

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 1

Wednesday 26 June 2002

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

THE LEGISLATURE

The Committee met at 5.35 p.m.

MEMBERS

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile (Chair)

The Hon. Don Harwin
The Hon. Tony Kelly
The Hon. Peter Primrose

The Hon. Henry Tsang
The Hon. Dr Peter Wong

PRESENT

The Hon. Meredith Burgmann, MLC, *President of the Legislative Council*

Mr John Evans, *Clerk of the Parliaments*

Mr Warren Cahill, *Clerk Assistant—Committees, and Usher of the Black Rod*

Mr Robert Brian, *Parliamentary Librarian*

Mr David Draper, *Manager, Food and Beverage*

Mr Greg McGill, *Financial Controller*

Mr Ali Shariat, *Manager, Information Technology Services*

Mr Robert Walker, *Manager, Building Services*

CHAIR: I declare this meeting open. The media are welcome to attend. I welcome the President, the Clerk of the Parliaments, the Financial Controller and staff to this estimates committee hearing. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of The Legislature. I remind the media that in relation to any recording that they make of this hearing they take responsibility for what they publish or for any interpretation that is placed on anything that is said before the Committee. Copies of the guidelines for broadcasting are available from the attendants. There is no provision for members to refer directly to their own staff. Members, witnesses and their staff are advised that any messages should be delivered by the attendant on duty or the Committee clerks. To assist Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves by name, department or agency before answering questions. Mr McGill, did you receive a summons under my hand in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901?

Mr McGill: I did.

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I convey apologies from the Hon. John Jobling who is not able to attend. The Opposition does not propose to substitute any other member. I represent the Opposition. Madam President, how are tenders called for new equipment?

The PRESIDENT: Tenders are not called if the cost will be less than a certain amount, but it is done in the standard public service way. The Clerk will give more details of the way in which tenders are called.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I also ask the Clerk to address how the former pager system was replaced, and the tender for that as well.

The PRESIDENT: I can answer the question on the pager issue, but the Clerk can give more details about the tenders.

Mr EVANS: With regard to the acquisition of equipment, we first refer to any Government contract that is in existence covering that item of equipment.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: How was the old pager system replaced? To begin with, why was the old pager system replaced?

The PRESIDENT: It was very old. It was certainly here before I arrived at the Parliament. It dated from the eighties.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: It was 1987. I remember Michael Cleary in caucus when he was first given a vibrating pager.

The PRESIDENT: The Department of Public Works and Services undertook a tender process for a replacement system. JTech Paging was the company that provided the lowest tender, \$33,000, and complied with all the requirements. JTech was awarded the contract.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That was \$33,000 for the first replacement pager system?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. The system was installed and it was immediately apparent that the pager units were unsuitable. The Department of Public Works and Services advised JTech of the problems and JTech agreed to supply alternative pager units that would address the issues that were identified with the pagers that it had originally supplied. A suitable replacement pager was agreed upon and JTech was asked to provide the replacements in the shortest possible time frame. The replacement pages arrived and were distributed, but a number of them proved to be faulty. This was mainly due to poor quality control. JTech advised that the short lead time in obtaining these units did not allow the manufacture sufficient time to undertake the usual checking and testing procedure prior to shipment. Presently JTech has agreed to repair or replace any units that are faulty and to have all units modified to resolve any quality control issues. The Department of Public Works and Services believes that it must give JTech a reasonable chance to resolve the issues, but have approached other

companies with a view to identifying another suitable supplier should JTech be unable to solve the remaining problems.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: How were the first set of pagers tested prior to their supply?

The PRESIDENT: I also probably need to let you know that the funding for the pagers was from the Public Building Maintenance recurrent expenditure budget, and not from the Parliament's budget.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Public buildings?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, through the Department of Public Works. Quite a number of the items of expenditure in our budget are actually paid for through that recurrent expenditure part of the Public Works budget.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: For the first set of replacement pagers, what was the testing process that was undergone prior to supply, and prior to taking the old pagers out of operation?

The PRESIDENT: I introduce Mr Robert Walker, who is the manager of Building Services.

Mr WALKER: They basically went around the building and did signal testing to make sure that we had sufficient coverage all around the building where we requested the pagers would cover. This was carried out, and they found that they had to put in a couple of new amplifiers. The pagers were then put into service and they were pretty much functional at that point. We had one problem with an old wiring system at one stage, but that is the only time they actually failed.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Was there compliance with the brief that the company was given?

Mr WALKER: Yes, there was, to the point that we asked them for a pager which would page anywhere in the building, given certain numbers, et cetera, et cetera. The issue was that they gave us more than we requested, and I suppose the pagers became overcomplicated compared to the original pages. But the actual pagers themselves pretty well functioned as they were supposed to—as we requested them too, I suppose.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I think Madam President touched on this in her reply, but with the second pagers—which are basically characterised by being very light, the belt clip falling off and the battery cover detaching rather easily—what actual testing was there of those before they replaced the others?

Mr WALKER: This is the second lot?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Yes.

Mr WALKER: We were given one as a sample which I proceeded to take to the Presiding Officers. I showed it to them and suggested that this was the one that the company was proposing that the others could be replaced with. That was just one unit. As you can appreciate, we could not see all the units. We agreed that that was an acceptable unit and we asked whether we could get them as quickly as possible because we obviously were not happy with the old units.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What is proposed for the next pager system? Will they be tested prior to being adopted?

