might be some movement on some policy issues, in which case we will have to have a bit of rethink. That is really the reason why it is still with me.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What was the capacity of the new building at the design phase? How many people was it designed to accommodate?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That is a good question. I am advised that it was 39.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And how many does it carry at the completion stage?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That is the number of people currently in it.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So it was designed for 39 and it accommodates 39. Have there been any structural issues with the building?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: He is opening a new folder; that is a bad sign.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I know what that look on the President's face. Am I about to be turfed out?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Dr Kaye, could you just remind me of the exact question you have asked?

Dr JOHN KAYE: It was not an exact question but the question I have asked is: Have there been any structural issues or other faults or defects with the building?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: How much time do we have left?

Dr JOHN KAYE: About two minutes. You could take that question on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am happy to answer the question, but it will take the whole two minutes. Would you prefer me to give it to you on notice?

Dr JOHN KAYE: No, it is an important matter. I can put the other questions I have on notice.

CHAIR: Dr Kaye, you have one minute remaining.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I do not want to take time from Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. Perhaps you could give us a short answer and then put the rest on notice; would that be convenient?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I do not know that I would want to do that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Let's do this by yes or no.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The new office wing on level nine was constructed to address a staff accommodation shortage, as you are aware. There have remained some defects and outstanding works to be completed due to the performance of the building contractor. Facilities branch engaged an independent consultant to conduct a full audit of the construction and the resulting report was provided to the building contractors for their rectification works. This measure was taken to ensure the building works are completed according to the contract and the Building Code of Australia requirements. These outstanding matters are in the final process of being resolved. In terms of what outstanding matters there are, it might be better if I answer that on notice, if that is okay, rather than going into great detail now.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Yes, thank you; that will fine. I have one other question. Am I correct in saying that the new couches in our offices were made in the United States?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Where were they made?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Germany.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Why were Australian-made couches not sourced?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am definitely going to answer this question before we move to questions from Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. The sofa selected for members' rooms has been chosen for its longevity of product life—therefore, sustainability. It has a 10-year product warranty and was recommended by an independent consultant for its upholstery, which has a serviceable life of up to 30 years. The sofa has this particular upholstery as it was demonstrated that over the long term the selection of this type of covering is a far more cost-effective option than other covering materials due to maintenance and longevity requirements. The sofa has an RAL quality label, which represents the German equivalent of Australia's Good Environmental Choice Australia [GECA] ecolabel. The sofa was also chosen for its open leg design to allow full accessibility for cleaning underneath, reducing work, health and safety [WHS] risks. So basically the situation is that it was the best product available for the amount of money in the budget and it was done for reasons of sustainability and serviceability.

CHAIR: Mr President, I have a general question about community access to Parliament House. Are you proposing any changes to the guidelines for the hosting of exhibitions, events and functions in Parliament House?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You have asked about events, exhibitions and functions. There are certainly no changes at all in terms of events and exhibitions that I am aware of. It remains as it has been. The only change that has taken place in terms of exhibitions is that during the peak period of visitation, which is the summer, generally speaking we ourselves will organise an exhibition with a Parliament-linked theme or we will put part of our art collection on display so that we have reliably every summer school holidays something of interest when visitation spikes. For example, we had the "Politics and Sacrifice" exhibition this year.

Two years ago we had the "Twenty-five: stories from Australia's first Parliament" exhibition. That was an initiative of mine, which I think has been worthwhile in terms of visitor engagement and visitor experience in Parliament House. So there is no change there. In terms of functions, the only change has been to the room hire policy. When it was approved a few months ago it was put on the website so it is there for everybody to see. That is really the only change. And it is only change that has to do with the cost structure, not to do with accessibility for anyone who wants to come and host an event or a function at Parliament House.

CHAIR: Are those charges intended to be applied to outside organisations only? I am concerned about members' privileges and what privileges members have for the use of rooms when meeting with deputations, delegations, and other things as part of their parliamentary role.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: There is not intended to be any impact on members fulfilling their parliamentary duty. In terms of members organising meetings or private events here with their constituents, there really is no impact at all. There is a slightly different cost structure, but one of the things I insisted on is that there be no impact on members who are conducting meetings pursuant to their duties, or on the activities of parliamentary parties or caucus. So they have a particular categorisation in the policy called "members' private events". If they are put on a member's House Committee statement, there are no room booking charges, for example.

