

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 – PREMIER AND FINANCE

Wednesday 2 March 2022

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

THE LEGISLATURE

The Committee met at 9:30.

CORRECTED

MEMBERS

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Acting Chair)

The Hon. Lou Amato

Ms Abigail Boyd

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg

The Hon. Don Harwin

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane

PRESENT

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, *President of the Legislative Council*

* Please note:

[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered.

[audio malfunction] is used when words are lost due to a technical malfunction.

[disorder] is used when members or witnesses speak over one another.

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

Budget Estimates secretariat

Room 812

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

The ACTING CHAIR: Welcome to the additional public hearing of the Portfolio Committee No. 1 inquiry into budget estimates 2021-22. Before I commence, I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. I welcome President Matthew Mason-Cox and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Legislature.

Before we commence, I would like to make some brief comments about procedures for today's hearing. Today's proceedings are being broadcast live on the Parliament's website and a transcript will be placed on the Committee's website once it becomes available. In accordance with broadcasting guidelines, media representatives are reminded that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. All witnesses in budget estimates have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. If witnesses wish to hand up documents, that should be done through the Committee staff.

President, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you—although I do not see a table behind you. They must be invisible. Finally, could everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses will be sworn in prior to giving evidence. President Mason-Cox, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn in as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. I would also like to remind the following witnesses that you do not need to be sworn, as you have been sworn in earlier budget estimates hearings before this Committee: Mr David Blunt, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council, and Mr Mark Webb, Chief Executive of the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Mr DAVID BLUNT, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council, Department of the Legislative Council, on former oath

Mr MARK WEBB, Chief Executive, Department of Parliamentary Services, on former affirmation

Ms JOCELYN WEBB, Director, Financial Services, Department of Parliamentary Services, sworn and examined

The ACTING CHAIR: Today's questioning will be on a free-flow basis, so you may get it from all angles. Even the Government is going to ask questions today, which is going to be interesting. The question is whether you can answer them. We will start with the Opposition.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I might just take you to the area of policies in general, President, and policy consultation surrounding those policies. I just wanted to ask you is there a consultation policy in force in the New South Wales Parliament? I am referring now specifically to the suite of policies that the Parliament has.

The PRESIDENT: The undertaking, as I understand it—and I will ask Mr Webb to expand upon this—is that policies are reviewed on a four-year cycle every term. In that regard, consultation is obviously the hallmark of that policy review, depending on the nature of the policy being reviewed. In that regard, I am advised that there is a backlog that does need to be addressed and is in the process of being addressed. I might ask Mr Webb to make some remarks about that, but it is very important that the policies of Parliament are subject to that regular review process. You might note that we are reviewing the harassment and sexual harassment policies at the moment through the Broderick review. Indeed, a lot of work has also gone into fatigue management over the last six to 12 months as a result of the extended hours of sitting of the House. With those few introductory comments, I might ask Mr Webb to reflect on where we are up to in that whole policy review process and particularly which policies are currently being reviewed—and, indeed, the backlog and when we are looking to address that.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Before you add to that, Mr Webb, can I just ask is there a formal policy to consult?

MARK WEBB: I can talk to that. To the point of consultation, if it is a policy relating to safety matters we have a formal position that the consultation process is through the work health and safety advisory committee. Last year the Joint Consultative Committee, which is our consultation process with the unions, put in a request that for policies with a staffing impact we use the JCC as a consultation mechanism to ensure staff views are taken into account. We have agreed to that. I would say one of the major reasons that we have a bit of a backlog at the moment is that the same people that do the policy review within my department are the people that have been running the COVID response over the last couple of years. With the Omicron outbreak last year, since we made that agreement with the JCC we have not actually had any policies come forward for consultation, but we have agreed that we would use that mechanism for consultation. But we do have a legal obligation to consult through the work health and safety committee, so that would be the only thing that would trump that requirement.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Prior to the JCC airing of this, there was no formal consultation mechanism with members or staff on policies that actually affected their day-to-day working environment?

MARK WEBB: We tended to do it more on a policy-by-policy basis. We looked at who was affected by the policy. We did not have, if you like, a global position on consultation except for the work health and safety area that I talked about. We tended to look at the impact of a particular policy and look at a consultation measure on a case-by-case basis. It was a good suggestion by the JCC, so we were happy to take it up. As I say, unfortunately we have not actually put it into practice yet, but that is because we have not put any policies forward because of the—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I ask, then, if that was agreed to at the JCC, is there a proposal to actually solidify that in a consultation policy? In other words—

MARK WEBB: Happy to look at that. I do not have anything like that in front of me at the moment, but I do not have any objection to it either.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I would have thought that would be a threshold minimum for policies that actually affect the working environment and conditions of both members and staff. I would have thought there should be a formal policy in place that requires you to consult in that collaborative way.

MARK WEBB: Yes, I am happy to. I have no objection to that. That is the philosophy we try to take into policy development, so I have no problems with formalising it.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I ask how many policies on the New South Wales Parliament intranet are actually in force? Apparently there are a ton of them on there, but how many are actually in force?

MARK WEBB: There is. All of the ones on the intranet are in force. Some of them are out of date, though, because of the backlog that I referred to before. As the President said, we are meant to review them every four years, and there are quite a few there that have not been reviewed in the last four years. They are still in force, but they do need to be reviewed.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay, so we could potentially have policies on there that are so far out of date that they are almost irrelevant?

MARK WEBB: Yes, that would be my concern. In terms of how we have prioritised the policies, we have gone to the oldest ones first, but there are still some that are quite out of date that we need to work through.

DAVID BLUNT: If I could just add one observation, just because a policy is old it does not mean that it is not still important. A good example is the code of conduct for members' staff. That dates from some years ago but it is still vitally important and the provisions of it remain current.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: My only concern is that it could have a perverse effect whereby part of an outdated policy may actually be counterproductive if it was written 10 years ago and things have moved on, for whatever reason.

MARK WEBB: I think that is a fair point. David is right; sometimes when we look at a policy it is still relevant, it makes sense, we update the date and do not make many more changes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Which is again why consultation is so critical, because you will align the two with reality based on—

MARK WEBB: Yes, absolutely. That is true.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In October 2021, in answers to supplementary questions submitted for this portfolio, it was said that "the New South Wales Parliament House closed-circuit television and security access control systems policies are due to be reviewed in 2022", which we are obviously now in. Have the reviews commenced?

MARK WEBB: No, not yet.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: How many policies that are relevant to the employment of members' staff have been updated in the previous 12 months without any consultation being conducted prior to the policy being updated or changed? I guess this relates to the context of the previous questions. But the question is are there any policies that relate to the employment of members' staff that have been updated in the previous 12 months without any consultation?

MARK WEBB: I would have to take that on notice. Sorry, I do not have that information in front of me.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Great. That ties up the policy section.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sorry, before you go off that, I think sort of related is the work that is being done in relation to the independent complaints officer, which I know is a work in progress. We have had updates and that consultation that we have had has been very good. One of the things that the complaints officer is not set up to do is to deal with complaints around sexual assault and harassment. That is my understanding. Perhaps you could clarify what is being done? Are we waiting for the Broderick review to come back before putting that independent complaints mechanism in place or is there work being done on that in the meantime?

The PRESIDENT: In relation to the complaints officer, it has stalled, if you like, in the Legislative Council, as you would be aware. There have been discussions between the respective privileges committees to iron out the last detail or two. As I understand it, those discussions have not brought it to a conclusion and there are some other discussions occurring behind the scenes. I might ask the Clerk to reflect on that, because he is a lot closer to it than I am.

DAVID BLUNT: As you are aware, there is a motion currently before the House, debate on which was adjourned until the first sitting day this year. It was then postponed last week until the first sitting day in March. It is on the *Notice Paper* as a matter of Business of the House for 22 March, with potential consideration by the House then. At the briefing session that the Deputy Clerk and I provided to members and your staff a couple of weeks ago, at the request of the Privileges Committee, the question you are asking now was one of the ones that was addressed then. Through that discussion and subsequent consultation and review of the detail of the reports of the privileges committees, in relation to sexual harassment, it is very clear that the terms of reference for the independent complaints officer include bullying and harassment. Of course, harassment includes more than just sexual harassment.

In relation to sexual harassment, the Anti-Discrimination Act includes a very specific provision in relation to members of Parliament and other participants in the parliamentary workplace—a provision that I think is not well understood or remembered by everyone here, but it is there. It proscribes sexual harassment by and of members of Parliament. Ultimately, if a complaint is taken to the Anti-Discrimination Board within 12 months of the event, if not conciliated, there can be potentially a fine of up to \$110,000, for which a member or anyone else who is the harasser would be personally liable. So that is an important piece of information that I think all members and everyone else in the parliamentary workplace should be aware of. Hopefully, just that process of education will have a salutary impact.

But it is envisaged that the independent complaints officer will develop a protocol with the Anti-Discrimination Board that would address the detail of the sorts of matters that would be referred by the independent complaints officer to the Anti-Discrimination Board because of their expertise and experience in this field, and which matters the independent complaints officer would deal with themselves. Given that the independent complaints officer is envisaged to be there to deal with complaints about members' conduct in an expeditious and confidential manner, it would be expected that the sorts of complaints that can be dealt with quickly and confidentially would indeed be dealt with by the independent complaints officer, whereas perhaps more complex ones, where the expertise of the ADB would be of assistance, might be referred. But that detail would be worked out between the officer and the ADB.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So from a practical perspective, then, if we have a person within Parliament who has experienced sexual harassment or assault—I mean, often people are not aware of the difference when they are experiencing it. On the assumption that the complaints officer is in place, would the complaints officer be set up to then confidentially handle that without being obliged to take action that is not necessarily what the complainant would want? For example, a complainant might want some sort of intervention in the circumstance or they might want education of the person they are complaining against. Will the complaints officer be obliged to involve the ADB?

DAVID BLUNT: Again, that will be a matter to be determined in that protocol that is developed between the independent complaints officer and the ADB. But, as a matter of general principle in relation to the proposal that is before the House, in relation to harassment of any kind—whether it is sexual harassment or otherwise, or bullying—there are particular provisions around confidentiality, and matters are to essentially remain confidential so that if the complainant does not want the matter to be made public it will not be. That is one really important feature. But exactly the sorts of rectification steps that you have just described would be precisely what is envisaged by the proposal that is before the House—those sorts of immediate, timely, practical ways of resolving matters so that there is some change in behaviour. If the rectification steps that the independent complaints officer recommends are not implemented or not accepted by the member, then the matter gets escalated to the Privileges Committee.

The PRESIDENT: I would just like to add, that first part of your question about whether this is something that the Broderick review is looking at and whether it is waiting for that Broderick review to comment on it before it is put in place—the two are separate. The Broderick review will no doubt comment on the proposals that Parliament puts up, and both the Speaker and I are very keen to progress this and to have the complaints officer put in place as soon as possible. It is not subject to the Broderick review, but the Broderick review will no doubt reflect upon what has been done.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: And there is a review provision, isn't there, within that proposal that the House is to consider?

DAVID BLUNT: Yes, within 12 months—so before the end of the parliamentary term.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If we got feedback from Ms Broderick that perhaps we could improve it in some way, that could be then considered, but at least then we would have it in place to begin with. We could improve upon it.

The PRESIDENT: Absolutely, yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That was just to follow up on those questions with regards to the Broderick report. You have just indicated, Mr Blunt, that the time frame for reporting is within 12 months. Is that right?

DAVID BLUNT: The review?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes.

DAVID BLUNT: Sorry, it is probably best for Mr President or Mark to—

The PRESIDENT: I can comment on that. The Broderick review is planned to conclude in probably May or June, subject to the current phase of consultation which is occurring—the survey that has gone out to all people affected. The feedback from that is now being assessed; indeed, the process of that is coming to its conclusion. That will form a very important part of the report, the quantitative analysis, which of course will be there with the qualitative analysis and the interviews that have been held with members and their staff and people who have availed themselves of that option through that process. All that material, that data, will be the foundation for the report, which we anticipate, based on current expectations, to be in May or June. We will have a better idea of that once the data has been fully assessed.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Will the report be released around that time?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. It will be made public, yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What resources have been allocated to the implementation of the recommendations, as far as you know, of the Broderick report?

The PRESIDENT: Well, we don't know what the recommendations are. But once we have those recommendations presented to us, there will be a quick and timely response in that regard and an assessment of the cost implications. Let me assure you, Mr Moselmane, that the Parliament takes its responsibilities in this area very seriously and will be acting to remediate whatever needs to be remediated. I should note in that regard that the policy review has already been done by Ms Broderick in terms of the current policy framework. There is some identification of some areas where we could improve, and those improvements are already in play. Those policies are being updated as we go to ensure that we have the model—the absolute best—system in place to ensure that this is an exemplar here in Parliament, as it should be, for all businesses, corporations and organisations across New South Wales.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How are the recommendations envisaged to be supervised? Is it by an advisory group?