Mr WALKER: At this stage, we are still trying to get the second lot sorted out. The company has given an undertaking that it will sort this problem out, with the clips falling off and the battery compartment not being easy to put back together. We were given that at the time, and there is a shipment on the way back here now.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Madam President, I am sure you appreciate, and I probably speak for the Government as much as for the Opposition—

The Hon. TONY KELLY: You do.

The Hon. DON HARWIN:—when I say how incredibly difficult we find it, particularly at this stage of the session when the bills go through rapidly, to contact our members in the building. It is almost impossible. The pagers are simply not working. Apart from anything else, that slows down the business of the House because we just cannot get our members into the Chamber when we need them. That is the only reason the Opposition is raising questions about it, not because we have any other concern besides ensuring the smooth operation of the Parliament.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: May I ask a supplementary?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: If it is on the same issue, yes.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: It is. There are two problems: one is that they go off about an hour later. There was a division at a quarter past four, and the pager went off at a quarter past five, by itself. I presume they are not designed to do that. The other problem is that I would like to be able to have the correct time and date, or even the year.

Mr WALKER: That is being addressed now. The problem we have is that we do not know this. All we hear is that somebody has said that the pagers do not work, but without being able to find out the specifics, it is very difficult for us to go back to JTech and say that the pagers are doing something they should not. We could test them in the office 20 times and they will work every time. What we really require of members is that if they have a problem, could they please give us the details as quickly as they can. We will get back to the manufacturers. We would be very happy to drop the whole lot, but at this point we have to give JTech every opportunity to fix the problem.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Is it possible to replace the clip because it comes off so easily?

Mr WALKER: That is one of the issues that we are now looking at, at the present time. We have said that we are not satisfied with the battery cover. It is very difficult to put it back on. We are losing pagers because the clips are falling off. They believe they have sorted out that problem. We are expecting a shipment in at the end of next week, I think, and we will then be able to test them properly to see if they will answer all the problems.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: So in summary, they met the design criteria.

Mr WALKER: Yes.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: However, the clip comes off, they fall off, we cannot set the date, they buzz when they should not and the battery falls out. And those are the pagers that have been tested. So they have met all criteria except for those few issues.

Mr WALKER: We believe that it is a quality control issue. The instrument itself appears to work okay. It is just a matter of getting other issues sorted out.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest to members that, in this period when pagers might not be working properly, they should stay alert and respond to the bells.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am grateful for that advice.

CHAIR: When The Legislature decides to obtain new pagers I ask that consideration be given to trialling one or two pagers.

Mr WALKER: We would have loved to have been able to do that. But we cannot do it in this building. If we are to get the pagers to work we have to install amplifiers all around the building.

We ran the paging system off the existing wiring system. We would have loved to have been able to do that. We would have loved to have been able to say, "We will give half a dozen pagers to people, let them trial them for a month and see whether they work." Unfortunately, we were not in a position to do that taking into account the way in which the paging system works.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What has been the cost for the refurbishment of Parliament House lifts?

The PRESIDENT: At present five members' elevators are being progressively upgraded. That work, which is costing \$840,000, is being funded once again from recurrent expenditure in the public buildings budget. Work which is presently on schedule and which commenced in December 2001 is expected to be completed by October 2002. At present three elevators have been upgraded with the fourth to be completed by the end of July 2002. In order to minimise disruption only the elevator being refurbished is taken out of service.

This arrangement requires the refurbished elevators to receive commands from the old elevator controller if the old system develops a fault, which has happened on a number of occasions. So the new elevators do not receive the correct commands. That has resulted in delays being experienced by building occupants. When refurbishment of the fourth elevator is complete—which will be at the end of July 2002—the old elevator controller will be disconnected and a new elevator controller installed. That will solve the problem that has been outlined. It should be noted that no refurbished elevator has had any fault since going back into service.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What warranty and service arrangements are in place for the maintenance of the lifts?

Mr WALKER: The standard industry warranty for the lifts will be ongoing for the first 12 months. Following that there is an ongoing arrangement with the successful tenderer to provide service for the next five years.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Am I right in saying that, after the fourth lift is commissioned in July 2002, the problem with the slow reaction time of lifts, especially during divisions, should be alleviated when we resume in August?

The PRESIDENT: It should solve the problem.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Madam President, I draw attention to a question I asked you in the House on 7 March 2001 regarding the exposure of members and staff to asbestos and other synthetic mineral fibres [SMF] within the parliamentary precinct. My question was in the following terms:

Are you aware of plans by Parliamentary Building Services to remove asbestos and other synthetic mineral fibres on 26 and 27 May on level 10?

Can you inform the Committee why that work has not yet been carried out?

The PRESIDENT: At all times I have continually affirmed the importance of occupational health and safety issues in the Parliament. I do not know how many times I have emphasised the importance of the dust diseases issue. In the past year some difficulties have been experienced with SMF while work has been done on the ceilings and walls of Parliament House. A suitable material called tontine has been identified as a replacement for synthetic mineral fibre, and that is what is presently being installed throughout Parliament House.

The occupational health and safety committee and the Public Service Association are in agreement that that is a safe alternative. At this point, no firm replacement program has been implemented. However, in order to minimise the cost of any replacement program, as unrelated works have been carried in areas containing SMF, the SMF is removed and, if necessary, tontine is installed. A number of wall panels have had SMF removed and the ceiling space above the Legislative Assembly Chamber has also been cleared.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What about the level 10 area to which I referred?

