

# CORRECTED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into 2002–03 budget estimates

Melbourne – 26 June 2002

#### Members

Ms A. P. Barker  
Mr R. W. Clark  
Ms S. M. Davies  
Mr D. McL. Davis  
Mr R. M. Hallam

Mr T. J. Holding  
Mr P. J. Loney  
Mrs J. M. Maddigan  
Mr G. K. Rich-Phillips  
Mr T. C. Theophanous

Chairman: Mr P. J. Loney  
Deputy Chairman: Mr R. M. Hallam

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms M. Cornwell  
Research Officers: Mr M. Holloway

#### Witnesses

Mr B. A. Chamberlain, President of the Legislative Council;  
Mr A. Andrianopoulos, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly;  
Mr R. Purdey, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly;  
Mr W. Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council;  
Mr B. Davidson, Parliamentary Librarian;  
Ms C. Williams, Editor of Debates; and  
Mr S. Aird, Director, Corporate Services, Parliament of Victoria.

**The CHAIRMAN** — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings on the budget estimates for the parliamentary departments. I welcome the Honourable Bruce Chamberlain, President of the Legislative Council; the Honourable Alex Andrianopoulos, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; Mr Ray Purdey, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; Mr Wayne Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council; Mr Bruce Davidson, Parliamentary Librarian; Ms Carolyn Williams, Editor, Department of Parliamentary Debates; Mr Steven Aird, Director, Corporate Services, Joint Services Department; and other parliamentary officers, members of the public and the media.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded. As witnesses you will be provided with proof versions of the transcript early next week. Before I call on the presiding officers to give a brief presentation on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budgets estimates for the parliamentary departments, I ask all people present to ensure that their mobile telephones are turned off.

We have received apologies from committee members Ms Susan Davies, the Honourable Roger Hallam, the Honourable Theo Theophanous and the Honourable Gordon Rich-Phillips.

Mr President and Mr Speaker, would you care to make a presentation?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — It is our great pleasure to appear before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee of this Parliament. As we have stated in previous years, we believe that we should be subject to public scrutiny and public accountability just like any other ministers who administer public funds. May I advise you that Mr President and I have agreed that I will make the presentation that we have for your committee. Then, of course, we and the officials accompanying us will subject ourselves to questions. Can I also take the opportunity to record an apology on behalf of Mr Graeme Spurr, Director, Infrastructure Services, in the Joint Services Department, who unfortunately is not with us today. It was our intention that he would be one of the panel that fronted the committee.

Having said that, without further ado I will now commence our presentation in regard to parliamentary administration. The first note that I make is that the presentation will consist solely of those areas that are the domain of the presiding officers, either the President or myself, and will not include any mention of matters contained within the parliamentary appropriation in regard to the Auditor-General.

#### **Overheads shown.**

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — I begin by giving a brief outline of the parliamentary appropriation and the parliamentary spending of funds. Essentially as I am sure everyone is aware, we are a \$76.2 million operation. That money comes to us either via the annual appropriation or via special appropriations. As you will note from the chart that is flashing before you, we divide that into a number of components. The largest is what we term members and staff costs — in other words, salaries — with some \$45.5 million, a very large chunk of our overall operation. Another important component is supplies and services, which is \$26.5 million. I guess that is the only area in which the Parliament can control some of the expenditure of its budget. As you will see from that, there is very little in the way of discretionary budget that we administer. The other components that make up that \$76 million are depreciation of \$3 million, and a capital assets charge of \$700 000, which is the annual 8 per cent levy imposed on all the Parliament's non-heritage capital assets. In the 'other' category we have \$500 000, consisting of everything else.

If I break that \$76 million down for you, you will notice that of the members and staff costs — in other words, salaries and salary on-costs — that make up that \$45.5 million, \$14.23 million makes up members salaries and a further \$6 million makes up superannuation contributions. Some \$9.86 million of that total is used to pay for electorate officers' salaries at the 132 remote locations around Victoria where we have electorate offices.

Staff salaries at Parliament amount to \$10.64 million. The other category, which includes such things as fringe benefits tax, Workcover payments, payroll tax, staff and electoral superannuation, et cetera, makes up the balance of \$4.7 million.