The PRESIDENT: We have an advisory group that has been established. You would be aware that the Deputy Speaker is the chair of that advisory group and that has members involved in it. That has staff members from across the Parliament. That group is working very closely with the executive team as well as with the Broderick review, who are reporting regularly and interacting with that group regularly. We envisage that the implementation phase, depending on what the recommendations are, will be a close working relationship with that advisory group and with the executive of the Parliament to ensure that we are able to implement those recommendations as necessary.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Mr President, will the Government provide a response to the Broderick review? Will it be put in front of the Government to provide a response?

The PRESIDENT: The Broderick review has been commissioned by the executive group of Parliament, so the executive group of Parliament will be providing a response. In that regard, the Government has commissioned a report by Pru Goward; indeed, that is a process that is still ongoing, as I am aware. I am not sure about the timing of that, but obviously that is an issue that is for Government to consider, given it relates to their commissioning of that report. I do not expect the Government will be responding to a report commissioned by Parliament. Mr Webb just suggested—unless we require further resources in order to implement it. But, of course, that is always an ongoing issue with Parliament and the Executive: the need to ensure that this place, in whatever form, is adequately resourced. That will continue to be something we fight as hard as we can for.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I was going to go to the matter of staffing, which is very important and I want to get to it. But since you have segued us into that area, President, we might just go to the issue of the Legislature budget because I think it is very important. I want to, for a start, traverse where we are up to. My recollection is that there was a hearing by the PAC which handed down a recommendation for an independent funding model. This is the perennial problem of the Legislature being subservient to funding by Treasury. There is, from what we can gather, a pretty big misalignment of demand for funds versus supply in terms of the capital budget and other things. The PAC recommended an independent funding model along the same lines as the UK model, whereby we would be quarantined in the appropriation bills for a certain amount of money but we would still have to put forward a business case. I understand that the Chair has a bill, which is currently residing in the LA, to give effect to that. Did you want to give us an update on where that is at and the rationale behind all of that?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. That would be a great opportunity to reflect on some of the issues Parliament faces in terms of its capital budget particularly. By way of background, as I understand it, the Public Accountability Committee—which, at the time, I was a member of—reviewed the budgetary position. Whilst the Parliament, as we all know, is subject to the vagaries of putting a budget forward and dealing with the Executive

and the ERC through that process—out the end, through a somewhat opaque process, comes a budget for Parliament, which we make work as best we can. In regard to the PAC recommendations I think the preferred model was the House of Commons model, but there were a couple of alternatives there.

One was that the Public Accountability Committee act as, if you like, the reviewer of the Legislative Council budget; that the Public Accounts Committee similarly act in relation to the Legislative Assembly; that a joint committee of sorts act in relation to the joint responsibilities of Parliament, the DPS responsibilities; and that together a full budget for Parliament be worked out and then submitted to Treasury. And then if the Treasurer wishes to quibble with that, then that is detailed in the Treasurer's speech to Parliament and explained. The model that I believe was encapsulated in the bill that has passed the Legislative Council that was brought in by the Chair and is in the Legislative Assembly. I am not sure where that goes from here. We have not had a response from Government in that regard. It is still something that is on the *Notice Paper* in the Legislative Assembly.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: If I hear you correctly, President, that means that the Treasurer would still have veto over the proposition. The point is that it would become a publicly available document subject to debate, and there would have to be good reason as to why.

The PRESIDENT: That is right.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: And in the UK, by and large, this works.

The PRESIDENT: The UK is probably a step further towards independence in that they work out the budget and that is it. It is delivered and it is put in the Treasury budget documents. Whereas this model is a step back from that in that you would have an independent process which would be overseen by those respective committees and through that process a budget determined. That would be a public inquiry with Treasury officials coming and with other stakeholders coming. The committee would be able to hear from the Clerk and from DPS and from other stakeholders in relation to that budget, understand the needs of Parliament, be able to independently assess all of that material, come to an independent view as to what an appropriate budget is and put it to the Treasurer. The Treasurer then would have to make a decision based on their own internal advice and other issues—a government has to balance the priorities of its budget—and would come back with a figure to Parliament, which would then be discussed if there was a variance in the Treasurer's contribution to Parliament.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I ask, perhaps Mr Blunt, in terms of the status of the Borsak bill, am I correct in saying that they were waiting on the recommendations of the PAC and then they have asked for extensions to respond to the PAC before we deal with the bill? Or is that not necessarily correct? I am just trying to get a handle on why we have not had a response from the Government on any of this stuff.

DAVID BLUNT: I might just ask the staff who are listening in if they can send me an update as to where we are at in terms of the Government response to the PAC reports. But in terms of Mr Borsak's bill, that is solely a matter for the Legislative Assembly now as to the programming of that bill in terms of other private members' bills that are before that House.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. We might just go to some specifics, I think, to tease out some of the issues surrounding this issue. How much of this financial year's allocated budget has been spent?

MARK WEBB: We are on track, at the moment. In terms of the exact percentage, I would have to take that on notice, but we are on track to expend what we have been allocated this year.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: We are in March, so we are kind of—

MARK WEBB: Three-quarters of the way through. I would say there is one exception to that. The construction pause that happened at the start of the financial year meant that two of our major projects—in particular, the membrane project—had to pause for three months. So that expenditure is on track from a project point of view, but it is all deferred for three months. We are going to have to move a little bit of money into next financial year to catch up. But, besides that, yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In terms of the overall budgetary restraints from Treasury, which we touched on in the introduction from the President, in the context of the money that is required to simply remediate the building—we are not talking about capital improvements now, just remediation and depreciation—can you give us a feel for the gaps there?

The PRESIDENT: We have done quite a bit of work in this regard and the advice that I have is that we are talking a figure over the last 20 years where there has not been a proper allocation of funding for what I would call remediation and maintenance and upgrading of the building as needed. The figure is around about \$188 million. And, looking forward, we have got some serious remediation issues that must be addressed in the near term. If they are not—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sorry, President, \$188 million is what we need just to get it up to scratch. What have we got in the kitty?

The PRESIDENT: We get \$2.9 million in a budget each year for minor capital works, and then we need to put forward a business case in relation to other aspects—for example, the IT rejuvenation process, the membrane of the building which was creating leaks. You might have seen, with some of the weather, some of that leaking is still there, and that is in phase four of that project, which is about an \$18 million spend. So we are addressing some of those pretty fundamental issues. You might remember the leaking in the Jubilee Room, which was quite significant and affected a large number of books. Actually there was leaking into the Legislative Council forecourt area outside the Chamber as well. Sadly, there is some leaking in the Chamber itself. So we have some serious issues. We are occupying the oldest public building here in Australia. It has significant heritage value. It is really a priceless piece of our heritage. In that regard, we just simply have not invested in ensuring that it is fit for purpose.

There are occupational health and safety issues as a result. We have parts of the building that are not able to be accessed. For example, the second storey balcony is now a no-go area because there is wood rot on the balcony. It is dangerous and so staff have been advised not to access the second floor balcony of the Rum Hospital. One example which always shocks me is that we had some remediation—I think it was last year—and a humidifier was placed in the Legislative Council Chamber and overnight it took out 29 litres of water, which underpins the problem we have with mould in that Chamber. There are a number of members who are affected by that and have come directly to me raising those concerns. I have got to say, as a former asthmatic, I am affected by it as well. The mould and the overarching moisture in that building, I think, is becoming a significant occupational and health and safety issue for members who have to work in the Parliament itself—not to mention visitors, not to mention the other precincts that are affected by this, along the whole Rum Hospital. So one of the key issues, I think, is to address that in the near future. That is certainly what the Parliament will be putting forward to the Executive in relation to urgent remediation works.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So we have got remediation and what seems like fairly urgent WHS issues that have to be addressed—it is not a like or would like. Then you have got the issue of the actual accommodation and the adequacy of the accommodation to house people—staff. But I want to go particularly to the Press Gallery. I understand The Guardian has got temporary spots at the moment. Where are we in terms of budgetary requirements to accommodate the necessary expansion of the Press Gallery and, in particular, permanent spots for The Guardian?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Chair, I wonder if, before we go off this topic, I might just be able to ask one follow-up to the President?

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes, sure. Please do.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: President, I warmly endorse what you are saying about the importance of investing in the fabric of what is an important public building and, indeed, an historic heritage building. It is the case though that in the past 10 years there has been more than \$80 million—almost \$100 million—spent on upgrading the building, is it not, which has addressed issues like WHS in the kitchen, food safety issues in the kitchen, WHS in members' offices in terms of furniture, and various other upgrades to the building as well, to make it more functional?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, that is true, and it is simply a question of ensuring that we have adequate funding in relation to some of those more neglected parts of the building. Mr Harwin, you are absolutely right that there has been some investing—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Perhaps I would characterise it as, rather than "neglected", things that were on the list—

The PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, it has been a long list.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: —that were not addressed after the initial \$80 to \$100 million?

The PRESIDENT: That is right. Indeed, the investment in the Jubilee Room was a wonderful investment and that, sadly, was undermined by the massive leak which we had, which we are still recovering from.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Have we got to the bottom of whether that was caused by faulty work when constructing a building over the top of it?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. The feedback we have had is that there was an issue with blockages of drainpipes and the like. So we were pleased in some ways that that was addressed then rather than with the amount

of rain we have had recently and we are about to receive, because I think the impact would have been so much more severe. But did you want to comment on that, Mr Webb?

MARK WEBB: Yes—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I just ask—as a little bit of an addendum, because you might want to put that into context though—if it is \$80 million over 10 years, roughly \$8 million a year on average, on evidence that you put on before in a previous answer, you are saying that we need almost \$200 million just to bring things up to scratch?

MARK WEBB: Yes. So—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In one year?

MARK WEBB: Well, yes. Sorry, and I should say that even if \$180 million was available we—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It was paid zero in the 15 years before.

MARK WEBB: That is right. I should say, to support what Mr Harwin was saying, in the first 10 years of this millennium the average investment in the Parliament was more in the nature of \$3.5 to \$4 million. From 2011 onwards that jumped up to closer to \$10 million a year and made a huge difference. We would have been in much worse shape if that hadn't happened.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure.

MARK WEBB: But what you are saying is quite right. The investment needed to catch up is probably more in the order of \$25 million a year, if we wanted to catch up everything that needs to be done.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So credit where it is due, but we still have a ton of—

MARK WEBB: Yes, that is exactly right. The interventions made in the early 2010s made a massive difference. Honestly, there would be parts of the building that would be uninhabitable if not for that advocacy that was done at the time.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Given the circumstances, have we submitted urgent requests from the Government to say—you may have done it; other leadership presidency has done it—that it is urgent that we need this money to repair? Otherwise the cost of repair will double or triple, perhaps, in time. Have we made submissions?

The PRESIDENT: They certainly have been made. It is probably worth looking at the future prospects because we have had an assessment that over the next 10 years, if we do not receive significant investment above what I would call the minor capital works budget, which is \$2.9 million a year, it is anticipated that deficit will grow between another \$200 and \$250 million. So this position is dire. As the Hon. Don Harwin pointed out, there are parts of the building that have received some investment, and that has been very welcome. Recently, in relation to the Government's position about trying to accelerate investment more generally in the economy, there were submissions taken to boost economic activity through the COVID period. One of those was the membrane to the building, which is an \$18 million investment over a number of years. But the reality is that there are some very neglected parts of the building. Probably the most neglected is the old Rum Hospital. I have some pictures here which might be useful to members, which really explain that in more detail. If that was satisfactory, Chair, I could table those.

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: I think it is worthwhile having a look at those because they really run through some of the more obvious issues that you can see with the naked eye, but sitting behind that are some serious issues that require significant investment. That is certainly the subject of our budget bid which we are making to Government for the next budget, which we have actually parcelled under the bicentenary to ensure that Parliament is in such a form for a potential visit from the Royal Family, should that come to pass. Indeed, we have in November the holding by the New South Wales Parliament of the international Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference and congress, which will be involving Parliament, with many members of Parliament from overseas coming to this place as well as the Convention Centre, which will be the primary place for hosting the conference proper.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just on the back of that, clearly there are some very urgent and quite dire maintenance issues that are required, as you say, to bring things back up to a standard where they are not going to further deteriorate. Are there also opportunities to build in better technology and accessibility, particularly for with people for disability? Are there opportunities to build that in at the same time, or is that going to cost more money?