The PRESIDENT: That would have occurred as a result of work having been done there for other reasons. Once the SMF is disturbed as a result of other work, tontine is used to replace it.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I refer to an issue that was raised earlier. Did consultation take place in relation to the interior design of the lifts? Who gave permission for that interior design? Some people have described the lifts as 1950s hotel lifts. Was there any consultation in relation to this issue? Who designed the interior of the lifts?

The PRESIDENT: There was no consultation with members of Parliament or with the Presiding Officers. I will ask Mr Walker to respond.

Mr WALKER: Public works nominated a design consultant. Some designs were produced and we spoke to the Presiding Officers about them. Basically, we had a choice between two designs. The one that is presently used in the lifts is the one that we chose in the end.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: So the Presiding Officers were consulted?

Mr WALKER: They would have been.

The PRESIDENT: No.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: The President was not informed.

Mr WALKER: It did go through and a couple of options were chosen. We basically went with one of the options.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Without speaking to the Presiding Officers or the Minister for Public Works and Services?

Mr WALKER: It is my recollection that we went through a procedure and someone signed off on it.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I noticed that one of the three lift cars has a middle glass panel whereas the other two do not. Were there some changes to the design along the way?

Mr WALKER: Yes. A few people said that they did not like the mirrors in the corners. So we asked for an equivalent sized mirror to be installed in the middle of the lift. We basically went ahead and put it in. That mirror will be fitted in all the different cars.

CHAIR: You said earlier that you were given only two designs and you had to choose from one of the two?

Mr WALKER: Yes, we went through a series of meetings. We chose what we thought was a design that would suit the Parliament. It had to be in keeping with the style of the Parliament and the present surroundings of the building.

CHAIR: You said earlier that you had a choice between only two designs?

Mr WALKER: That is the decision to which we finally came—two different designs.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Are you prepared to name the person who actually designed it?

Mr WALKER: I will get back to you on that one.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I will let that person retain his anonymity.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: As a result of changes to the funding of The Legislature over the last few years, would you be able to identify what services have had to be cut or what services have been forgone as a result of the lack of funding?

CHAIR: It would help the Committee if the Hon. Don Harwin was a bit more specific. He asked a very general question.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is a general question.

The PRESIDENT: Is it a general question about how we dealt with a lack of money?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am not heading anywhere other than asking what major services or programs were not able to be undertaken because you asked for money and you were not given it?

The PRESIDENT: Given that you are presumably asking about the Legislative Council—obviously I cannot answer questions to do with the Legislative Assembly—basically we try to live within our budget. So it would be hard to say what specific services might have been affected. However, it has been difficult. We are not, in fact, living within our budget. One of the areas that I would like to raise as an issue is that we continually ask for budget supplementation for an allocation of relief staff for those members of the Legislative Council who have only one member of staff. Basically, that is backbenchers in the three major parties.

Crossbenchers have two members of staff and, of course, Ministers have staff. So we are really looking at 18 members of Parliament. We sought a recurrent allocation of \$132,000 which would have covered relief staff. That was not available. However, a review of The Legislature's base funding is currently being conducted jointly by Treasury and officers of The Legislature. That will include an assessment of staffing arrangements for future years. The issue is important for those members of the Legislative Council who have only one member of staff. There is enormous pressure on that staff member to take holidays when it suits the member of Parliament. I think that is very stressful for staff. I think that is probably the area that has been most affected by a lack of funds.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What was the allocation of funding to run the Legislative Council's committee system over the last two years, and what is the current funding for running that system?

The PRESIDENT: The budget for 2001-02 was \$1,730,000, the revised budget was \$1,753,000, and the budget for 2002-03 is \$2,190,000. That takes into account the extra number of committees that have been formed during the year. It also takes into account the fact that estimates committees are now more active, and that a lot of references have been made to the standing committees, such as the Standing Committee on Social Issues. There is a huge amount of committee activity going on.

CHAIR: How do you allocate the budget for a joint committee?

The PRESIDENT: If it is a joint select committee that originated in the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Assembly would be responsible for the budget. If it is a joint select committee that originated in the Legislative Council, the Legislative Council would be responsible for the budget.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I understand that the Parliament made arrangements to fly an officer to East Timor during the week following East Timor's independence. What other support has The Legislature been able to provide to the Timorese?

The PRESIDENT: The Legislative Council, with the support of the Federal Parliament, was successful in an application to provide training assistance to the newly appointed members of the East Timor National Council and the newly recruited staff of the secretariat for the council. The project was part of an AusAID-funded, capacity-building program run through the Illawarra Technology Corporation, which is a commercial arm of the University of Wollongong. The total cost of the AusAID assistance to East Timor was \$127,736.

Ms Lyn Lovelock, the Deputy Clerk, spent four months in East Timor as training co-ordinator. I might say she was an excellent choice because not only is she used to working in Asian countries and can adapt to quite difficult situations, but she speaks Bahasa Indonesian. Ms Lovelock was there as a training co-ordinator, with management oversight for training and resources supplied by several donor countries, including the United States of America, England, Portugal, Japan and Brazil.