If we look at the other big chunk, the \$26.5 million that makes up supplies and services, the committee will note the biggest component of that, \$7 million, is essentially electorate office costs, including members' electorate budgets. Next down the list is communication expenses, which essentially includes all telephone, Parlynet and other such costs, which are around \$3 million on an annual basis. Equipment rental, which includes all the things we bring

from outside on a rental basis, is \$1.9 million, and we use \$1.3 million with regard to printing operations throughout the Parliament and the parliamentary departments.

The amount of \$1.8 million goes towards paying for the provision of the vehicle fleet. That is predominantly provided for members of Parliament and to a lesser degree some senior executives of the Parliament. Committee costs are \$2.7 million. That figure of course excludes core salaries, because, as I indicated, salaries were included in the previous chart that I presented.

Without boring the committee to the nth degree, we have lumped the remaining \$8.8 million into a general category, which, for the committee's benefit, includes such things as cleaning costs, consulting, garden expenses, insurance, legal costs, maintenance consumables, office equipment, postage, office requisites, travel, utilities and training.

The point that needs to be emphasised is that when one looks at the discretionary funds that are available to presiding officers one concludes that it is very little indeed. We estimate it is only around \$10 million, or 13 per cent of our overall budget. You will note that we have not got the flexibility, for example, of ministers who appear before you, who seem to have a far more discretionary use of their funds than do the presiding officers in relation to the Parliament.

That is a thumbnail sketch of the parliamentary appropriation. I should say that the figures presented were for the 2001–02 financial year, and we make the qualification that as we have not finished the year the figures may vary slightly.

**The CHAIRMAN** — They are expected outcomes rather than actuals.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Expected rather than actuals. We will be able to provide the committee with the actuals after the 30th of the month, when we close off our accounts. I am sure everyone has done a similar presentation. We expected that this presentation would occur at a similar time to that of last year, which was after the conclusion of the financial year rather than before it. Having said that, I nevertheless congratulate the committee on bringing forward these hearings as early as it has this year.

As part of the presentation we wanted to tell the committee a bit more about what has occurred over the last 12 months and certainly what we plan to do over the next 12 months. As I am sure the committee is aware, besides the legislative function of this Parliament through the Assembly and the Council we have undertaken a number of important things throughout the year, which we want to bring to the committee's attention. First and foremost — and I should put this on the public record seeing that we had a *tete-a-tete* before the meeting started over meeting rooms and accommodation — I can assure the committee that the Parliament has worked nonstop in trying to address some of those issues that have been identified over many years now. We think 2001–02 has been a very good year in progressing some of these issues to resolution.

Firstly, we advise the committee of the magnificent new meeting rooms created on the Legislative Council side of the building immediately behind the Legislative Council chamber. These rooms are available — and we express our appreciation to the President and the Legislative Council — to all members and all staff of the Parliament. The rooms have been in constant use, certainly in the six to eight months since their completion, and they go a long way towards addressing some of our meeting room requirements, particularly on sitting days in view of the extremely high number of meetings and delegations that occur.

We are able to report that in addition to the two featured in the overhead we have recently completed, and they are now operational, two meeting rooms in the temporary facility out the back, not only for the tenants or the occupants of the temporary facility but for anyone else who might need to overspill on sitting days. Of course we have three meeting rooms set up and in constant use by staff across at the refurbished 157 Spring Street. As you will note, Mr Chairman, we have created — and I should say for those who are not aware that we have removed one meeting room downstairs — a net six new meeting rooms for use by the Parliament.

The next point we wanted to bring to the committee's attention is the completion of our IT strategic review.

As you are aware this Parliament has in place an IT system commonly known as Parlynet, which was funded in about 1996 and has not had substantial changes to it since that time. For the past couple of years we have been making submissions to Treasury to improve that system and to improve the technology that is available to members and staff to better do our jobs as legislators, researchers or advisers, as the case might be.