The PRESIDENT: That is indeed part of the bid that we are putting forward to the Executive. One of the issues is disability access through the front of the building. That is part of the bid and a detailed proposal has been put forward in that regard. It is an opportunity to look at the facade of Parliament, as well, which hasn't been painted for 40-odd years. If you have a look, there are some pretty gross examples in some of those pages. We are also conscious of the Macquarie Street East project itself and the sandstone quarter, if you like, of the city. We are advised that The Mint, which is the sister building to our building, will be renovated and the facade will go back to its traditional facade of sandstone and lime.

There is a strong view amongst some stakeholders that we look to update the facade of Parliament so that it is complementary to that. There are some proposals that are being considered in that regard, moving away from the salmon and going back to the traditional sandstone, which is in keeping with the natural heritage of the sandstone quarter and would also improve the occupational health and safety aspects of the building because sandstone is more porous and would allow the ventilation of the building to be much more efficient in that regard.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: President, can I take you back to the part of my question about the accommodation for the press gallery and specifically The Guardian? Where is all that up to?

The PRESIDENT: I know that space is at an absolute premium, so I might ask Mr Webb to comment on that specifically.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It's just not, but anyway.

MARK WEBB: As you know, we updated the press gallery space a couple of years ago. My trusty team at the end of my computer tells me The Guardian has a permanent spot in that space. There is a little bit of space left down in the press gallery area, but we are utilising pretty much all of it. If it was to be extended any further, we would have to find the location to extend it to. At this point, there is not anything contiguous with the current press gallery that we could expand into.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So they are permanently accommodated now, are they? Okay. I just want to go through a couple of numbers, if you like. Feel free to take them on notice, but I think it is important to inform the Committee around some of the detail of the context we just had. In terms of the next tranche of capital works planned for next financial year, can you tell us what that is?

MARK WEBB: In terms of the stuff that has already been approved?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes.

MARK WEBB: Do you want a dollar figure?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The dollar figure and what sort of capital works we are looking at.

MARK WEBB: I might get my trusty team to send me through the dollar figure while I tell you about what is planned for next year. At the moment, the last stages of the roof membrane project is one of the major things that we are working on. We are implementing stage four of five. Stage five will occur next year. We are also looking at the replacement of the skylight on level 12, which is over 40 years old and is not very thermally sound. A lot of heat gets in. Half the leaks we have in the roof are through seals around the skylights, so we are looking to replace the skylight as part of that project. That is one of our major projects for next year. The digital transformation project will continue. It was a three-year program that was approved; this is the second year of that three years. That will continue into next year. I think everyone here would have been moved over to Microsoft 365.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes.

MARK WEBB: We are in process of moving the LA over, as well, at the moment. That is the starting point for then starting to add some extra features and the ability for people to work more mobile and the like. More modern wi-fi is being installed around the building. We are in the process; we have doubled the internet pipeline into the Parliament. We are working on electorate offices fit-out—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Does that mean we will be availed of 5G when it happens?

MARK WEBB: We are working with the telecommunications company on that. The wi-fi network is for wi-fi. In order to get 5G we need to work with a telecommunications company to have them install the right antennas for 5G. We have good working relationships with Telstra and Optus, which we will continue to work on. I know some people that are on Vodafone—since the building across the road went back up again the signal strength for Vodafone has dropped quite a lot in the building, which probably tells me their antenna is somewhere behind that building. That would be the other area we want to work for. If you have Vodafone and you are on the Domain side of the building, the signal strength drops away pretty dramatically by the time you get over there.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In terms of the wi-fi, does it cover all parking floors?

MARK WEBB: Yes, we will be installing it through the parking area. But also we are focusing first—you might have seen people walking around with a *Ghostbusters*-style detector, you know, beep, beep, beep kind of stuff, where they are looking at—

The ACTING CHAIR: The ghosts of politicians past.

MARK WEBB: Could be! That might explain some of the readings we have got around the place.

The ACTING CHAIR: Yes, they never leave.

MARK WEBB: Yes, that is right. What we have been looking for are dead zones and weak spots. A lot of the walls in the building are quite thick, so you could have a wi-fi repeater there but, if there is a big wall, the signal strength can drop off quite dramatically just a few metres down the track. What we have been doing is identifying those areas where the wi-fi network is weakest and focusing on them first. But over the next 12 months or so all the wi-fi repeaters will be replaced with modern, stronger wi-fi networks, so we should have good signal throughout the entire building. Members have told us that is important. Especially if you are coming down to a committee and then going back up to your office, having that strong wi-fi is an important part there.

We have done some trials in the building on the new technology that we are using and the people in those areas have said it has made an incredible difference to the strength of the wi-fi network. So a lot of digital transformation—that is heading into its third year. We will also be preparing the cases for future investment, because technology does not stand still so we need to continue to invest in technology to make sure that goes through. That digital transformation also includes improvements to what is called the Parliament Information Management System, or PIMS. That is the system that is used to manage the business of the Parliament, in the Chamber, in particular, and the Hansard production system—so further improvements in the Hansard production system as well.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mark, I know I have raised this before, but is part of that digital transformation a proposition to have an app for members and staff that helps them navigate their way around the Parliament, rather than the website?

MARK WEBB: Yes, there are quite a few things. At the moment we are looking at bringing up to date the old systems that are past their useful life. That is where the focus has been in the first couple of years. As we get to the end of that, then a whole bunch of stuff comes up. The Clerk of the LA would want me to mention the parliamentary portal that we want to develop, which is a way of giving members access to the parliamentary information that you personally need—so things that are related to you and the information presented in sort of a single portal so you are not having to dive into different systems all over the place to get it. We are looking at wayfinding around the building, as another example; so the capacity to use this new network to make it easier for visitors and people in the building to find various places and the like. You might have noticed some QR codes that have gone up around some of the artefacts in the Fountain Court, basically making it easier for people to engage with the building and find out about the history and the—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The analogy I would use is internet banking and the way that the banks have transferred everyone over to app-based applications and how much easier it is. For a member who is racing around the building, or might quickly need access to information in the Chamber via their phone, an app whereby I want to see the running record, I want to see which amendments are up, I want to know what is on for dinner at the Members', it is all there. If there are clever people who know how to design these things, rather than relying on pulling out a laptop and trying to—I mean, I just think it is worth the investment because it is a lot more productive for members and staff, would be my point. Okay. You have given us an outline of the capital works and digital transformation, but what about minor works planned over the next financial year?

MARK WEBB: We go through a process, towards the end of the financial year, to determine how to spend the minor works budget in the next year. Just going off what we have been spending this year, one of the things that minor works has to cover which is not—this is in the Legislative Assembly, so I will not talk about it more here, but we do have to cover electorate office refurbishment as a part of that. You might have seen us doing the ceiling work. That is one of the other major projects that will continue into next year. Where corporate accommodation that sits under the ceiling work—both in members' offices and in the corporate area—was required we also have been using the minor works for that. But we have not been through the process of allocating next year's minor works yet. We tend to not do it until we have got a better sense of what is coming up in the budget, because if certain things are being covered by other budget bids and we look like we are going to get the money then we can divert the minor works to other areas.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: While the thought occurs to me, Mr Webb, last year I think you told us about the—I mean, there are the remedial works just to get it up to scratch from a WHS point of view, then there are the want-to-have sort of things for productivity and all the rest, but then there is the whole problem

around space per se and being able to accommodate the growing number of people in the building. Is there going to be a time where we are going to actually have to look at new accommodation or expanding the current accommodation? What are the projections on that?

MARK WEBB: We have done a fair bit of work on that. There is currently a temporary, if you like, surge in people in my department because we have got a whole bunch of people in working on those major projects. So we know that that is a possibility, at any given time, that you might need to accommodate a bunch of people to do particular pieces of work. In the long term though, all of the parliamentary departments are reporting areas where they are under-resourced—so having capacity to accommodate more people there. On the member side of things, the analysis we have done would indicate that it is probably unlikely that the number of members per se would change dramatically into the foreseeable future. But the issue that would cause a major accommodation concern would be if the staffing allocation to members was to change dramatically. If that was to occur, for instance, if all LC members were to get two staffers rather than one—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: As we should.

MARK WEBB: —our capacity to accommodate that, just because of the nature of the tower block and how the offices—I mean, Ms Boyd is not here at the moment, but if you go into the area where the crossbench is, we have got quite interesting combinations of offices to try to accommodate the two staff per person, if every single LC member was to move in that direction. The issues that we are dealing with are more about the staffing complement for members as opposed to the number of members. One of the questions I asked a year or so ago was: Is there any prospect there could be 50 members of the Legislative Council or 120 members of the Legislative Assembly? That does not seem likely, but the staffing allocation is the area that we are probably doing most of our scenario planning on at the moment.

DAVID BLUNT: If I can just make two observations in relation to this issue. During my time here, there have been periods where some staff have been located off site, particularly Legislative Council committee staff, way back when I first started, and then a period about midway. I have got to say, it is not ideal. So my preference would always be to be able to accommodate everyone on site, if at all possible. The second observation is that we may well face this issue though in relation to another temporary surge area in the months to come. As you know, in the lead-in to each election period, for a nine-month period we appoint a Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, by the time of the election, has quite a team. We just do not have anywhere to accommodate them at the moment with the surge in the staff who are required to manage the capital works projects and digital transformation.

MARK WEBB: That is why one of the things we have been working on—which is work that started in Mr Harwin's time—is a precinct plan to try to look holistically at the building and work out what the future might look like, to try to work out how we might accommodate some of those things. I should say, in the interest of transparency, that we also have had to recently accommodate some extra Ministers' suites, which has used up some space in the tower block that we might have had some capacity with before.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Maybe you'll have to revisit Max Willis's plans to grab the Nightingale building.

The PRESIDENT: I'm glad you mentioned that. As part of the Macquarie Street East precinct planning we have been looking at options and the Government's preference for—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I was just saying that tongue in cheek, though.

The PRESIDENT: —a lovely external plaza sitting out there in front of the hospital area, moving over Hospital Road and creating more of a central public space. One of the options we have considered is the idea of a new entrance to Parliament to enable facilitation of people through that area, which would open up potentially some more space for accommodation—committee rooms and the like, which are also in short supply—integrating that into level seven. That would require taking a little bit of the hospital next door. But the Nightingale building—well, that has always been a point of contention. We did look at the prospect of trying to bring the ministry back into the parliamentary precinct and looked at options in terms of what that would mean to the current building. There were some significant issues there. Obviously that is an issue for the Executive, nonetheless.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The bicentenary celebrations—you did touch on this. Have we got a dollar figure on what we need? It is 2024, isn't it, that we have to get it all up to speed by?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mr President, if you could be brief, because I want to try and get through questions, what sort of money do we need to get it up to standard?

The PRESIDENT: What we have done in that regard is—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Point of order: You are talking about the capital works costs, not the cost of any—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, the capital works costs. I am sorry. I should have been specific.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. That is what I was going to address, the capital works. We have tried to address the issue of insufficient funding to remediate the urgent works needed in the Rum Hospital, for all the reasons I have explained. That is packaged up with the bicentenary budget bid, which has gone in or is going into Treasury and through the budget processes, to prioritise it as a "must do" over the next couple of years so that when we come to 2024 and we have all the planned functions—as well as at the end of year, in November, the CPA international conference—we have a building that the Parliament and the State can be a lot prouder of. We will put the best foot forward and deal with some of these issues that are really undermining and degrading the building, and making working in the building unsafe in some areas. As I mentioned, the occupational health and safety issues in parts of the Rum Hospital are becoming intolerable for some members in terms of being able to work in those spaces for lengthy periods, and the second-floor balcony is off limits.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: President, is that \$188 million part of this two-year funding envelope?