In addition to developing a working set of procedures for the newly appointed national council and devising a functioning committee system, Ms Lovelock developed a two-part training program for both the members and staff of the National Council. The first phase of the training consisted of a series of formal training sessions for the members, followed by a period of hands-on training, while the council was sitting and committee inquiries were being conducted. As well as walking the staff through specific aspects of procedural work, such as preparing agendas, speakers' notes and minutes of proceedings, a number of checklists were prepared to assist with the ongoing work of the council. All these documents were translated into both Indonesian and Portuguese. Part two of the training program was aimed specifically at the secretariat staff, and has resulted in a significant increase in the capacity of the staff to support the work of the council. The training included a number of formal sessions as well as a variety of role-playing exercises and hands-on training while the National Council was in session.

As well, Mr David Blunt, the Director of the Legislative Council Committees, was one of the two trainers who spent three weeks in East Timor during November 2001 delivering the first stage of the National Council training. I might add to that I have been talking to other council officers to see in what other ways we can help the newly formed country of East Timor. The problem is that now that they have chosen Portuguese as their language, we are less able to be helpful in the matters in which I believe they need help, which is procedures in the Parliament. However, I have been discussing with the Librarian perhaps involving ourselves in helping with information technology facilities, particularly information technology management in libraries. Information technology is always conducted in English, so that is an area in which we could be helpful. I have been talking to the Librarian about this because he has been interested in those programs with Pacific Island countries.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: Under the old computer system I was able to install Chinese software in my computer so that I could read news and emails in Chinese. I presume that members of other ethnic backgrounds do likewise. I believe that with the new system I cannot install my Chinese software without checking first. Is it possible for Information Technology Services to speed up the process?

Mr SHARIAT: Yes, we have undertaken to do the testing of the software. We realise that the operating system that was capable of using the multilingual software was a different operating system under Windows 2000. The staff have undertaken to test the software and deliver it for you as soon as possible.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: I also discovered that my emails sometimes come back to me, and sometimes people who send emails to me in Chinese receive their emails back.

Mr SHARIAT: I am not quite sure I understand your question.

The Hon. Dr PETER WONG: If I send an email in Chinese, GroupWise sends the email back to me with a message saying it cannot reach the receiver. However, if I use Yahoo, there is no difficulty with sending an email. Similarly, many people have told me that if they send an email to me through Yahoo, I can read it. However, if they send it through GroupWise, it is returned to them.

Mr SHARIAT: I will undertake to investigate this further, because it is the first time I have heard of the problem.

The PRESIDENT: I will take the question on notice and undertake to obtain a response in the appropriate time.

CHAIR: Do we have both of those systems in our computers?

Mr SHARIAT: Yes. It is very difficult to speak about every application on the system. I know that Windows 2000 does have support for multilingual systems.

CHAIR: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3 Volume 1, page 1-2, which refers to upgrading of Parliament House security arrangements. We still receive complaints that members of the public are appearing on office level floors, particularly level 11, without prior entry authorisation. Could you explain what procedures and arrangements are being made to better secure the parliamentary precincts and the offices of members of Parliament and their staff?

The PRESIDENT: Firstly, one of the major problems we have with people appearing in the working part of the building is that they are allowed in through the security process by one member of Parliament and then that member of Parliament does not stick to the protocol, which is that guests are to be escorted back to the public area of the Parliament. Consequently, the guests then wander around the upper floor level and become a nuisance by then seeking to lobby other members of Parliament.

Until we can get members of Parliament to stick to the protocol and take their guests back to the public area—which might mean coming down in the lift with them and escorting them through the security area—we will have a problem with people simply knocking on members' doors. Often they do not even knock on members' doors, they just walk in, and that is a problem.

With regard to upgrading security generally—partly arising from September 11 and partly arising from the fact that we needed security upgrades—quite an amount of money is being spent on security systems. This year we have \$500,000 to spend on capital equipment, including cameras, metal detectors, and items such as that. There is a \$250,000 capital enhancement for the installation of the hardware, and \$250,000 recurrent expenditure from the financial year 2002-03 for the replacement of Chubb staff and enhanced security services.

We are hoping to move away from the use of contract staff and more towards professionally trained, appropriate day labour. I think there has been a problem with the contract staff. When they first come on duty they have no idea who the members of Parliament are, and therefore sometimes their behaviour is inappropriate.

CHAIR: Are you referring to the Chubb security officers?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: I recently visited the Federal Parliament. With regard to unescorted guests, the Federal Parliament has a system of issuing different tickets for different types of guests, so that guests wear a ticket stating that they are either escorted or unescorted. It may be worthwhile looking at such a system.

The PRESIDENT: At present we have a system whereby the name of the member of Parliament who has invited the guest is shown on the pass worn by the guest. The problem is that if a guest removes their pass, they can look like members of staff, and people do not like to stop them and ask, "What are you doing here?" It is an ongoing problem, and we will continue to address it. Members should let us know if they are ever bothered by other people's guests.

CHAIR: Following up that point, the security staff could advise those guests that they must not remove the member's identification while in the building and that there will be a penalty or action taken or they will be refused future entry if they disobey the rule.

The PRESIDENT: I think that does have to be tightened up, and that is something we can look at.

CHAIR: Some of them appear to know the system and how to work it. They may need to be penalised in some way.

The PRESIDENT: Yes, I agree with you.

CHAIR: I notice from page 1-11 that security staffing has increased from 17 to 20. That is an increase of only three. Have any extra duties been added to the security for those three people or is it just part of the rostering system?

The PRESIDENT: Are you interested in what the additional staff will be doing?