As I am sure we have indicated to you in past years, those submissions, were unsuccessful. That was essentially because Treasury kept on saying to us that our submissions were not of a sufficiently high quality to fund and that we needed to have a strategic approach to that. During the year we did that by commissioning Pricewaterhousecoopers to do it for us. We went through a very extensive consultation process that involved all members of Parliament as well as staff. I am glad to say that report was used as the basis for our submission for this year's budget. As I am sure the committee is aware, that was successful, and we are able to move towards upgrading Parlynet through the Parlynet 2002 project, about which I will tell you later.

The building at 157 Spring Street is one of our huge successes in that during the year we finally managed to relocate more than 30 staff from the temporary facility across to 157. We have now totally refurbished and occupied levels 1 and 2, and as you can see from the image, our new help desk operation is a far more professional approach to IT and a far better facility from a health and safety point of view than it was when in its previous location, which, if you recall, was over the spray booth in the tradesmen's area in the north-east corner of Parliament.

I am sure many members have enjoyed the benefit of the airconditioning of Parliament. Stages 1 and 2 of the project have been essentially completed, which means that the third floor offices, the library, the front of the building, the second floor, the main floor and some ground floor offices have been airconditioned. We will tell you about the remaining stages of that project a bit later on. The project has been delivered virtually on budget and on time, despite the tremendous heritage issues that had to be confronted in bringing airconditioning to some of the locations that needed it and despite the difficulties of providing such a service in a building that was built 150 years ago.

I referred earlier to additional meeting rooms. The other pleasant thing that occurred over the past 12 months was the provision here of additional offices for members of Parliament. The successful relocation of the Joint Services Department across to 157 released space in the temporary facility for the refurbishment of members' offices. I am glad to report that essentially 11 new offices were created there for members of Parliament. That, coupled with the additional office that is now the Treasurer's office in the main building and the imminent inclusion of the nine offices that will come on stream as a result of the refurbishment of the Legislative Council housekeeper's residence and the alteration of some existing multimember offices — let us remember that some members in the Legislative Council are still in four-person offices across there — means that we will have virtually 21 new offices which have either come on stream during the past year or will come on stream in the next couple of months. That is a fantastic achievement that will ease the accommodation burden that we have all had for many years now.

We have concluded stage 1 of our human resource management implementation. You will recall that last year we advised you about the problem that was confronting us in that the company that was doing our payroll was no longer going to continue to do so and we had to move to a new provider and new system of payment of salaries. The system we went for is Empower. We can report, as I am sure you are all aware as you have been continuing to receive your pay, as has every employee in Parliament in the fortnightly payments, that the transition to the new system was very well and professionally managed by the Joint Services Department. That is now operational, and we continue to be paid as per normal.

One of the other achievements of the year is that Parliament has completed the Parliament's corporate plan, which I think the committee will be the first to receive today. The senior officers of Parliament have spent valuable time in putting some of the aims, goals and values that govern us as an institution into written form. That will of course be made available not only to all members but to all existing staff and those who join us in the future. We should say that that is the second corporate plan that the Parliament has drawn up; the first one was for 1999 to 2002. This plan is of course directly linked to the individual business plans for each department.

Among the other highlights of the year is one of which I am sure all members of this committee are aware. It was the very successful regional sittings that occurred as part of the centenary of Federation and centenary of statehood. The Legislative Council met in Ballarat and the Legislative Assembly met in Bendigo. I guess that praise from me about those two events would be hollow without regard to what has been said by many others around the state and certainly around Australia who saw Parliament's undertaking as a magnificent initiative.

We have of course completed our revised budget output targets, and at this time I am pleased to report to the committee that we have fulfilled one of the many recommendations that this committee put to us as a result of the corresponding hearing last year. Those revised targets are contained in budget paper 3.

The next point to be made about committee funding is close to your heart, Mr Chairman, as it was close to the heart of the previous chairman of this committee, Mr Forwood, and certainly to the committee itself. It is my understanding that for four or five consecutive years the committee has recommended we address the issue of committee funding — to shift it from special appropriations to the annual appropriation and for it to be output based. That will allow the committees the flexibility they need to make their work just that little easier in that they will be able to carry forward the 3 per cent that the rest of Parliament is allowed to carry forward from year to year.

I take the opportunity to say it was a long and hard struggle by the committee and the presiding officers with Treasury. I am glad the presiding officers and the committee had such a victory over Treasury, although some others may not necessarily see it that way. That is another of your previous recommendations that we have been able to achieve during the year.