The PRESIDENT: That \$188 million reflects what has been a deficit over the last 20 years, but we are looking at a much smaller portion of that in relation to the bid that has been put in. In the vicinity of \$20 million is what we are looking at for the capital side in order to address all the issues.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That is 2023 and 2024, is it, to get up to speed?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, to get up to speed. Part of that will be a new air-conditioning system, for example, to deal with the humidity issues which are creating all the moisture. Walking past the Parkes Room, you might have seen how that has been stripped back to reveal some of the actual utilities. You will see that there are problems with the sprinklers and the air-conditioning system which comes up through the roof—we want to reposition that—and also the void that exists in that corner of the Parkes Room where quite a lot of mould and other material comes forth, not to mention the flooring being uneven and the like. There is quite a significant piece of work in the Parkes Room and that leads into the adjacent rooms, as well as the Chambers, where we want to address the mould issues. But also, there are wallpaper issues and maintenance issues in there that haven't been properly addressed.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I will wind up this bracket with a couple of questions on the proposed expansion, marketisation, viability of the cafe on level seven. I want to get the wind-up on that. The original proposition was to have some opaque, controllable glass doors, wasn't it? You would open up that area where the fountain is—where the exhibition is—to people to sit outside. And then I think there was a proposition to can the opaque automatic control and just have glass doors, and then it was canned altogether. Can you give us a feel of what it cost to do the preparatory works for that? Was there a cost-benefit analysis done on, "Why don't we just see this through?" Why was it decided not to go ahead with it? I want to be frank: Superficially, I thought it wasn't a bad idea to open that place up, because it is sort of squirrelled away. It doesn't seem to get a lot of use, particularly by the public. I thought it would have been a good income source for the Parliament to make use of what would be a nice cafe area for the public to enjoy, as well as members. I want you to give us a bit of a feel on the decision-making and the cost-benefit analysis behind the termination of that project.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I can indicate that my first question is related to this issue. If that is the last of this bracket, Mr Chair, it might be a convenient time for me to ask.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: But I think mine are quite different to that. I have a very different perspective.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In terms of the President's answer?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. Look, it is an issue that preceded me in relation to the original decision so far as putting a door in that space, which, as you know, was going to be an exercise—a door being built in San Francisco. We couldn't get a proper outcome after four attempts to create the door. The system wouldn't work properly in terms of moving it from clear to opaque, so the decision was revisited for the whole project when I became President. It is probably fair to say that I have a high degree of sensitivity in relation to the impact of that on the exhibition space in the Fountain Court area and the original heritage proposals that were endorsed and complemented by the architects that built the Fountain Court, and the heritage plan of Parliament.

The idea of putting a door in that place impinges on the exhibition space quite significantly. As part of that door proposal, the next step was to put tables and chairs in that area, which would affect the egress and movement of Legislative Council members to and from the Chamber and limit the use of that space, and also impact upon the viewing of that exhibition space. So there are very specific requirements for how that space is used. On balance, when we needed to review that decision, I took a view—at odds with some—that we really needed to put a halt on the project and that it was not sensitive to the original purpose of the Fountain Court and did not take into account a number of those factors in the way that I believe they should have been balanced and weighed.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I ask, President, what it cost us to get to the point where we stopped and what it would have cost us had we followed through?

The PRESIDENT: The cost for the whole project was in the vicinity of \$65,000, from memory. I think we had actually formed up the work for the door to go in, which cost us in the vicinity of \$20,000, was it?

MARK WEBB: About \$35,000.

The PRESIDENT: It was \$35,000? Okay. There was then the final element. The difference between those figures would be paying for the door and putting it in, so that was stopped at that point in time. The view that was taken was that we could actually bring attention to the cafe with better wayfinding and better signage, which is part of the proposal for the front of house. That is going through a process now of architectural drawings to give options, which will be something that the Presiding Officers will need to consult on in the near future to work out the best way of implementing that proposal.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So, of the \$65,000, we dropped \$35,000 and the remaining \$30,000 would have got us there. What was the process to socialise this with members? Because my feeling was that not a lot of members knew what the proposition was.

The PRESIDENT: Yes. Well, indeed, when I became President, I was not aware that we were doing this at all. I was concerned about it when it did come to my attention, but it had been a decision that had been made by the previous presiding officers and executive team. When I was advised, I was naturally bound to reflect that and continue that process until there had been a change in the project of such a fundamental nature that it could be revisited—a judgement that I made, on speaking to various members, and on reflecting on the heritage plan for Parliament and seeking advice in that regard, and on the original architectural motivations behind the Fountain Court and the implications that had not been taken into account of the egress of members to and from the Chamber by the positioning of chairs and tables in the Fountain Court area, which was a significant add-on from the original vision.

So the view that I took as presiding officer, after consulting with various members—and this is not a perfect sort of situation, but it is my responsibility to make a judgement and make a decision in that regard—and after seeking some counsel and some advice in relation to those heritage and architectural aspects and the original purpose of that room, the view I took was that we needed to put that project on hold. In fact, I would prefer that we restored things to as they were, whilst still having the original works embedded in the wall, so if there is a decision in the future to move to putting in some sort of doorway into that area then that could be done and that \$35,000 that has been used to date would not be wasted. So that would always be a possibility for the future. But at this point in time, in my judgement—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Could I suggest, President, that it is good that you have said that, because the \$35,000 has not been wasted.

The PRESIDENT: That is right.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In other words, there is the structural preparation there. Can I suggest that that is a conversation that really should be socialised with the members, because I do not think the majority of members were even aware. But I do not want to dwell on the point, because we have got a lot to get through.

The PRESIDENT: But I will say, on that point, the front-of-house project, which is coming to a stage where I think it is ready for some socialisation—to take your term—I think is integrated into that, effectively, because all those things impact on the Fountain Court. So I am quite happy to have a discussion and revisit it, but I thought, in the interests of ensuring that there was no further steps taken which would impact upon the very important exhibition space, that there needed to be a hold on that project until we had the whole vision for the Fountain Court and the front of house very clear in people's minds.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Before Mr Harwin takes over, can I just ask when is the formwork going to be removed?

The PRESIDENT: Well, that is a decision that is still being progressed. That formwork, I would hope, requires both presiding officers to agree, but that is still under discussion. In the meantime, we are where we are.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Just before I ask my question, could you just clarify what the front-of-house project is?

The PRESIDENT: The front-of-house project is, again, something that has been put in play by the presiding officers before my appointment, my election. It is looking at how we deal with the arrival of visitors and members to Parliament when they walk through into the reception area—a redevelopment of the reception area so that we look at a few of the options of perhaps moving the front desk more into the Fountain Court and dealing with the current desk area, which has some issues with egress into the Legislative Assembly area; putting in some display cases; putting in a few options in relation to some of the cabinets that are currently in the bar or the cafe area on level seven for parliamentary tokens and the like; and things that can be purchased through the cafe area, moving those and putting them into more of a presentational piece in the actual foyer where the current desk is for reception—so reconfiguring that area to ensure that it is more receptive and updated. There are some options that have been developed in that regard, which are at that sort of early stage, which need to be, I think, consulted with to ensure that we get the best possible results. I am very keen to do that in the near future.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: First of all, President, I would like to endorse what you, in what can only be described as verisimilitude, have been able to do in terms of the door from the public cafe into the Fountain Court. I have to say that my response to the answer you have just given is nothing other than alarm. But, in any case, Mr President, with your permission, I am just going to ask Mr Webb a few questions in relation to this.

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Mr Webb, Parliament House is a State heritage-listed building, is it not?

MARK WEBB: Yes, it is.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: And a heritage conservation management plan has been prepared in terms of the various precincts of the building and they are given ratings, as I recall, of high, medium and low?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: And that heritage conservation management report, at the time, was lodged with the Heritage Council of NSW?

MARK WEBB: Correct.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Mr Webb, in that conservation management plan, what is the rating for the Fountain Court?

MARK WEBB: The Fountain Court is a highly rated heritage section of the Parliament.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Was the heritage management plan taken into account when decisions were made about punching a hole in the wall of the Fountain Court between the public cafe and the Fountain Court?

MARK WEBB: Yes. We went through the normal heritage process for a highly significant heritage area—so a section 60 heritage application. We also consulted with the architect, Andrew Andersons, and briefed him on the proposal as well, and went through that process because of the high heritage nature of the—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: From the point of view of staff and any contractors involved, including heritage specialists, architects et cetera, who was involved in taking decisions in relation to that proposal to punch a hole through the wall of the Fountain Court?

MARK WEBB: The capital works team prepared the heritage application. I will have to ask them to send through the name of the heritage architect that we used through that period. I do not have that.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: So you are taking that on notice?

MARK WEBB: I will take that on notice, but if they can provide it to me—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Would you also provide, on notice, the extract from the conservation—I am sorry, I will withdraw that. I have not looked recently; is the conservation management plan on the website?

MARK WEBB: Yes, I believe so. LSJ Architecture was the architecture firm. Yes, I believe so; we have not taken it down or anything like that.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes, good, thank you. I will re-read that section later. Fine. It was LSJ Architects?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: And was the section 60 application dealt with by Sydney city council under delegation from the Heritage Council?

MARK WEBB: Yes. That is correct, yes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: And they gave permission?

MARK WEBB: They did, yes. And Andrew Andersons did not have any concerns with the proposal.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Was his concurrence sought in writing or was it done verbally?

MARK WEBB: I will check that. It was reported back to me, but I will check whether it was sought in writing.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Could you please supply whatever letters were written to Andrew Andersons and whatever reply was sought?

MARK WEBB: Yes. Will do.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think that covers my questions in that regard. Mr Chair, would you like me to go on to ask about the two other matters that I want to cover?

The ACTING CHAIR: Can I just ask a question?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes, of course.

The ACTING CHAIR: This is just in relation to COVID compliance costing in the Parliament.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That was going to be one of mine.

The ACTING CHAIR: You may not be able to answer this off the top of your head. For the last financial year and for the financial year to date, what has been the total cost or direct costs in relation to compliance with COVID—in other words, testing kits, staffing et cetera, related and unrelated—when the Parliament has been open? As a joiner to that, what has been the cost to the revenue of the Parliament of it being closed to the public, for example, as it is today? We are missing out on having the public coming in here and using our restaurants and using our cafeterias et cetera. We have gone to a lot of trouble in the last few years promoting all of these things. At some stage, we do need to get back to a normal operation and start doing things again properly. Completely as an aside—and this is another question today. Since I got the email from Mark, I will ask you the question, Mark. Why did we need to shut the Parliament down today because there is a protest outside? What is different today to what it was yesterday or Monday, for example? There are a whole lot of questions there. Do you want to start from the start?

MARK WEBB: Start from the start, yes.

The PRESIDENT: Just as a general comment—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: May I ask if you can also specify what has been paid to the consultancy firm Hibbs in the preceding financial year and so far in this financial year?

The PRESIDENT: They are excellent questions. We have the information. I will pass to Mr Webb shortly for those specific details, but I make the point that they are significant costs. There is significant cost to Parliament being closed, as well, particularly in our catering functions area, but obviously that was done in relation to a response to the health advice and on the basis of the health advice given by Hibbs. In that regard, it is probably worthwhile running through the figures, if you would like to do that, Mr Webb.

MARK WEBB: Yes, I will do that. This year, until the end of January 2022, the COVID costs to the Parliament have been \$2.25 million. We have also, as you say, experienced a loss of revenue in the catering area. The loss to date has been \$2.24 million worth of lost revenue.

The ACTING CHAIR: That is this financial year?

MARK WEBB: This financial year.

The ACTING CHAIR: That's a big dollar.

MARK WEBB: Huge, absolutely huge. The year before COVID came, we got catering to a break-even point. We were the first Parliament in Australia to do so. The breakdown of the COVID costs—we did have some additional cleaning costs that came in. That was about \$84,000. The rapid antigen test kits that we bought is about \$525,000. The nurses that we have had administering the testing regime has been \$1.2 million. We have had

various IT and audiovisual costs as we have moved to try to support virtual committees and virtual running of the Chambers. That is about \$300,000. And to the Hibbs costs, which was the nature of Mr Harwin's question, this year to date we spent \$68,000 on that advice. Last year we spent \$88,000 on that advice, which were the two pieces of information that were asked for there.

As you say, on the catering side of things, that loss of revenue is made up of functions and events. Of course, they dried up completely; we didn't have any functions and events for many months of this financial year. It is also catering revenue around the restaurant and even things like the cafe, for instance, with the period of time where sittings didn't happen. That is usually the busiest time with things like Cafe Quorum and the like. So it is a mixture of events, functions, restaurant and cafe revenue which contributed to that loss of revenue. It has had a significant impact on the Parliament's financial position. We do have what they call a parameter and technical adjustment bid in with Treasury to try to recoup some of those costs, and we have been working with our insurer around some of the catering losses to see to what extent those catering losses would be covered by the insurer. We are working through those processes at the moment.

We have put a very rigorous process in place to ensure that the COVID costs that we are tracking are only related to the COVID crisis. I did see some commentary over the weekend about government departments where that might not have been the case. I can assure the Committee that we have had a rigorous process—

The ACTING CHAIR: You do not have a COVID slush fund, then.

MARK WEBB: No, sadly not. Everything that is in that COVID bid is related to costs that we would not have incurred except for the COVID situation. So, yes, that is a breakdown of where we are at the moment. It has had a big impact on our operations. As we broke even with catering, for instance, it enabled us to start to consider how to provide better service to members through the catering system. Suddenly, when you're losing \$2 million plus, that puts more pressure back on the catering area. We did some great work through that time; I think you are all aware of the meals for disadvantaged people program that we did in conjunction with OzHarvest. We kept people busy and I think we did some good work, but it cannot be denied that the financial impact was very large.