CHAIR: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: They will be replacing the Chubb contract officers. My understanding is that there will be a much more sophisticated video system in the building, one that will actually be useful. Our present system is extremely old, and it was not bought as an integrated system. Sometimes parts of it do not work with other parts, so seven systems will be amalgamated into one.

CHAIR: I realise that at one stage we had uniformed police officers providing security, certainly on the external part of the building, and they were replaced by the Chubb people. I am not sure of the main reason for that, but if it was budgeting, what is the comparison between the cost of uniformed police officers and what Parliament is paying to contract security civilians—or did we ever pay for the police?

The PRESIDENT: My understanding is that the police stopped doing the guard duty on the verandah of Parliament House as a result of a decision by the police, who felt they should be out doing police duties rather than, I suppose, what you would call security duties. We got transfer funding from the Police Department when that service to us ceased.

CHAIR: With the September 11 events and the increased security right round Australia, particularly in government buildings and Parliament House-type buildings, would you consider having further discussions with the New South Wales police force in regard to the terrorist threat—apparently the United States and Australia are number one and two in the world—and whether there should be a reconsideration of the seriousness of the situation and whether we should have uniformed police officers who, I assume, could act in a far more efficient manner to protect Parliament? I have serious doubts whether some of the Chubb security people could provide security for any building. They may be licensed, but I am not confident that they could handle some terrorists coming up the steps of Parliament House.

The PRESIDENT: My view is that the police would be very reluctant to take on security guard duty again. I am not aware of any other Parliament where police are doing that duty. I am sure that if the police felt there was a threat, they would be involved in protection duties. As you know, often there are functions in this building where police—either the Federal Police or the various police protection units—are on duty guarding certain guests. Certainly the police are very aware of whether or not there is the likelihood of a threat in the building.

CHAIR: As you know from what you just said, we often have members of the consular staff who are at high risk in their consulates or embassies in other countries. Are you saying that on those occasions there are plainclothes police assisting?

The PRESIDENT: Absolutely. You can tell them: they have little cords coming out of their ears. Yesterday it was my cousin with a little cord out of his ear.

CHAIR: So the point of that is they get the VIP treatment and members of Parliament get Chubb?

The PRESIDENT: Isn't it nice that we are not the security risk that they are?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: It is also good that you are making those changes, which will change that.

The PRESIDENT: I think it is really important that we are able to use some of this money to replace the contract security staff with our own security staff. It is more sensible and more pleasant. If they know who the regular staff and members of Parliament are, they are not as intrusive and therefore they are better security guards.

CHAIR: I have noticed for some time that there are people who are regularly outside Parliament House, near the main gate. I do not know them personally but, because of the placards they carry, some of them appear to be mentally unbalanced or have certain mental problems. Is there any attempt to monitor who these people are, in case one gets really violent and decides to move into Parliament? Some of their placards contain attacks on Ministers, and some of them are named on the placards as being very evil people. We can treat it as a joke, and they may be harmless, but someone needs to monitor those people.

The PRESIDENT: The manager of security is very aware of the potential of even harmless demonstrations to change. It is not just the lone protester: any demonstration outside Parliament can change. I have certainly seen the manager dealing with the situation. Do you want more detail?

CHAIR: I am not critical. My observation would be that they handle the demonstrations efficiently. I was thinking more of those lone people.

The PRESIDENT: My point is not that you are being critical; it is that perhaps it might be more appropriate if you have a private conversation with the security manager rather than us talking about our security arrangements in something that will appear in print.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Are you aware that during sitting days members like us sometimes find it difficult to get a car parking space on level 3? I raised the matter with Mr Speaker in caucus and he assured me that there will be a site, as there has always been, on the northern wall of level 3 for members parking on parliamentary sitting days. I have confirmation that once when the bell was ringing I hurriedly parked in Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's space, and he was very annoyed. This morning I again missed out. The bell was ringing and I had to keep going down to level 2 to look for a parking space. Would you endorse Mr Speaker's position that it is appropriate to have a sign that on sitting days the northern part of level 3 be assigned for members only? I have a sign designed.

The PRESIDENT: I assure the honourable member that the issue of parking in the car park is an ongoing problem. I will think about it. Members cannot even have guests who have a disability park there on a sitting day. The car park is not big enough for the sorts of activities that occur in here on sitting days. It is an ongoing problem.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I spoke with Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker is quite happy to have such a sign, so I am just asking you whether you also believe it is worthwhile.

The PRESIDENT: Yes, I am happy to look at the issue, but I am also very concerned about the fact that I think we are breaching some of our obligations under various State legislation dealing with disability issues too. I think we have to balance a number of issues.

CHAIR: I gained the impression that some cars seem to be permanently parked—by that I mean they are there for seven days. They do not move, unless someone gets in here earlier than I do. I see the same cars in the same spots, and I have come to the conclusion that those cars are not moving in or out. Is there any monitoring as to whether cars are left here—it must be by members or staff—and tie up a spot when they perhaps do not need it?

The PRESIDENT: Country members leave their cars here when they have to go back to their electorates. That is a legitimate use of the car park. It is a secure park for their cars while they are back in their electorates. There is no way you can ask members not to do that.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: And members pay for it.

The PRESIDENT: Members pay \$660 a year to have a designated car park here, so you can hardly tell them that they cannot park.

CHAIR: To ascertain that they are vehicles that belong to country members, is there any system within security or through administration to carry out a check every so often? Maybe staff members are leaving cars there for indefinite periods.