The next gives us special pleasure in that last year the committee gave us a hammering about some of the work we were doing.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Very gently, I am sure.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — It concerned how we went about communicating with our client base — members of Parliament and the staff — regarding how we did things. We took up the suggestion of the committee and commissioned an outside agency to conduct such a survey. Later in our presentation we will be able to give the committee some of the flavour of the responses coming in.

Another significant event that occurred for the Victorian Parliament was our co-hosting with other branches and with the commonwealth branch of the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference that commenced here in Melbourne and then went on to have the major part of its deliberations in Canberra.

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — The first day was 11 September.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — As Mr President correctly reminds me, those of us who were there will never forget it because the conference was held during the days surrounding the tragedy of 11 September, which in some way upon reflection one could say had such an adverse effect not only on world affairs but certainly on the conference itself because of the enormity of that particular disaster.

As part of our activities during the year we have continued the relocation and refurbishment of electorate offices, but as the committee would appreciate as we are getting towards the end of the 54th Parliament, admittedly with a year to run, this particular program has slowed down considerably. Nevertheless, over the year it became necessary for us to relocate four members of Parliament to new locations and there were numerous refurbishments within existing electorate offices.

The other historic and significant event was that the Legislative Council and the parliamentary library celebrated their 150th anniversaries during the year. As you would be aware, both occasions were appropriately recognised in the parliamentary calendar and two of the books commissioned and written about the Legislative Council and the history of the parliamentary library are ones I commend to anybody who has any interest in parliamentary activity and parliamentary history.

We also very successfully trialled the library's electronic news service from existing funds that Parliament found. As a result of that trial we were able to move on and secure funding on a permanent basis for this very valuable research tool that the parliamentary library provides through Parlynet to all members and staff.

Some of the works in progress which were identified last year but which have not been brought to a successful conclusion include the refurbishment of the Legislative Assembly. Part of that funding was contained in the previous year's budget and the remainder was provided in this year's budget. Plans have been completed for that project and schematic drawings have been developed. The architects advising us on this are now in the process of selecting appropriately qualified builders. It is envisaged that this project will be contracted out for work to start very shortly, because we plan to do this project without interrupting the sittings of the Legislative Assembly in any way, shape or form.

We plan to pre-construct components of the refurbishment and have them ready for installation or decanting into the chamber once the Assembly concludes the forthcoming spring sitting, which I think is in around the first week in December, and to have concluded such decanting of works before 1 March 2003, when we expect the first day of the autumn 2003 sitting will occur. As you will be aware, the project will provide for a total refurbishment of the

chamber in, firstly, providing ergonomically designed seating for members of Parliament; and secondly, having a much-improved sound and acoustics system throughout the chamber so that those problems that have confronted us in the past where people have been unable to hear what is occurring in the chamber will hopefully become a thing of the past. It will be of such a modern standard, I remind Ms Barker, that the facility now enjoyed by the honourable member for Burwood, who can plug in and hear sound from the Speaker's microphone, will be enjoyed by all members of the Legislative Assembly.

As part of the refurbishment we plan to address one of the fundamental problems that exist with many areas in this building — that is, access by the disabled. We will be able not only to provide access into designated and reserved areas of the chamber by the disabled, where a wheelchair instead of a chair will be able to be slotted in, but more importantly disabled people will be able to enter and watch Parliament.

The occupational health and safety master plan for the refurbishment of the kitchen has been successfully concluded this year. I need not tell the committee that Parliament's kitchen facilities are of the 1927 model and will take some considerable sums of money to address if Parliament is to continue to provide that service and function.

We now have a master plan for addressing those problems and concerns. That of course was submitted in its preliminary form through the budgetary process and was unsuccessful. It was very low down in our listing of priorities, and we hope that as we approach next year's estimates and next year's budget considerations we will be able to lift it slightly up the priority order.

One of the projects that was raised at this committee meeting last year was with regard to the fire compartmentalisation project, which essentially is a project that the Parliament is undertaking to ensure that smoke and smoke and fire damage is confined to certain small areas of the building where they first occur so that we are able to better protect the rest of the building and the facilities. As I recall, Mr Chairman, Mr Hallam showed a particular interest in this last year. That is why I am mentioning it here.