The ACTING CHAIR: While we are talking about catering—and I just mentioned it to the President. I did not mention it to him before. It is a very small thing, probably a silly thing in some people's minds. I sat in on the Portfolio Committee No. 1 hearing in relation to our good people from Treasury on Monday. As anyone that sits in on any of our committee work in this place—certainly since 2019, when the secretary of the Treasury slashed any expenditure in relation to our morning teas and even cups of tea, even a lousy little biscuit. I note for the record that the Treasury staff, when they turned up on Monday, had copious amounts of food, copious amounts of drink, copious amounts of absolutely everything they needed, and they sat privately and quietly having their morning teas and lunches and afternoon teas in the Parkes Room, opposite the Jubilee Room. There is obviously a two-tiered society going on here. I thought the members of Parliament employed these people. These are the very same people who slashed our scones and—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Do you have a question, Mr Chair, or are you just venting?

The ACTING CHAIR: The question is coming. The question is this: At what stage will the Parliament properly be considered in relation to reasonable catering requirements? Having a 15-minute committee break and having to run upstairs, grab a cup of tea and come downstairs is fine; I just think that everybody should be treated equally. Do you agree?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: In that light, I note it is 10.58 a.m. We will probably be breaking, won't we?

The ACTING CHAIR: Sorry?

The PRESIDENT: I have a surprise for you, Mr Chair.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: We are having a break, aren't we, at 11 o'clock?

The ACTING CHAIR: The break will be based on whether I get the right answer or not.

The PRESIDENT: Following receiving a number of complaints along these lines, I asked the question as to why the policy was changed. The answer was that it was an efficiency dividend saving that was identified probably a couple of years ago now and was implemented as a result. I think it is an issue that would be best put on the committee of chairs to discuss. But personally, given the long sitting hours for the budget sittings, I have decided that we could accommodate that through the sittings for the budget estimates. I have asked for that to be reinstated for budget estimates so that members are given morning tea and afternoon tea in the committee hearing. A modest morning tea, perhaps not as—

The ACTING CHAIR: I am not asking for anything at all. I am simply saying that—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You're just venting at Treasury.

The ACTING CHAIR: I'm just having a go at Treasury. That's quite correct.

The PRESIDENT: I am informed by the Clerk that the morning tea is on its way.

The ACTING CHAIR: There are obviously two classes of people working in and around the New South Wales Parliament.

The PRESIDENT: It will be simply some tea and coffee, some fresh fruit and some modest biscuits. But I thought that was appropriate given the representations that have been made to me, and my clear understanding of the long hours being worked during estimates across the day. So I have taken the initiative to reinstate that but wish to refer the matter to our Chair's committee.

The ACTING CHAIR: That is a very brave position.

The PRESIDENT: We can sort that out moving forward. But I think it is a very modest cost and I think it is reflective of the long hours being spent by members that we can accommodate that.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: For the record, I am perfectly happy to buy takeaway from the cafeteria and support the Parliament's turnover.

The PRESIDENT: We will be supporting it.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Mr Chair, I did make the point that in all of the other estimates we have been taking a break at 11 o'clock. I think it would be appropriate to give the staff a rest and also enable members to undertake whatever urgent things they need to do for 15 minutes.

The ACTING CHAIR: Sorry, what was that? Every other estimates was catered for? I have not turned up to one recently—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, I said we had a break.

The ACTING CHAIR: Maybe it is because it is me. Maybe that is what it is.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: He wants a break for 15 minutes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: We have a break for 15 minutes, before we resume and conclude the hearing, so that staff can take a break and if members have to attend to urgent matters, they are able to do so.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Spoken like a true unionist. I agree.

The ACTING CHAIR: I was going to suggest that we could have a break from 11 o'clock, and it is now 11 o'clock. We will have a break for 15 minutes and return.

(Short adjournment)

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I would like to ask some questions with regards to closed captioning and employment levels. First, if I may, through you Mr President, ask Mr Mark Webb some questions about the closed captioning services. In the last budget estimates, Mr Webb said that DPS was finalising a contract for closed captioning services and that the technology would be trialled in December on some committees. Are you able to confirm if that took place, Mr Webb?

MARK WEBB: Yes, I can. Yes, that happened. We concluded the project and we have been testing, both in December and later in January and through into February, with committees and in the Chambers as well. I am pleased to say that testing has gone well and the intent is to start the service in March.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What were the outcomes of the trials? Can you elaborate a little bit about that?

MARK WEBB: Yes. There was the normal kind of just making sure that all the technology talks to each other and the like. We were also wanting to assess the quality of the captions. Parliament is a unique environment and we wanted to make sure that the captioning process actually usefully captured what was happening in Parliament, and that meant working with the people that we have taken on to make sure that they got across parliamentary language, understood the procedures that were happening, and so they could anticipate things that would be coming up et cetera. So all of that has been happening over the last couple of months.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: When do you anticipate that it will be introduced into Parliament?

MARK WEBB: In March.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In March?

MARK WEBB: This year, yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That is fantastic. That is good news. However, a question with regards to staffing. Will that closed captioning have any impact on Hansard?

MARK WEBB: The transcript that comes out of the closed captioning also gets fed through to Hansard so they can use it as the first rough cut of a transcript. The Hansard team are working with that information to see how useful that is at the moment. There are no impacts on staffing levels or the rest at the moment. But it has the potential to increase the speed with which we can produce transcripts.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: When you say that there is no impact on staffing "at the moment", do you foresee—

MARK WEBB: Well, sorry, no, I am not foreseeing any impact on staffing.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You do not foresee any impact. I might ask you a few questions with regards to matters of disability that Ms Abigail Boyd started asking and the President gave some answers. In terms of our employment levels of people with disabilities, are you able to provide us with numbers on those rates of employment from the financial year 2019 until the present? You can take that on notice.

MARK WEBB: I might need to take that on notice.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Okay. Is there a proactive recruitment policy for people with disabilities or is it happening organically? Do you have a policy? Mr President or—

MARK WEBB: Yes. That is a great question. One of the things we have been working on recently, you might recall that the former President was the former Minister for Disability Services. He kicked off a process of creating a disability inclusion action plan for the Parliament, which is a process that many government departments follow as well. In fact, this is timely because just last week the SMG—myself and the two Clerks—approved the first disability inclusion action plan. That gives structure to what has previously been a slightly less formal approach. So we have always included in our advertising, you know, our desire to have people from a diverse range of backgrounds apply for jobs et cetera. The disability inclusion plan looks at employment, it looks at the building and accessibility in the building—all things that could contribute to people with disability being able to fully participate, both in employment in the Parliament and in the parliamentary processes as well.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is that plan on the website? Is it public?

MARK WEBB: It will be soon. I think we literally approved it on Friday last week. So it is very close— if not already, it will be very soon available for people to look at.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How many members of staff who work in the Parliament in senior management identify as having a disability?

MARK WEBB: I will ask my crack team to send me through the figure while we are talking and jump back in with it when it comes through.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In terms of accessibility to visitors, does the disability inclusion plan include not just the staff and members of Parliament but does it also include accessibility for visitors into the building?

MARK WEBB: Absolutely, yes, and that is an ongoing program for us. As you know, with a heritage building there can be constraints when you look at the tension between accessibility and heritage and cost and the like. Most recently, we have replaced the drive system in the elevator that goes from level six to level seven that is the pathway that people in a wheelchair use to get into the Parliament. It was previously often colloquially described as "the world's slowest elevator". It was not the fastest. Mr Harwin will recall that one of my first questions when I came on board was "Can't this elevator go any faster?", to which, at the time, the answer was no. This was news to me, but elevator technology has been improving over the years. I am pleased to say that over Christmas we were able to replace the drive system of the elevator such that a journey that used to take a minute now takes 25 seconds.

Part of the reasoning for that investment was to make sure that people that are coming in in a wheelchair can rapidly get to level seven—whereas, previously, if the elevator had been on level nine, by the time it got down to level six to pick somebody up and then back up, minutes and minutes would have passed. That is just an example, I guess, of the improvements to accessibility. You also would note that the Speaker's Garden and the

Hospital Road areas both now have accessible ramps, so that people can get into the building. The turnstiles that were put in at the back at Hospital Road also have an accessible entrance in the middle of the two turnstiles. So as we move around the building and as funding allows, we have been ensuring that accessible access to the building is top of our concerns whenever we touch an area of the building.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Does the disability accessibility plan address level nine, for example? Visitors who need to go into the garden—

MARK WEBB: At the moment, as you would know, the pathway for a visitor in a wheelchair to get to level nine is through the formerly world's slowest elevator that I referred to before. One of our immediate things was to improve the speed to make the accessibility not just to level seven but also up to level nine better. I have asked for some engineering studies to be done on what it would take to look at the accessibility of the set of stairs that comes up from the level nine lift lobby into the garden and to see what options might be available there. It is a tricky area because it is the boundary between the tower block building and the Fountain Court building. From an engineering point of view it is not as straightforward as it might seem at first glance, but we are doing some preliminary works. The cost of it will require us to put a budget bid in, though. It is not something that we would be able to incorporate in minor works, I don't think.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is there a time frame?

MARK WEBB: The engineering works will happen over the next couple of months. Whether we get money to do it will depend on how budget is made available to us.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: The other matter relates to—

The PRESIDENT: Mr Blunt would like to add something.

DAVID BLUNT: If I can just refer to an initiative—it is probably a few years old now. An initiative of which the former Presiding Officers were extremely proud was the construction of the Changing Places facility. It is one of the few such facilities anywhere in the Sydney CBD, I understand—

MARK WEBB: That's correct.

DAVID BLUNT: —that enables an adult who requires changing to be changed in a dignified manner.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: With regards to access to the gym for people with disabilities, does the plan also address that?

MARK WEBB: Yes, we do have gym access on our list. I would say that, of the accessibility projects we are considering, it is probably a little lower on the list than some of the other ones we have been talking about. But it has been captured as part of our review of the precinct to see where accessibility needs to be improved.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: When you say lower, do you mean next year or the year after?

MARK WEBB: It would depend on funding. I haven't even done the engineering works down there yet, so I couldn't say one way or the other, but it is certainly captured on the list of things that need improving. But it is not as simple as a ramp down into the gym, because the bathrooms down there are not accessible compliant. You are talking about having to look at a ramp of some kind, or something that would enable a person in a wheelchair to get into the gym, and you would also have to look at the complete refurbishment of the bathrooms because at the moment they are not accessible compliant. If you recall going into the men's bathroom, you go in through a door and then you have to do a tight turn to the right. Even getting in to the bathroom is difficult for someone in a wheelchair. Beyond that, you would have to look at the actual gym floor itself—the spacing of the equipment, what type of equipment is there and all the rest—so it is not a small undertaking at all.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I understand that. Sorry, Don.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, no. It's all right. Keep going.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Can I just ask a question, sorry? Before our break, Mr President, we talked about the mould in certain parts of the building. How has that actually been addressed with the air-conditioning system? The other thing I would like to know is: Does our air-conditioning system get tested for legionnaire's disease, and how often does that occur?

MARK WEBB: Yes. We have a regular maintenance regime around the air-conditioning system. Tests for things like legionnaire's disease is a part of that annual process that we go through. Someone will correct me if I am wrong, but I think it is twice a year that we check for legionnaire's disease. I will get someone to confirm that in case I have got that wrong. The HVAC system that controls the air conditioning is 45 years old. Some of

the air conditioning that was put into the two Chambers is a bit newer than that—in fact, a lot newer than that. Just to give you an example, you might recall that at the moment we are running 100 per cent fresh air into the Chambers with a changeover of eight times an hour through sittings, as a COVID preventive measure.

I asked my engineering team what would happen if I switched the whole building over to do fresh air changing every eight hours and they said the system would burn out within three months if I was to try that. It is an old system. It is scrupulously maintained. But when we talk about the underlying infrastructure of the building and making sure that it is fit for purpose for the next 200 years, they are the kind of things that you do not see on a day-to-day basis but are absolutely vital to be done in order to make sure that the precinct can continue to work in the way that it does. And, Mr Moselmane, approximately 2 per cent of the LC and DPS staff have a disability.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Thank you, Mr Webb.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: President, I want to take you to some issues to do with staffing and positions and whatnot. We have been over this ground before, but I think it is pertinent to raise it given what we experienced on the last estimates. By way of introduction, we agreed there had to be an urgent review into staff grading and positions, and that was in light of several anomalies we raised with regards to remuneration relief and whatnot. Can we get a feel for where the review is up to?