The PRESIDENT: I will speak to the security staff about that, if that is an issue.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: I would like to follow up an issue that I raised last year regarding safety of staff, and I think it particularly affects the Legislative Council staff when they are exiting from the Hospital Road exit. The proposal was to get them some sort of after-hours egress out the front so they do not have to go out of the Hospital Road exit late at night. Have there been any steps towards a solution to that problem?

The PRESIDENT: Once again this also has been an ongoing issue. Staff have raised concerns that the path of travel when leaving the building after hours via the Hospital Road exit and through the Domain Terrace had very poor lighting, and some staff—particularly the women—did not like walking through there after dark. Building Services held a meeting with the State Library and it was agreed to upgrade the lighting in the Domain Terrace, with the cost to be split between the State Library and Parliament House. The work has now been completed, resulting in the level of lighting in the area being doubled. The cost to Parliament House was \$5,600, with the State Library incurring a similar cost. To further improve security and ensure compliance with the Building Code of Australia, the existing centre gate leading from the Macquarie Street forecourt to the Macquarie Street footpath is to be automated. This gate will be monitored and remotely controlled from the security room on level 6. The cost of this work, which is expected to be completed within two months, will be approximately \$20,000.

This amount includes upgrading to the lights in the forecourt area. The work is being managed by the Department of Public Works, and will be funded once again through the recurring expense of public buildings program. Following many approaches by me over a period of approximately eight months, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly has agreed to allow staff to exit the building after hours via the disabled ramp on level six and the centre gate once it becomes operational. I am very pleased to be able to tell members and, of course, staff that that central gate will be operational so that all workers in the building can leave the building straight onto Macquarie Street.

CHAIR: If I can clarify that, will staff need a key, or will they just turn the handle and the gate will open?

The PRESIDENT: No, I think they will press a button and security will let them out. This is so that it does not become a gate that people can get in, because security will have a clear view of what is happening.

CHAIR: And staff will identify themselves as staff members?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I have received a delegation from a number of staff members who have a very important question: What is the result of the trial of the coffee machine in the foyer, and how long will this service continue?

CHAIR: You are planning to expand it.

The PRESIDENT: In October last year the Speaker and I approved of Mr Gerry Lissing of the Lissing Link to undertake a review of the catering services of Parliament House. The first stage of this review was to examine the need for a coffee facility to be located in the foyer area as a trial. That trial commenced on 22 November last year and has proved very successful for the needs of members, staff and visitors. In December 2001 a two-year contract was entered into for the provision of a Bezzera eagle espresso machine in the foyer, and a Bezzera master and slave system for the dining rooms at a monthly rental of \$1,326 plus GST. Mr Lissing has completed his review of the catering service and provided a report to the Speaker and me.

Today we had a meeting of the subcommittee. The review canvassed the views and needs of members, staff and visitors in the various catering outlets in Parliament House, as well as management. I can go into the principal recommendations of the review if you want me to, or I can simply say that we are committed to serving good coffee. I had better say for the record that we are committed to serving better coffee, and that will continue. How it will continue still has not been

properly decided, and we are looking at an area not in the Fountain Court, because I still think that is not quite appropriate, but we would prefer it just off the Fountain Court.

CHAIR: Where would that position be? What is just off the Fountain Court?

The PRESIDENT: At the moment we are considering—but we have not yet discussed it with the staff—taking a portion of what is now the staff dining room so that it would open onto the Fountain Court. There would be a small sit-in area, but it would be mainly still a takeaway service. It would act very much as it does now, with a small area for people to sit and chat, which I think would be a very good idea. At the moment there is nowhere to take a journalist or a constituent who has come in to see you, apart from taking them up to your room or into the staff bar, which is pretty low rent.

CHAIR: Would visitors still have access to that area?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

CHAIR: It would not be restricted to staff.

The PRESIDENT: Those decisions have not all been made yet. As I said, we have to discuss it with the staff, but some of them have indicated to us that they are so excited at the idea of having a better coffee service that they would not be too opposed to it. But, as I said, it does have to be discussed.

CHAIR: I was going to ask a general question about that facility, and I am 100 per cent in favour of it. What pressure does that put on the staff who work there? I have noticed that they are the regular dining room staff. How is that being handled within the rostering of staff in the whole building and in terms of their other responsibilities? Have extra staff been hired, or are they just doing extra duty?

The PRESIDENT: No. Originally two staff, and I think now three staff, were given the proper barrista training in order to deliver good coffee. As you know, it is not just the machine that delivers good coffee; it is also the training of the staff involved. Those staff members working on the coffee machine are pretty happy about it. They are certainly not complaining. They now have very marketable skills in the open market in that they are now qualified barristas.

CHAIR: To clarify my question, does that mean that there are three people short in the dining room or other areas?

The PRESIDENT: No.

CHAIR: I am not suggesting that the staff are not happy to man the machine.

The PRESIDENT: The staff personing the coffee area have been replaced.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I notice that there is an exhibition of women members in the foyer area. How much does it cost to put together something like that exhibition in the foyer area?

The PRESIDENT: The materials costs and conservation costs—that is, conservation of the partition in that class case—were approximately \$600. Total costs, including the cost of labour of the two archives staff for 10 days—that is the manager and the administrative assistant—was approximately \$4,500. My view is that they were there anyway doing the vital job of archiving the parliamentary records. However, I might add that 27 August this year is a very important day for the New South Wales Parliament in that it is the anniversary of the date that the women's suffrage legislation passed the New South Wales Parliament. That was when New South Wales women got the vote. We are undertaking a number of events.