We have had to further delay this particular project, because the advice we have from our experts with regard to this area is that the airconditioning project we are currently doing greatly impacts on the computer modelling with regard to how areas are isolated because of the different vents and the different circulations that occur. The advice we have is that this project cannot be completed until the completion of the airconditioning project, and it is our intention to do just that.

I mentioned earlier, Mr Chairman, your committee's suggestion, and our taking up that recommendation, to do a client survey to see how well we were performing as a Parliament. To do that we thought it best, as I indicated earlier, to give it to an outside agency, in this case Morgan Research, which undertook this for us by circulating a questionnaire to all members of Parliament and all staff of the Parliament. That was done earlier this month.

I am able to report that these are interim results that we are giving you here today. As I said, this will only be a flavour of what the outcome is going to be in that they are indicative — but they are substantially indicative, in that no less than 43 members of Parliament have responded to this survey.

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — We assume that everyone at this committee table has done it.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — And 232 staff members have responded. We expect that figure to increase dramatically as people catch up with their emails and their questionnaires over the winter recess. We certainly want this feedback to assist us in doing our job in a way that satisfies you, the members and the staff as best we can. Despite the complaining I hear from time to time at the House Committee, I am very heartened to note the very high percentage of satisfied or better than satisfied service that we are providing throughout all departments of this Parliament.

It is our intention that once this survey is concluded — which of course will not be printed in the raw form that you see here but with the overall results — we hope to have a breakdown of members, a breakdown of electorate officers, a breakdown of parliamentary staff and certainly a breakdown within each of the departments. You will be able to see individual things within departments, including individual areas such as cleaning, for example, and what the survey shows on that. As I said, we will give everybody an opportunity over the next little while to respond to this. As the President quite rightly points out, we expect all members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee to submit their views.

If we now look to the future and what confronts us over the next 12 months, we see that as far as we are concerned the no. 1 project — other than the legislative function that we perform — certainly over the next five months, is the



implementation of phase 1 of the IT strategic plan. I indicated to you earlier our success in obtaining some \$2.8 million in funds from this year's budget with regard to implementing phase 1 of that strategy, which essentially includes all hardware upgrades as well as software upgrades — what we have loosely termed the IT catch-up initiative. It will result in better software programs and of course new hardware being provided to the 132 electorate offices and to some sections of the Parliament here, and certainly new laptops being provided to members, so that we can better do our job utilising this modern resource tool.

The project is currently at the tender evaluation stage. We have put it out to tender, and some seven tenderers have been submitted. We have a working group of officers who have been ploughing through and assessing those tenders, and the President and I hope to be in a position to make an announcement about a successful tenderer as early as next week, because the deadline we have set for the rollout of Parlynet 2002 is that we want it up and operational in the very last of the 132 offices by 1 November 2002.

I will not repeat here what I said about the finalisation of the Assembly chamber, because I think I adequately covered it earlier. However, I should mention at this point that one other component affecting the Assembly is the re-roofing of the Assembly chamber. It is one of those problems that is not highly visible to us as operators within the building, but it is one of those essential maintenance jobs that must be done if we are to avoid the nightmarish scenario of having water damage occurring to the building.

**Mrs MADDIGAN** — Are we going to be washed down Bourke Street?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — We are not going to be washed down Bourke Street, as the Deputy Speaker — frivolously I hope — asks! Nevertheless this is a very important heritage building, and the President and I, as the temporary keepers, if you like, of the building during our terms as President and Speaker feel it is absolutely essential that we do our utmost to protect it. This project will be concluded over the winter months, so the job should be completed by the time we come back for the spring session. I should point out for those of you who are wondering that the Legislative Council re-roofing was completed about two years ago. That will bring this project to conclusion.

Phases 3 and 4 of the airconditioning project are just as important to those that have not enjoyed airconditioning as yet as phases 1 and 2 were to those that were involved in them.

Phases 3 and 4 essentially will bring airconditioning to all the remaining offices in the main building, including the Legislative Assembly chamber and the Legislative Council chamber, with the thoroughfares, or the corridors, if you like, being the only remaining areas not airconditioned. That funding was provided in this year's budget.