The PRESIDENT: Absolutely. I think that came initially out of the former Presiding Officer answering a question of yours, Mr Buttigieg. In that regard, I can report that Kellie Edwards has been appointed as the independent person to oversight that review. The consultation with the PSA commenced back in December. In February we appointed the independent expert, Kellie Edwards.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sorry, President. I don't mean to be rude, but just while things occur to me—this is the industrial relations consultant, is it?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What is her background? Where is she from?

MARK WEBB: She is a barrister at Denman Chambers. She has served on the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and NCAT in the past. We went out to three different people specialising in this area and Ms Edwards came back with a proposal that we thought was good. I think previously you had indicated—certainly the other message we got is that bringing some independent, external capacity in was an important part of the process. So, yes, that has commenced.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. When you say the PSA, what about the United Services Union? I understand they have some coverage, too. Have they been consulted?

MARK WEBB: The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance has some coverage, but I don't—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I would suggest the United Services Union has, as well, with staff.

MARK WEBB: I will check that. I have not seen—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I think you will find they have.

MARK WEBB: Do you know which staff they are?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I know certainly LC staff, and there would be LA staff as well.

DAVID BLUNT: Just to clarify, are you referring to members' staff?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Correct.

MARK WEBB: They are not part of the joint consultative committee process at all.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: If they are not, I would suggest that is a major omission.

MARK WEBB: Okay. I will look into that.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I don't mean that in an adversarial sense; it is just that I know they do have coverage. Alright, so Ms Edwards has been appointed, and there was to be a consultation group comprising members to interface with that.

MARK WEBB: Yes, that's right. As to your previous comments about consultation, the intent is to have a consultation group that would include both members and their respective staff to be involved in the consultation around the process.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. So members, staff, unions—Ms Edwards has been appointed. Is that it? Is that as far as we have gone?

MARK WEBB: We are also looking at Mercer, who do job evaluations. Once there is an agreed job description for the various positions, Mercer will be involved in the evaluation of that job description to again ensure that it is a completely independent process. This goes beyond the salary for the positions, because people also raised issues around work health and safety, fatigue management, conditions of employment more generally, hours worked et cetera. So we have kept the scope wide to look at any employment conditions that people are facing, not just narrowing it down to, "What salary should this job be?"

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So the Mercer part of the equation will be a job evaluation on worth?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But then there is a whole other suite of things—

MARK WEBB: Things that have to be looked at as well.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I am just interested to know at what point will the consultation with members and staff and unions be inserted, so that we get a fully informed debate prior to any formal job—

MARK WEBB: Absolutely. The consultation will be through the entire process, not at some defined point late in the piece, because to come up with the job description, if you like, we have to do that consultation. What do you require out of your staff? What do staff do on a day-to-day basis? We need to understand the reality of what a 2022 member's staffer does in order to construct a job description that can be evaluated.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Will there be a point in time where Mercer is involved in that, watching the input, so that they can determine the relative weights and compare?

MARK WEBB: Yes, exactly right.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Do you have a time line for that?

MARK WEBB: It will depend a little bit on the consultation. The process has started now. The intent is to try and make sure that the process is complete such that the annual update to the presiding officers' determination on conditions of employment can be updated. It is updated on 1 July each year, so the intent is to do the work between now and that update.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So we have got four months to pull this together?

MARK WEBB: That is correct.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But the actual composition of the consultation group has not been—

MARK WEBB: No, that is the next cab off the rank.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Any terms of reference for the review being finalised?

MARK WEBB: We have drafted what we want to get out of it, but the first thing we want to consult with, with the consultation group, is making sure those terms of reference cover what everyone wants to get out of the process.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay, good. I am conscious of the comity between the Houses, but I do not think this question is beyond that, given what I am asking: Have any representations been made to the lower House Speaker, the Hon. Jonathan O'Dea, regarding the need to conduct a similar review for senior electorate officers and electorate office staff?

The PRESIDENT: Certainly, and the Speaker is keen to be involved.

MARK WEBB: Mr Buttigieg, just in response to one of your questions from before, the union you mentioned is not a party to our awards, which might be why they have not been involved in some of the issues that have come up before. I am very happy to talk with you offline to try and work through—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, let's have a discussion about that, if they are not a party to the—

MARK WEBB: To any of our awards.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay.

MARK WEBB: But, of course, members' staff fall into an interesting category because of the legislation and the presiding officers' determination. I am happy to talk to you about that offline.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Let's do that. That would be appreciated. The initial document outlining the review described conditions of employment as being within the remit. So will this also include a review of remuneration levels as well as compensation for additional hours? I think you have answered that question—it will.

MARK WEBB: Yes, it would.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: And how additional hours worked are compensated, and, if so, what information will be used to conduct this review and how will it be collected—well, I think it is all going to be through the filter of that consultation group, and then Mercer pull together the formal—

MARK WEBB: Yes. I really want to emphasise the work health and safety aspects to this. For instance, somebody who said, "I'm very happy to work extremely long hours as long as I'm paid a lot of money for it"—we would have to look at it and say, "But can we let them work a whole lot of hours?" from a context of fatigue management and the like.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I want to traverse fatigue a little bit because it is a subject I do not think we have adequately grappled with, either from a staff or member's point of view. We will go there in a minute. Any other research to be conducted with members and staff as part of the review?

MARK WEBB: No, the consultation group is the primary mechanism. But we are very open to if there was other jurisdictions that you wanted to bring to our attention or any other information, we are trying to run this as a really open exercise. We are keen on getting to the right outcome.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, I think that might be helpful. The lower House members have brought to my attention that MPs apparently no longer have the choice to pay staff performing higher duties a higher rate based on their experience. On the old paper forms, MPs had the choice to pay employees stepping up to higher duties at a higher rate, but apparently this is not an option on the online forms any more. In terms of the LC, that would only apply to members with multiple staff. Is this going to be part of the discussion and will it be investigated as part of the review in terms of remuneration and regrading?

MARK WEBB: The short answer to that is yes. I am not aware of any change to the policy, though. I do not really want to get—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Comity.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The lower House was by context, Don, and it specifically refers to the LC in terms of—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes.

MARK WEBB: So, yes, all things that contribute to conditions of employment are within the scope of the review.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Was there any reason why that option was excised off the form?

MARK WEBB: As that is to do with the LA, it is probably not appropriate for this forum.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But there was never an option with the LC, was there?

MARK WEBB: No, because secretary/research assistants are all at the one level.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: For example, in my office, if my senior staff were to go off and the other staff were to perform higher duties, I would not have the option to ask for them higher duty pay, would I?

MARK WEBB: No, that is right.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay.

MARK WEBB: On commencement, for all members' staff, there is a set of criteria about what level—year one, year two, year three, year four. There are things like what qualifications they have and various other criteria. That is done on commencement of employment and then, once they have done that, they then move through—like any public servant would, each year move up to the next level until they—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How do you address that, where one of your staffers—the senior person—leaves for, say, three months and the other person steps up and fills that role for three months?

MARK WEBB: You are talking about the whips—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Well, the whips are an example. The Leader of the Opposition is an example.

MARK WEBB: Yes, that is right. Somebody stepping into that role for a period of time would be paid at that level, because it is a different role. You have got an SRA and you have got a whip's staffer; if someone was stepping in to do the whip's role, they would be paid at the level that the whip's staff are paid at—a different role.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Even though the staff were at a lower level?

MARK WEBB: Yes, they are acting in a job.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: At the last hearing, Mr Webb, you said that DPS was considering offering relief for members' staff to undertake training. Has there been any progress on offering relief for members' staff so that they can attend training sessions?

MARK WEBB: Where the training session is something that the Parliament has asked for them to do, yes, we have been providing that relief.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What about if, as part of their allocation, members have got a training allowance and so have staff and it is deemed by the employer, which is us, essentially, that they need to do the training? Is that under consideration?

MARK WEBB: It was not something that we considered after our last session, but I am happy to consider it further. General training outside of things asked for by the Parliament is usually not backfilled, so I would just have to—but you are talking about the skills development allowance and the use of the skills development allowance?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes. So there might be a situation where there is a \$500 course on Adobe or whatever that we want a staff member to attend that might take a couple of days and we are left without staff. Can we get it backfilled?

MARK WEBB: I am happy to have a look at that. That was not part of my considerations previously, so I am happy to have a look at it.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Great. I am just wondering, given we had the discussion on the fatigue policy—I am chopping and changing here, but we might just go into that, I think, if I can find where it is.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I can jump into some questions while you are looking.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, do that, while I find out where the hell I am. Thanks.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Just a question with regards to library matters: You have indicated at the last budget estimates that you will be conducting a review on the services required from the parliamentary library. What are the findings of the review?

MARK WEBB: Over the course of the last 12 months the library and research service has been doing quite an extensive review of the services. Many of you may have been consulted as part of that process. The question we asked members and members' staff was, "What services do you need out of the library and research service?" As a result of that—in broad strokes, because I don't want to take up too much of your time—there was a heavier emphasis on research services and fact-checking. There was slightly less emphasis on—not many people were saying they are going to come down to the library and borrow a book. There was still some of that, but not as much. So the team has gone through a really comprehensive exercise to shift the balance of the work they do to put more emphasis on research and fact-finding and the rest, and less emphasis on some of the areas that people have indicated they are not using as much as they used to. I would like to really emphasise—no job losses or anything along those lines. This is just shifting where we are putting the balance of our effort.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You have anticipated my next question about positions of staff and librarians.

MARK WEBB: No job losses at all, no downgrades of positions or anything like that. But some people are working on different jobs than they were doing before.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: The librarians that were helping members and other staff in the library now are shifted to do some other work, but are not losing—

MARK WEBB: Not outside of the library. Yes, that's right. Like I said, there is a little bit more emphasis on research and fact-finding for people, and that reflects what the membership told us was what they valued most.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I have to say that my experience of the research has been, by and large, excellent. It's really good.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It's fantastic.

MARK WEBB: As well as shifting emphasis on to some more research, people also indicated—by necessity, our research service are generalists, in the past, because there has only been half a dozen of them. You couldn't afford to have, say, an economic specialist or an energy specialist or things like that. One of the other things that came out of the review is that members told us that they would like to see more specialised knowledge and have access to more specialised knowledge, so we are using that to guide future recruitment. But also we put a bid into Treasury, which Treasury supported, for a pilot of a program where we set up a panel of external experts in areas.

In particular we are going to focus on support to committees in the first instance, but the idea would be that if you were—as a committee, you might have had experts give evidence as witnesses. But often experts coming in as witnesses are coming because they have a particular point that they want to make in giving their evidence. The option would be available to a committee to call upon this external panel of experts to provide expert advice to the committee to help them make sense of what is in front of them. So they are just a couple of examples of where we are trying to make that research service deeper and richer and provide better service for members around that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is that review available for members to see?

MARK WEBB: Yes. We will be putting something out in the next week or so about it. The work is complete, and I really want to take the opportunity to commend the team for the work that they did. It was a thorough, deep process. I won't pretend there weren't disagreements along the way—people had different views on where the balance should be. But everyone worked together in a really mature way and with the best interests of the Parliament at heart. I think this outcome is an excellent outcome for the Parliament.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What is the number of FTEs that we have in the library?

MARK WEBB: In the library? I am sure I have that somewhere in my folder or someone will type it to me. I will come back and tell you.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Are there any current vacancies?

MARK WEBB: There are always vacancies around the place at any given time, but—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In the library?

MARK WEBB: I will check on whether there is anything. I am not aware of any advertised in the library at the moment, but I will check.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So FTEs versus vacancies because we are trying to get a feel for the flux, as opposed to not backfilling in an expedient manner, I guess.

MARK WEBB: That's fair. I'm happy to provide that on notice.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Thank you. Before I go into fatigue management, something occurred to me before when Shaoquett was asking about Hansard. Am I correct in saying that the reason that the technology, the closed captioning—this whole AI stuff is going to be something that the Parliament is going to have to grapple with is because it is going to affect society on such a dramatic level much more quickly than we are prepared for, I suspect. But this is an emblematic issue for us. With the advent of closed captioning, you mentioned it is going to speed things up, which will allow more productivity, presumably. Am I right in saying that because of the increased demand on Hansard with committee work as well as the Chamber, the demand will look after the supply of labour, notwithstanding the technology? Is that why we are on safe ground there?

The PRESIDENT: That is the expectation.

MARK WEBB: Absolutely. I think I mentioned this at last estimates. We have almost doubled the size of the Hansard team in the last two years. It has gone from 20 FTE to 36 FTE in the last two years. Now, some of that resource is temporary resource because that is the funding that we have, but that is to deal with the demand issues and fatigue management issues as well. We are absolutely committed to making sure that we are doing everything we can to advocate for Hansard so they are able to do their job safely and with reasonable pressures that are going on as well.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay, great. Let's go into fatigue management. In the October round of estimates we heard from you, Mr Webb, that there would be consultation with members' staff about the new fatigue management policy after a new fatigue management policy had been rolled out for DPS staff. Can we get an update on the parameters of that fatigue management policy and where that is up to in terms of consultation with members' staff?