There will be a reception for women in New South Wales and male members of Parliament, but it will be specifically for women's organisations and women members of Parliament, to celebrate that occasion. That will take place in the Strangers Dining Room in the evening. We also intend to have

large portraits of the 63 women who have been or are now members of the New South Wales Parliament displayed around the whole Fountain Court area. That will be just for the week of that very important occasion for the New South Wales Parliament. That may well incur some expense.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: That is a celebration of 100 years ago: 27 August is the one hundredth anniversary, and you said there are 63 women. Is it correct that almost half of that number are currently serving?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. I think something like half the women members of the New South Wales Parliament are currently in the Parliament. We forget how very recent the first woman was elected.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It was 1927.

The PRESIDENT: The more interesting figure is the date on which the first woman from New South Wales represented us in Canberra. That was Jeanette McKew, in 1983. That is an extraordinary date.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Page 1-2 of Budget Paper No. 3 refers to members' network connections from their electorates and/or home offices and the work that is being done to improve response times and access to information. This is a particular issue for members in country areas, and the frustrations that members feel in terms of slow response times and also quite often the large number of days on the weekend when access is simply not available because the service is down. Often in a busy sitting week members in country areas get to read their emails only when they get home, and then the service is down. Can you outline exactly what improvements you see for members in country areas as a result of what is outlined in the budget papers?

CHAIR: And why is the service down?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I assume it is a down for servicing.

CHAIR: But not every weekend.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is not every weekend, but at least once a month on the weekend.

CHAIR: It may be down every weekend but it is not being serviced every weekend. That is the point I am making.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: At least once a month I simply cannot get on to the network.

The PRESIDENT: I will ask Mr Shariat to answer that technical question.

Mr SHARIAT: The upgrading of the connectivity to the Parliament was undertaken by changing the supplier from Telstra to AAPT. I know some members of the Legislative Council have been the last in the series to be switched over to AAPT but we are undertaking to complete that by next week. We wanted to swap the members when we were upgrading their computers to the new operating system. Given that we have undertaken to replace the computers, that process caused the delay. However, our contract with Telstra is finishing at the end of this month so we will be switching all the members to the new AAPT service. That will at least double the speed of the connectivity from what you currently have and reduce the cost considerably, especially for members in country areas.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Is the shift to AAPT mainly for lower House members? I am not familiar with those arrangements.

Mr SHARIAT: The lower House members have already been switched over because their computers were replaced. All the staff computers have been replaced but the members' computers have not been replaced yet.

CHAIR: Have the Legislative Council members who live in the country been connected to the new system? Are you saying that they have been connected or they are being connected?

Mr SHARIAT: They will be in the process. I think some members have been connected now but all the members will be connected through the AAPT network before the end of next week.

CHAIR: Even though it is cheaper, do you think the new system is more efficient than that of Telstra?

Mr SHARIAT: Yes, the connection will be. It still depends on the Telstra connection, but the modems have been upgraded from 28K, which you have at the moment, to 56K.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I have a question about the cameras in the Legislative Council. I do not know whether it is valuable or not but it is very difficult for some members in their rooms to see what is going on in the Chamber and who is there. Given that we have discussed this before, is there some allocation or proposal to do something about that?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: It is clearer in the Legislative Assembly.

The PRESIDENT: The Legislative Assembly has a very good camera system. I agree that the poor quality of the picture makes it difficult sometimes to even work out who is in the chair or whether someone is in the chair.

CHAIR: It helps to have white hair.

The PRESIDENT: I am not seeing myself, it is trying to see who else is there. The Legislative Council camera system was raised during the budget estimates hearing last year. It was noted at that time that although there had been an asset acquisition program proposal to upgrade the camera, no funding had been allocated. The Legislative Council camera system requires upgrading primarily to improve the quality of the picture currently being broadcast. It is often difficult to identify a member until they can be heard speaking. Television stations cannot take a direct feed from the Chamber camera, due to the poor quality of the picture. Also it is a fixed camera, positioned above crossbenchers which means that some members are not in the view of the camera when they speak from their position on the bench.

An amount of \$150,000 has been allocated in the budget for a project to upgrade the camera system. This will provide a much higher quality broadcast throughout Parliament House and to authorised departments and agencies, and will improve the picture for use by the media. Specifications for the project are currently being prepared, and it is anticipated that quotations will be sought in the next few months. I am really very hopeful that that issue will be eventually fixed.

CHAIR: There have been discussions at previous estimate hearings about the need for a committee hearing room because so many hearings are now being conducted. Has there been any progress in trying to set up a permanent hearing room with permanent equipment? The equipment here now is all set up temporarily and moved out after the hearing. I realise there are space problems with the building.

The PRESIDENT: There are enormous space problems with the building. As you know, sometimes committees are forced to use the Jubilee Room or even the Chamber. I would prefer committees not to use either of those areas because the Jubilee Room is a public display area and it mean that groups cannot go in and look at what is a very beautiful old room. I think it is inappropriate for the Chamber to be used for committees. It is not that we do not have a specific room, we really have very little space for the large number of committees we now have. Certainly I will take on board and think about having a room set up specifically as a committee room, but I cannot imagine what room it would be. All these rooms are used for a lot of other uses. This room is used for receptions and seminars, and it is probably the most appropriate one. It really cannot be used just as a committee room. However, we do have some good news in that we have \$100,000 for audio equipment for committees which will make a big difference.