The tender documentation is currently being prepared, and we hope to put it out very shortly. It has been deemed that we will put it out as a separate contract to phases 1 and 2 in view of the large amount that is involved. Of course this will be done under exactly the same conditions as phases 1 and 2, where work interruptions to both the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly's operations will not occur while both those bodies are meeting.

The library electronic news service is, as I indicated earlier, a huge success as a result of the trial. This year it has been funded for some \$300 000 not only for this year but for ongoing years so that this invaluable tool is put into the research facilities that are available at the Parliament so long as members think it is relevant to their needs.

Can I at this point congratulate the librarian, who has been at the forefront of advocating this project, and his deputy, Gail Dunston, who has essentially been managing some of the project. I am sure those sentiments would be conveyed not only by me and Mr President but by all who use the facility.

Security has been an issue at the Parliament, particularly since the significant world events that occurred last year. We mentioned 11 September, but it was not necessary 11 September that had us rethink our whole security strategy. It was more the events, if you like, in Zug, Switzerland, and certainly the events in the Parliament in India. We felt it important that we raise security to a higher level than what was in place prior to September last year. You have seen the results of that through added security and the added checking of what comes into the buildings, either in the form of people or in the form of the goods and services that are delivered.

I should point out that they are the interim measures that have been put in place that are visible. We are currently undertaking a review of all security operations. I do not want to say too much about that just yet until a report by security experts is in with a view to putting in something more permanent than the security guards we have at our entry points at the moment.

The human resources management system stage 2 has also been funded in the budget and further value-adds to what has been put in place already. Essentially stage 2 of the project develops our human resources management system to a high level in that all staff — and to a lesser degree, I guess, members of Parliament — will be able to electronically link in and have a look at their own entitlements. They will be able to have a look at their own leave balances through Parlynet in an electronic form, as well as of course continuing to apply for such leave electronically rather than manually, as has been occurring. Of course the *pièce de résistance* is that it will further eliminate paper, in that the system will be able to provide electronic pay slips.

**Ms BARKER** — I will wait to see that!

**The CHAIRMAN** — I am not sure that it eliminates paper!

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — The committee is somewhat sceptical, judging by the interjections regarding the elimination of paper! Nevertheless having said that, I am sure none of us would want to go back to the system prior to the one we are enjoying as a result of the Parlynet system being introduced to this Parliament.

**Ms BARKER** — I hope you are correct.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — I certainly do not want to go back to the pre-electronic Parlynet technology system. The other project that continues and has been further funded for its remaining stages is 157 Spring Street. This will involve the refurbishment of the third and fourth floors and the completion of the ground floor, which is currently under construction. Those of you who have been across there would have seen the front of the building boarded-up. That is essentially because we are now working on the ground floor, which will house the training facilities for the Parliament, as well as what we have dubbed the Parliament Discovery Centre, which will provide material and information both in written and electronic form at the footpath level, if I could call it such. We plan to have at least half of that ground floor open and accessible to passing traffic along Spring Street and for it to be seen as a stepping stone, if you like, to the main building on this side of the road.

I referred to the imminent completion of the new offices for Legislative Council members that are being planned in the area previously occupied by the Housekeeper now that he has departed and is no longer with the Parliament. As I indicated, that will add a further nine individual locations for members to be housed in — either in that facility or in the refurbished adjoining couple of existing offices, turning them from four-person offices into single-person offices.

**Mrs MADDIGAN** — So everyone will have a single office, will they?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Interjections are always disorderly, but perhaps it might be appropriate to take that in the form of a question at a later stage. That concludes the presentation from me, and I apologise if I took longer than what I should have. I guess I did so because, as you would have noted from my voice and my demeanour, we are certainly excited about the achievements of the Parliament over the past 12 months. We have made tremendous progress, and I want to particularly thank not only Mr President for the very cooperative way in which he and I have operated over the past 12 months but certainly all parliamentary officers, from department heads down, for the professional way in which they have conducted themselves over the past 12 months. With that, we will subject ourselves to questions from the committee.