MARK WEBB: It was put to us, which I think was a very reasonable point, that those fatigue management considerations should be included in the review we were talking about earlier because it is intimately bound into the conditions of employment—everything that would be done as part of that. So we have agreed to include that consultation as part of the broader—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So the Edwards review, for want of a better word, will encompass—

MARK WEBB: Will include that, yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. In terms of the parameters of the current DPS fatigue management, can you just give us a rough idea of the kind of macro parameters that—

MARK WEBB: Yes, I'm happy to. David might like to comment, as well, because it does cover the staff of the LC. David, do you want to start off?

DAVID BLUNT: Yes. Thanks, Mark. I have the policy in front of me at the moment. It applies to parliamentary staff—the staff of the three departments and contractors. Essentially, at its heart, it reinforces the responsibilities of the parliamentary executive, but particularly of the managers in each area, to be responsible for identifying, assessing and controlling the risks around fatigue. There is some detail in relation to a sort of sleep/wake model as one tool that can be used in identifying those risks. But if I can give you an example as to how it is playing out in the LC with the frequency of very late sitting nights, so thinking back to those sitting weeks in October and November where we frequently had a midnight finish on both a Tuesday and a Wednesday. The implementation of this policy in the Procedure Office resulted in us essentially sending home half the team at 10.00 p.m. on a Tuesday, the other half of the team staying until the bitter end and being responsible for the publication of the business papers.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I hope you're not referring to my adjournment speech.

DAVID BLUNT: Absolutely not, Mr Buttigieg. Then the team who has gone home at 10.00 p.m. on the Tuesday being the team that stays till the very end on the Wednesday.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: This goes to the nub of it.

DAVID BLUNT: But is that an adequate response? Ideally we wouldn't have sittings go that late so frequently.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Well, this is something I think we need to tease out because this is a stopgap approach, which is laudable because it is necessary. I think what we are saying, aren't we, is that it is almost impossible to comply with a modern-day fatigue policy and have the sitting patterns we have currently got?

DAVID BLUNT: Mr Buttigieg, as a Clerk, that is my experience. We—like, I am sure, all of you—to be frank, were absolutely smashed at the end of those sitting weeks in October and November last year and it is, frankly, not sustainable.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: As a back-up question to that, have we sought any legal advice about the responsibilities that would be slated home in the event of something happening? Because we all know, as sensible people, that this is what we need to do and deal with but, ultimately, if this is tested in a court of law, are we as members responsible for ensuring that our staff are not too fatigued? What happens if a member has an accident? Where does this all go legally? I mean, this is what we have to grapple with if we do not sort this out pretty quickly, I would have thought. Sooner or later, as much as I hate to admit it, something will happen.

The PRESIDENT: Yes, I think we had a fairly fulsome discussion at the last estimates in relation to this and the Crown Solicitor's advice had been sought. It is a joint responsibility, if you recall that discussion, in relation to members' staff, in that Parliament has a responsibility so far as the general working environment and the member has a responsibility in relation to the specific working environment—the hours, if you like, that a staff member is working. As to what happens, you know, if the House imposes a sitting pattern and a member makes decisions about a staff member and the hours they work and then suddenly something happens to that staff member or to that member, well, that would depend on the particular circumstances. I think the advice is unclear about what might happen. It would be up to the coroner or a court, should there be a litigation to determine a precise outcome, but I think the clear advice is there is a joint responsibility.

Obviously, it is important that Parliament provides a safe work environment, as much as humanly possible. Obviously, the vagaries of the House deciding when it sits—and you know that I am on the record, very clearly, about needing to revise that. The sitting until 12:00 for 12:30 on a regular basis is just not sustainable, not only for members and their staff, but for all the wonderful staff at Parliament. So fatigue management is still a very real issue. We are trying to manage it operationally, as the Clerk and Mr Webb have pointed out. That will

continue to be the case. But, at the end of the day, the Parliament is its master in relation to the sitting of the House, or the Chamber is. That will again be something that needs to be addressed. To how it comes out in a legal case or, indeed, if it should, I hope that never happens, but it would be, obviously, a balancing of all of those issues in the particular circumstances.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The situation of the members' staff is somewhat more definable in terms of joint responsibility, but I would have thought the member would have had a degree of it. In terms of the member themselves, given that the House is the master of its own destiny, you could imagine a situation where if a member had an accident and the spouse wanted to sue, potentially the whole House would be in the gun legally, right? Was that part of the Crown Solicitor's advice or not?

MARK WEBB: It was not part of the advice, because we were focusing on members' responsibilities to their staff through that advice process. But I do not think what you are saying is unreasonable. Members are not employees of the Parliament and have a collective capacity to set those conditions. I do not think it is unreasonable to assume that that would be taken into account in determining where the liability for a situation would be found.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Is there any possibility of us getting an addendum to that advice to that effect?

MARK WEBB: I am happy to do that.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Great. Mr Moselmane, do you want to go over the technology?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, I can jump over to that. Thank you, Chair. This is in relation to allocations of technology. I know the presiding officers do not control how many devices are issued to MPs and MLCs; it is more in the domain of the PRT. However, given what Mr Webb was telling us earlier about the success of the wi-fi and so forth, one staffer is allocated one laptop, where we know that a number of MPs and MLCs have multiple staffers who share the job. Do you think, Mr President or Mr Webb, that having and using a mobile phone and laptop is now an essential requirement for carrying out the role of secretary or research assistant?

MARK WEBB: This issue has been raised. You are quite right. If you go back to our desktop computing days, it was one computer per one desk and if someone was sharing that desk they would share the computer. We have been in the process, as you know, of rolling out laptops to everybody who works across the Parliament. That has still got some way to go, primarily because the worldwide shortage of computer chips has meant that we have just not been able to physically get laptops as quickly as we have been able to in the past. And, as a part of that process, this issue of people who share jobs—so someone who has two part-time people instead of a single person—has come up. The money that we sought from Treasury was on the basis of replacing the desktop machines with laptops. There is a financial impact, of course, if we were to go further and provide everybody that was part-time. There have been times in the past where a member might have employed five people against a single job, one day each. So I think some of those more extreme circumstances—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That was probably me.

MARK WEBB: We would probably want to work with a member to say, well, if you are going to that extreme, even though we are doing laptops generally, we might put a desktop machine in, if it is a more extreme circumstance. Our intention is to try and be more flexible, to provide laptops to people that are working part-time, but there is a budget impact that we have to go back and put forward as a part of that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Sure. At this point, for example, if there are two staff—

MARK WEBB: Yes, splitting the role.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: —one person will have the laptop and the other may not have it and is therefore denied access to the resources and so forth. Is there a plan, down the track, to accommodate at least two staff in a job?

MARK WEBB: If we can get the funding, absolutely. For a couple of members what we have suggested in the meantime is that a laptop can be used as a replacement for a desktop, because we have monitors and all those kinds of things people can plug into. So if somebody is in a situation where we have not been able to get enough laptops, we have suggested that they use the current one laptop as, essentially, a desktop machine, so that people can share the desk and share the computer. Our intention is to seek more funding to provide a wider range of laptops to people that are in those part-time circumstances. I just cannot promise you the timing of it because (a) I am not sure how many laptops I can get and how quickly, and (b) we do have to get some more money to buy more laptops in order to fulfil that requirement.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: The reason I ask is because some staff are asked—for pandemic reasons or whatever reasons—to work from home and, therefore, they need that access in order to be able to do their job. So that is a real consideration that ought to be taken into account.

MARK WEBB: I know this harkens back to our previous conversations, but one of the implications of less investment over time is that up until we got some money as part of the digital transformation process we just did not have any money to buy laptops. In fact, computers that were meant to last for four years we ending up stretching out to five years and then sometimes six years, because we did not have the money to even replace the desktop machines. So it has only been in the last 18 months that we have actually had any funding at all to start doing a mass purchase of laptops.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Does it require you to submit an application to the PRT?

MARK WEBB: No, it will require a submission to Treasury.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: To Treasury?

MARK WEBB: To Treasury, yes, to get money. That is right. The PRT—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is much easier to get it from the PRT, speaking from experience.

MARK WEBB: The PRT only makes vague comments about it. It just says members should have the equipment they need to do their job—I am paraphrasing—but it does not go down to specifics saying "you will have a laptop", "you will have a phone" et cetera. So then it becomes a negotiation between us and Treasury about what resources we can get to provide equipment to members. You will recall that at the very start of the pandemic most people did not have a portable device. A lot of people were attempting to work from home using things like Citrix and the like, which was very, very difficult. The process we have been going through to roll out better technology, I think, has improved greatly in the last 18 months. But we have still got a ways to go. There is no doubt about it.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I understand that in the last budget estimates, Mr Webb, you also said you would consider the issue of staff having an update to their phone devices?

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Where is that up to?

MARK WEBB: Yes, we have had a look at that. The electoral allowance provided to members is meant to cover things like phone plans for staff and the like, so that has been one of the issues that we have been looking at. Just recently the PSA made a submission to the PRT, as I understand it, on this issue of technology that is provided to members, so we will certainly be available to talk on that issue. But right now the entitlement provided to members when it comes to the electoral allowance is meant to cover issues—the old part of the logistics support allowance, you might recall, which covered things like this, was moved into the electoral allowance back in 2016. That is meant to be the source of funds for things like phone plans for staff.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: But also, some have devices that are not compatible with our systems.

MARK WEBB: Yes. The move to Microsoft 365, which you have all done, has greatly increased the capacity for people to be able to access email and various other things through virtually any device. Part of our plan is to improve the underlying infrastructure such that people can use a wider array of—I was talking to someone the other day, for instance, that uses a MacBook Air at home. The move to Microsoft 365 has meant that they can more seamlessly access their email et cetera from that MacBook, whereas previously they would have had to come in through Citrix. Citrix was sometimes a bit medium when it came to the Apple computer range. Now with Microsoft 365 they are able to seamlessly access their mail, where previously it was difficult.

We are also rolling out OneDrive, which is a cloud-based storage area. If you are sharing information with your staff, it can be done through the cloud now so that you have much more portability. Again, that can be done on a much wider array of devices. There are also plans to update the identity management processes. Cybersecurity is a large area. Mr Buttigieg, when you were asking for major projects next year I should have mentioned a major cybersecurity initiative that we are kicking off at the moment, which will go into next year too. The move to Microsoft 365 and the improvement of cybersecurity will give capacity for people to be much more flexible in how they access technology. It is certainly top of mind for us as we move forward.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Staying on matters of staff for MLCs and LA members, when was the last time a new staff induction was offered for new members' staff in the Parliament, in the LC and the LA?

DAVID BLUNT: They happen regularly. I am sure someone will send through the details of the precise date of the last one. I think they are run about quarterly these days. They are run remotely. The chief executive and I address the new staff and they get a range of presentations, particularly around key HR policies of which they need to be aware and with which they need to comply.

MARK WEBB: There was a bit of a slowdown when COVID first hit. We used to do them face to face, often in the McKell Room just outside of here. We had to convert that all to a virtual induction process, so there was a period of time in 2020 into 2021 where we had more like a nine-month period where we did not have any inductions. But we have worked out a virtual way of doing it and we have been doing it that way since.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: So the current process is a virtual process?

MARK WEBB: It is. Hopefully we will be able to go back to face to face soon, now that people are returning to the building.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What was that one on?

MARK WEBB: That was the induction for staff.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Onboarding?

MARK WEBB: Onboarding, yes. We have an automated onboarding process for the paperwork, but we also run an induction session, which covers all the things you would expect.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Just a couple of issues pertaining to parliamentary safety in the precinct: Back in October both Mr Webb and the President said you would make representations to the Royal Botanic Garden—this is something I have been going on about for a while now—regarding the safety of Hospital Road. I notice they have reduced the speed limit to 30, I think. It was 40. But that parking bay still worries me, and nothing has been done about it. As you come up Hospital Road past the hospital on your left there is a row of bikes, and it impedes the approaching visibility of the pedestrian. If someone is coming up from the Domain quite quickly across that pedestrian crossing over into the hospital and you are not concentrating, it would be easy to clean someone up.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: On the right?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, on the right. Where are we at with that?

MARK WEBB: I have written to the head of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust and brought the issue to their attention and offered to meet with them. I haven't heard back yet, but I will be following up with them to address the issue with them directly. But I have written to them.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. So we are going to have a follow-up—when?