CHAIR: I note that Budget Paper No. 3, volume 1, deals on page 1-5 with the sale of goods and services which increased dramatically above the budget. Do you anticipate a similar increase in 2002-03?

The PRESIDENT: It is not useful to look at page 1-5 in relation to our budget expenditure because it is actually incoming and outgoing cash flows. It is a cash flow statement rather than an operating statement. What you are referring to may simply be a matter of timing.

CHAIR: What is the explanation? Does that mean sales of goods and services? It cannot be when cash flows came in and when they went out because it was in 2001-02 and it is expected in 2002-03. I am not critical of the increase, I am just asking was the increase because of more functions being held at Parliament House?

The PRESIDENT: This is what I meant earlier, it is not as it seems. It is because of the way the House Committee money now appears in basically this cash transfer statement. The revenue from the House Committee appears, as does the outgoings of the House Committee. Before we just showed it as the profit from the House Committee.

CHAIR: Has there been an increase in functions organised at Parliament House that results in extra income for the Parliament through the dining room? Is it maintaining an average number of functions?

The PRESIDENT: I will ask the catering manager, Mr David Draper.

Mr DRAPER: There has been an increase in the number of functions through the year. Two years ago it was the Olympic year when we had a lot of functions and a lot of people compared with last year when it stabilised and this year we have had a lot more functions, but the numbers are down. On the whole we are taking more money through different ways. We are charging a little more.

CHAIR: You have a profit margin?

Mr DRAPER: We have the same profit margin. There are more functions but the number of people attending functions is less. We used to cater for 400 people at a function, we now do 200 or 300, and that is the state of the economy and people are not going to some of these functions, but we are doing a lot more functions.

CHAIR: On page 1-11 of Budget Paper No. 3, volume 1, Printing Services has a fairly big reduction in staff from 11 to six. I know that sometimes staff are transitional and that may be the explanation. Is Printing Services still as busy as it used to be? Is there less printing?

The PRESIDENT: As a result of the way in which members now have a global budget for their logistical support allowance [LSA], they now have the option of having their printing done outside the Parliament and getting reimbursement from their LSA. Members of the lower House, in particular, find it appropriate to have their printing done in their electorate, and that is what has happened quite considerably. The amount of printing being done in the Parliament House printery has gone down, and the number of printing staff has gone down. However, people have not lost their jobs. They have been transferred or their position has not been filled if they have left. But mainly, in conjunction with discussions with the union and by consensus, they have gone to other areas.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: How much did the paper recycling that has been implemented in the past few months cost? What impact has it had on recycling levels?

The PRESIDENT: I am pleased that we have eventually got into a full recycling program. Previously, we have had recycling occurring but not in the really wholesale way we are doing it now. The recycling program has been operating since 4 April 2002. Visy Recycling or Resource NSW met all set-up costs. Visy Recycling supplied the large 240 litre collection bins and the small cardboard boxes used for paper collection. Resource NSW supplied the large blue commingled bins and fliers and promotion material. Resource NSW also covered the overtime costs for three months.

Parliament House incurs the following ongoing costs: monthly rental of cardboard compactor at \$20, that is, \$240 per annum; fee for commingle collection per collection at \$6, that is, \$792 per annum; and staff overtime during sitting periods from 1 July at \$71.20 per sitting day, that is, \$4,272 per annum. Resource NSW is paying for the first three months of overtime as a trial which ends on 1 July and represents 24 sitting days. In the past, New South Wales Parliament generated approximately 120 tonnes of waste material per annum. It cost \$30,000 per year in collection and landfill charges. Since the recycling program began operating on 4 April, Parliament House has reduced its landfill waste by 63 per cent, representing a saving of \$6,500 to date. The recycling program has the potential to save the following resources every year: 572 trees, 110 barrels of oil, 176 cubic metres of landfill, 1.4 million litres of water and 180,000 kilowatt hours of electricity. Therefore, the total annual outlay is \$55,304, with potential savings of \$18,000.

CHAIR: Page 1-2 of Budget Papers No. 3, volume 1, says:

The 2001-02 financial year represents the first complete year for the new Members' entitlement system ...

What impact has the new system had on the Legislature, especially on the financial controller, Mr Greg McGill, and the accounts section? How has the new system impacted on the finances of the Parliament? Has it involved more work and more staff? Is it working all right.

The PRESIDENT: As you know, the Financial Controller does not answer these questions. I will answer what I know and then ask him. I think it has had a tremendous effect on the work of the Financial Controller's office. It has created enormous problems. The estimate is that it has basically increased the volume of work by 33 per cent, but there has been no increase in the number of staff. The first audit of the members' allowances took 3½ months and there were four auditors here on a daily basis. That took a large amount of staff resources.

CHAIR: Are there any plans to communicate that information to the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal as a cost-saving benefit to indicate the amount of minute detail and work that has been put on the shoulders of the accounts department and on all members? Is the amount of time and work justified? The remuneration tribunal could make up more and more rules and regulations and must take into account at the end of the day what work load that means for members and the Parliament.

The PRESIDENT: Members have raised it with the tribunal and the tribunal has said that it is prepared to work with the Financial Controller to try to ease to workload.

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