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — May I butt in while my colleague is having a rest to make a few comments. This could be the Speaker's and my last presentation to this august body. We are pleased to have been part of the development of a system of accountability that is very open, because we all have to be accountable to some section of society for what we do. A lot of what we have explained to you today are achievements which, when measured in an historical context, are quite dramatic.

The Speaker spelt out the increase in the number of offices for members. Something like 20 offices and a number of others that have a number of members in them will be subdivided. But we still have rooms in this place that are occupied by three or four members. Just about every other Parliament in the commonwealth has single-member offices. We have a 19th century building, and a lot of what has happened at least in my time, including 10 years as President, has just been about doing the basics. Much of that includes things you do not see, like ring water mains, new gas lines and rewiring the place — things which do not mean anything to some but which are essential if this building is to be occupied for another hundred or so years.

We talked about the temporary accommodation, to which we are adding 11 offices, having decanted the staff to 157 Spring Street. The fact is that that is a temporary building — it was designated as temporary by Premier Hamer



in 1975 — yet here we are, nearly 30 years later, and it is still a temporary building. So if there is a wet day and the bells ring and members of Parliament are out there in their offices — and there will now be more of them — they will get wet. I do not think any other Parliament subjects its members to that sort of thing. Nor, when we have our guests, should we. When you have your councils or your school groups in, or whatever, if you share an office you have to ask your colleagues whether they would mind leaving the room or you have to look around Parliament House to see whether you can find somewhere to go.

Admittedly we have created these new committee rooms — three over the road, two in the temporary accommodation and two here, although we then lost one — but it is still second best. I think the people of Victoria have consistently shown their support for the completion of Parliament House. With the work we have done the completion would be in a different format from what was envisaged some years ago. But there is scope to have a better situation for our Premier, for instance. Rather than having a proper set-up like Mr Beattie has in Queensland or the Premier has in New South Wales, if our Premier has visitors they wait in a corridor outside, where they can run into the next lot of visitors — and it may well be that people who are putting opposing views to the Premier will run into each other.

So we are very much down the list as far as facilities are concerned. We have ministers working in rooms four by two — and the Speaker and I did something on the ABC last year, when we showed them the office of Minister Pandazopoulos, then the Minister for Major Projects. You are trying to convince people to invest millions of dollars into Victoria, yet the responsible minister is in a poky little corner in Parliament House. We deserve better, and we think there is support from the Victorian community to do better. So I ask whoever the incoming government is to reconsider convening an all-party group to examine the needs of Parliament and the needs of our visitors in order to provide more appropriate accommodation.

I can report — and it has not appeared in our report so far — that the last government provided us with money to look for stone for the exterior of Parliament House if the extension goes ahead. You might recall that the problem before was that the stone was in a national park and there was difficulty in getting access to that. The result of this work is that stone to match the existing stone work is available on freehold land. We have not made a statement about that, because that will affect values and all those things, and it is only appropriate that we have that information — and given the previous planning, a lot of work could be undertaken fairly quickly. I am happy to answer questions on other issues later on, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Thank you, Mr President. At the outset can I say that the committee certainly welcomes a number of the things you and the Speaker have outlined to us, particularly those along the lines that we have recommended for some years regarding the revision of output targets and output measures and the development of revised corporate plans, which you have tabled with us today. We welcome and congratulate you on your success in carrying the argument on the way in which committee funding is to be appropriated.

I will commence the questions by asking about the corporate plan. As I say, the committee views having the corporate plan as a very good step. In overall planning terms the corporate plan is, if you like, the top tier, underneath which there would be, I would assume, individual business plans for each of the departments. I assume that has been done.

Can you tell us a couple of things about that — for example, whether the initiatives identified within those are included in what you have described to us today as being funded for the coming year, which ones are short term and which ones are longer term, and what is left to be done into the future? Secondly, what is the cycle of review for the business plans, and how often are the business plans reviewed so that they feed back into the revision of the corporate plans?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Mr Chairman, I will respond on these issues. Can I reiterate what I said in my presentation, that this is the second corporate plan the Parliament has adopted, and it is very closely linked to the departmental business plans that have been put in place and are operational. You correctly point out that within those business plans we spell out in somewhat more detail some of the initiatives that are to be met in the shorter term as well as the longer term.