MARK WEBB: We will be following up every couple of weeks until we get an answer.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. Well, if you want me to call them direct, I am happy to. An incident concerned me, which I have already raised with the President. Last year there was a rally outside the Parliament. This was on one of those blistering hot days which seem like a distant memory now. I think it was the teachers' strike. We had thousands upon thousands of people out there. A young girl was escorted to the front of the protest on this side of Macquarie Street to the kerb because she was feeling very faint, almost about to pass out, and paramedics couldn't get up to her because of the crowd. We were right outside that big wrought iron gate. We couldn't unlock the thing to get her into a cool environment and give her some water and get her some medical attention. The poor old constables were running around looking for the key, and it seemed like an eternity before they finally found the key and got it open. I was concerned that, in terms of protocol, access to that gate would be important in situations like that. Has that all been sorted out?

MARK WEBB: While we do not comment publicly on security arrangements in Parliament, the particular issues that you are talking about have been addressed. I do not want to go into details on it, but I am happy to talk to you offline about it.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: While Mark is flicking through, I would like to raise this issue. It may be the case now, I am not sure—the same situation where there was a protest at the front and visitors were asked to enter from Hospital Road. I had a constituent who wanted to see me, so I went to collect them. They came through the security. I am not sure whether he was carrying a bag or not. But, in any event, the person walked through with me. There were no security checks and no check on the bag. I think there was—I'm not sure. In other words, the security mechanisms there weren't activated. If people are now, as today, asked to come through the security section on level six at Hospital Road, are they being checked?

MARK WEBB: I am very happy to talk to you offline about this, but in the public forums I do not talk about security measures of the Parliament. But I am very happy to talk to you offline about it.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I just want to raise some ancillary things. Don, I am conscious that we are about 15 minutes away. Do you have anything you wanted to go over?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Many of the questions—not all of the questions—are useful questions, and I am happy for them to be asked, rather than going to one or two of the matters I was going to raise. We will just play it by ear.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure. Another matter I have raised with the President, the issue of the Neville Wran bust being squirrelled away—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: If you are going to raise that then I will definitely ask questions. It is dreadful.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What is dreadful, the fact that it is hidden away or the bust?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The bust. Sorry.

The PRESIDENT: I could not possibly comment.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Regardless of the aesthetic qualities of the bust or not, we would be aware that it was a gift from the Italian community?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: My understanding is, it was out in that forecourt area, the fountain area, for about 10 years and then a couple of years ago it was squirrelled away?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I am not sure who made that decision.

The PRESIDENT: I know Mr Webb is desperate to answer this, so I might just pass it to him.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure. I do not want to have to go through the pain of running a campaign with the Italian community to have it—

MARK WEBB: A decision was made, a while back, to rotate the location of the bust of Neville Wran. As you say, it was in the forecourt for some time. It has been in the Parkes Room most recently. I have been talking with the facilities team about where the next stop in the rotation would be. Suggestions have been made around the level 10 area, so that members that are based on level 10 can enjoy the bust, or the Opposition party room has been another potential location in the next stop on its passage around the building. But I am always very happy to talk about potential locations.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So the answer to the question "Will be the bust be moved back to its rightful place?" is no?

The PRESIDENT: The rightful place being in the Fountain Court?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In the context that it was a gift from the Italian community, I would imagine that they would want the public to see it, since they donated it, not just Labor members—who know how great that bust is.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Lou Amato will agree with that.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: He is torn.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: The Italian part is terrific. It is just the Labor thing—I agree with it being moved.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Wrong comment.

MARK WEBB: You will note that in the Fountain Court at the moment we do not have any—we have artworks on the wall, but we do not have any permanent displays that are things like statues or other sorts of sculptured works, from that point of view. We are very happy to work with people about what the right place for the bust would be, but at this stage I do not think it would fit in with where the Fountain Court is in terms of not having any statues in it.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Can I ask then a question about a matter which a number of members have raised with me which they feel quite upset with? When this room was built and when the room across the corridor

from here was built and further changes were made in terms of the old catering office, there was a decision that was taken in terms of the naming policy where a former Labor Premier and Governor-General, and a former—broadly speaking—from the Liberal side of politics Premier, Prime Minister and High Commissioner were chosen to be commemorated, in a bipartisan sort of way.

So there would be a McKell Room, and money was spent on acquiring artwork for that building, and the Reid Room was established and money was spent on acquiring some artwork celebrating Reid for that room. I notice that, during COVID, the Reid Room has been stripped of all its artwork and that it is no longer in use and is now just merely a storeroom. When is the Parliament planning to reinstitute the Reid Room so that it can be—I think at one stage a section of Labor Party members, sitting members, used to rent it quite regularly and there have certainly been other occasions where other members wanted to use it. When is it going to be reinstated, as it should be, as the Reid Room and made available for use?

MARK WEBB: That is in process at the moment. While we did the work on the Strangers' dining area, where everything had been pulled down, you are quite right, we did use the Reid Room to store some things while that work was going ahead. But now that that work is complete, we are in the process of restoring the Reid Room.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Thank you.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I just want to go to the perennial issue of staff dining. I think last budget estimates, Mr Webb, you said that you did not think there was capacity for the Parliament to introduce a dedicated dining space for staff but that you would consider it. I just want to know, has there been any further thought along those lines? And, in a follow-up question, why is it not possible for the staff to have access to, for example, the carvery or even the restaurant food, if extra room cannot be provided and dedicated for them, and they could eat that same quality of food in the cafe area? I think the general issue is that we have staff working long hours, and a part of the rest and relaxation to keep you going is to have a decent meal in a space. We really should try and address this. Because I think historically they did get access, did they not, to those member facilities?

MARK WEBB: There was, a long time ago—well, well before my time—a staff dining room.

DAVID BLUNT: The room that is currently the Macquarie Room was originally the staff dining room. It was converted into a purpose-equipped committee hearing space when the demand for meeting rooms for committees became such that an additional room was required.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: When was the decision taken to stop staff booking in the Strangers' dining room?

MARK WEBB: I was going to say, staff can book a table in the Strangers' dining room—no change to that. You are absolutely correct. You will also note that the—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I changed that, Mr Buttigieg, so that they could book. I totally agree with you.

MARK WEBB: That is right, staff can always book a table in the Strangers' Restaurant as a part of that. You will also have noticed that the themed buffet nights that we have been—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes.

MARK WEBB: —running do have access to staff as well. So we are trying to find different ways to provide access for staff—always happy to consider any suggestions along those lines. If there was demand for us to extend the carvery such that there was a members' dining part and an others dining, I am sure that is something that we could absolutely consider.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. I think if we could maybe use the JCC to kick around a few of thing things, that would be good.

MARK WEBB: Of course.

DAVID BLUNT: As a sample member of the staff, and to compliment Mark and all of his wonderful catering team on the work they do, those themed evenings on a Wednesday during sitting weeks, I have certainly taken advantage of them and the food is fantastic.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes, apparently it has been well received, but I think there is a desire to have that extended.

MARK WEBB: That is right. This is another example where great feedback from members and staff has been taken into account. Some people love the Strangers' Restaurant experience. It is a fine dining option. But

we did get the feedback that they also wanted simpler options at other times—sometimes you want fine dining, sometimes you want something a bit simpler. We have tried to make sure—you know, members only specials in the members' dining room, which are usually a simpler option, looking at what is available through the cafe in the evenings, and these themed nights as well, as just giving options to people. So if you have got some guests and you want a fine dining experience, then Strangers' is the go—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I will put that down as a placeholder to get some feedback and solutions. I just want to squeeze one in before I hand over to Mr Moselmane. The e-returns, I understand there is a level of maturity on that project in terms of, you know, Standing Order 52s and whatnot electronically. Was there a point in time where you were going to come back to us as members with an outline of where it is at and what we think?

DAVID BLUNT: Just to give you a very brief update, there are three stages to the project. Stage one has been completed. In a sense, that is one of the most complex stages. That has involved the building of a portal and facility for the uploading of documents by the executive. I understand from my staff, who have seen a demonstration very recently, that it is really outstanding work that has been done. The third stage is coming up and, in order to move forward, various very detailed business needs need to be articulated. There will be a process of consultation involved in that. If I can just give you some other good news, as well as the fact that that first complex stage has been completed, as late as late last week I engaged with DPC to emphasise the importance of the project and to ensure their continued engagement with the project. I was really pleased by the level of engagement that is continuing.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So if there are any major issues, it's not like we have gone too far down the track before they can be teased out with the members, I suppose.

DAVID BLUNT: No, not at all. In fact, one of those points of detail that needs to be teased out in relation to stage three is a matter that is likely to be considered by the Procedure Committee in the next few weeks. Again, you will no doubt hear about that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I have three very quick questions and that will conclude my questions. I want to raise security issues with regard to the special constable box at the Hospital Road entrance. Apparently there is no working air conditioning in that security box.

MARK WEBB: There is air conditioning in that box.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It's not working.

MARK WEBB: It has not been raised with me that it is not working, so I will definitely look into that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: At the moment, they are using fans.

MARK WEBB: Yes. If there is something that needs to be fixed, we will make sure it gets fixed.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you. The next one is with regard to the countdown clocks. Apparently, Mr Webb, you indicated that in February this year there would be countdown clocks available in each room for budget estimates hearings.

MARK WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I can't see it.

MARK WEBB: You are quite right and I do apologise for that. The audiovisual project has had trouble sourcing equipment in the worldwide shortage of computer chips and the countdown clocks were an unfortunate victim of that. We are super committed. I thought someone might ask me about it. We are very committed to making sure the next estimates does have countdown clocks. I do apologise; I did make that promise last time and I was not able to keep it.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thanks for the answer. The last one you can take on notice. What proportion of items procured for the Parliament are sourced in New South Wales?

MARK WEBB: I will take it on notice. But I will say that our general policy, which has been this way for a long time, is to seek New South Wales sourcing first and, if we cannot source in New South Wales, to source in Australia. Only in those times where we cannot source in Australia—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: So you source locally first?

MARK WEBB: Yes, locally first, and then expand out. But I will get you some exact figures. I do have a couple of quick answers to things that you asked that I was not able to answer that I will just do quickly. There are 16 staff in FTE in the library and 10 in the research service, so that is 26 in total across both those areas.

Mr Amato, I am pleased to say I was wrong about the legionnaire's disease thing. It is quarterly that we check it, not twice a year—four times a year.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: That is good to hear.

MARK WEBB: That is one of those times where I am very happy to have been wrong. The parliamentary librarian tells me that there are a couple of vacancies in the library that were waiting on the finalisation of the review. Now that that has happened, all of those positions will be advertised in the next couple of weeks to be filled. That is just a little bit of quick info to cover off some of the questions you asked.

The PRESIDENT: The Clerk has something, too.

DAVID BLUNT: Just in relation to the questions about the parliamentary funding model and the Public Accountability Committee report, an interim Government response was reported to the House in October, which drew attention to the fact that in addition to the Public Accountability Committee report there had also been a report on the funding models for the independent agencies by the Auditor-General and that it was the Government's intention to respond to both sets of reports at the same time.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But extensions have been asked for on the report?

DAVID BLUNT: The President indicated to the House that, in the circumstances, effectively the rationale provided in that sort of interim response was not unreasonable, but we have received no further advice as to when a final response or final decisions will be communicated.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think you will find, having been the signatory to the letter David is referring to, that the change in Premier and the change to administrative orders have prevented the matter being dealt with in the original time frames that we had hoped.

DAVID BLUNT: Thank you.

The ACTING CHAIR: No more questions?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: We will cover them on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: We have come to the bitter end at 12.30 p.m., sorry. You might lodge those questions on notice so you can get the answers you need. I don't think there was anything taken on notice that has not been dealt with.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think I asked for a couple of matters to be dealt with on notice. Is it possible to have them read back so that I can make sure that I didn't miss anything?

MARK WEBB: You wanted confirmation about whether the interaction with Mr Anderson happened either verbally or by meeting and letters. If it was in written form, you wanted copies of the correspondence exchanged.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Indeed, and I would also appreciate a copy of the advice that the heritage architect provided to the Parliament.

MARK WEBB: Around the door, yes.

DAVID BLUNT: On the inductions for members' staff, I have received notes suggesting that there was a remote induction on 16 June and another one on 7 October.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Some of the feedback we have had is that there are a few gaps in that onboarding process.

MARK WEBB: Please ask people to raise anything with us. It does replicate the former face-to-face sessions but there is sometimes trouble getting people to turn up to the virtual sessions. We are keen to get back to face to face because people tend to come along more substantively.

The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you. I note that you have 21 days to respond to questions taken on notice. We will call it a day.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.