CHAIR: I understand that obviously there will be charges if there is catering, but if there is no catering then there will be no charge?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It just depends which sort of event you are talking about.

CHAIR: I am talking about a member's private event.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: If it fits into the categorisation of a member's private event then there are no room booking charges and only charges for the catering. However, if a member is sponsoring an event for an external organisation then there is a different cost structure to what there has been in the past. Earlier we spoke about efficiency dividends. I do not believe that the only way of meeting an efficiency dividend is to make a cut. I believe that, where it can be done responsibly, we should also increase revenue. And there will be an increase in revenue obviously as a result of us bringing in the revised room booking policy. But I think this is appropriate and I will happily defend it. One only has to look at our neighbours, the State Library of New South Wales and The Mint, to see what they charge to external organisations to realise that we are missing out on revenue and therefore putting pressure on service delivery by not charging when we sponsor events or when we receive requests from external organisations to hold events here and do not have an appropriate costing structure.

I have insisted that we have not only the exclusion I talked about earlier for members' private events but also a discounted rate for room booking charges for any member-sponsored event—and there is a discounted rate for room booking charges, and they are heavily discounted. But in terms of external organisations that come her, I think it is only fair that, for example, our theatrette and its hire charge compared to the Metcalfe Auditorium, which is next door at the State Library, should have some sort of equivalence in the costing structure. Prudently, and after lengthy discussion between the Executive Manager and me, we have arrived at a reasonably good place, which I am happy to defend.

CHAIR: Have you taken on board the fact that that may prevent community groups and ethnic groups from using the theatrette to commemorate anniversaries of events such as the Assyrian genocide?

The PRESIDENT: I do not think that the cost structure is such that it would preclude many people. If it is a member-sponsored event—which attracts the discounted rate—the room hire charges are not prohibitive. With respect, there are costs involved in running a parliament, and why should ours be the only venue within the realm of the State in Sydney that imposes no room hire charges? We must still pay the bills. By not imposing a modest room hire charge, we would be shouldering a budgetary pressure in terms of the delivery of services to members, which is our core business. I believe it is the appropriate way to go.

CHAIR: We often offer a welcome to the "people's House", and that is why it should be treated differently from other venues.

The PRESIDENT: I believe the State Library also belongs to the people.

CHAIR: Not to the same extent. Is the estimated income from the room hire charges in the budget?

The PRESIDENT: Those charges are all on the intranet. There is no—

Dr JOHN KAYE: I think Reverend Nile's question was seeking how much revenue they are anticipated to generate.

CHAIR: And is that in the budget?

The PRESIDENT: We have already made substantial progress. The loss generated by the catering branch has been significant over the past couple of years—almost \$1 million. We cannot have a catering operation that loses that much. We have been trying to reduce the loss, and last year it was down to \$680,000, which represents about a \$300,000 reduction.

CHAIR: I appreciate that; I was not questioning the catering.

The PRESIDENT: We are trying to bring it down even further, because the lower it is the more it relieves the pressure on us to make savings in service delivery and other areas.

CHAIR: I was questioning the income from room hire rather than from catering.

The PRESIDENT: I responded that way because, in terms of our budget, room hire income is offset against the cost of catering. That is how we consider the issue internally.

CHAIR: The time allocated for the hearing has concluded. Any other questions that members have should be placed on notice. Mr President, I thank you and your staff for your attendance and cooperation in answering questions. All the best for another year. Any questions taken on notice should be answered within 21 days.

The PRESIDENT: I very much appreciate how productively we all worked together on capital works issues during the last Parliament in particular. I place on the record how grateful I am to crossbench and Opposition members for their support. Much had been neglected for too long, and we have now dealt with that backlog. That is very much appreciated. If ever crossbench or Opposition members have any concerns about an aspect of the Parliament's administration, they should come to see me because I am happy to deal with them.

CHAIR: Crossbench members are always keen to assist.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Speak for yourself, Fred. The Greens are here to be cross.

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