As I indicated to you with regard to the corporate plan, it is our intention to review those on a triennial basis. The business plans, of course, are reviewed annually. The Clerk has indicated to me that, with your permission, I should now call on the department heads to tell you something about the individual plans for each of the departments of the Parliament.

I will start by calling Ray Purdey from the Assembly and then Wayne Tunnecliffe from the Council, and then of course Bruce Davidson from the library and Carolyn Williams from Hansard. As I am sure you are aware, as a result of the review into the parliamentary services department both Wayne Tunnecliffe and Ray Purdey are the conjoined department heads of the Joins Services Department.

**Mr PURDEY** — Mr Chairman, I will talk on a more general basis and hopefully give a more general response to your question.

Following our visit here last year, the presiding officers and the department heads agreed that it was time to review the corporate plan and that if we were going to do a lot of the other things the committee had suggested then we had to start at the top and work down. Obviously the first place to begin was with the corporate plan.

We began making arrangements to do that late last year, and we appointed a facilitator to help us. I was part of the process of developing our first corporate plan. This time I am pleased to say that a wider base has been used in developing the corporate plan that we have today, in that all our deputies and some of the other staff have been consulted in the process. So there is a wider ownership of the actual plan that you have before you today. We actually commenced our formal review process early in January.

That has taken quite a while — and you would understand that you do not develop these things overnight. In fact, the final document is just hot off the press. I think Steven picked it up only this week, so we have only just finalised it. One of the things we found from our experience with our previous corporate plan was that the departments were having a lot of trouble cascading the various business plans out of the corporate plan.

They were not easily falling out of the corporate plan, so one of the things we tried to do in the new corporate plan was to improve the way it was constructed so that it would make the job of developing a business plan easier for each department, and I think we have reached that scenario. Having completed the corporate plan, we were then able to move into revising our output measures, and following that we were then able to concentrate on the client survey, which we have just completed.

All of the departments are currently in the throes of completing their business plans for the forthcoming financial year. You asked what will be in those plans; a lot of the things we have put before you today will certainly be mentioned in them, along with some more of the detail that goes with each of our departments.

Hopefully that gives you an overview of how this has all occurred. I do not know if any of my colleagues want to add anything to it; if they do they are quite welcome to.

**Mr TUNNECLIFFE** — I do not think we can add anything to that.

**Mr CLARK** — What were the major problems with the existing information technology system that were identified by Pricewaterhousecoopers? Do you expect that the major initiatives in the plan for the IT upgrade program this year will deal with the problems identified by Pricewaterhousecoopers? In particular, do you expect the upgrade in this forthcoming financial year will provide members with the ability to access information from their electorate offices from a variety of locations?

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — The major issue identified by members in their requirements was anywhere, anytime access. Members are very mobile: they move around the state and they move around the country, and occasionally — if you believe the papers — they go overseas. Having to take your notebook computer, for instance, wherever you go is a bit of a disincentive. Admittedly our next round of notebooks will be a lot slimmer and easier to carry, but to be able to go to an Internet café or some other Internet provider and get access to your email and the parliamentary library's resources was the no. 1 issue identified by members.

The outstanding service we now provide with our news service has certainly, as the Speaker said, been identified by members as one of the most valuable tools that has been added to their armoury over the past 10 or 20 years.

The other issue relates to the current limitations expressed, I know, by Mr Clark and others, which are the limitations on what they are able to do in finding new software that they want to use and being able to use that as part of the system. We have asked all members to contribute to, for instance, the design of the software packages we will have in operation, so we have tried to look forward. We have tried, for example, to accommodate the ability to have videoconferencing from your notebook computer, wherever you are. We have problems at the moment with hard disk and memory limitations, so we are trying to get the higher end of that, with 512 RAM rather than the 128 RAM we have at the moment. We have tried to keep in mind the fact that this system will be in

operation over the next three years, and we have tried to look at the higher end of things but to do it in a more flexible way so that the higher end users can be catered for as well as the vast majority of us.

We have adopted a plan that is very heavily reflective of the views of the members, so when we get into our electorate offices we will have — again, depending on what we finally select — less clutter on the desktops, screens with all the equipment underneath, much better printers, much better scanners and all that sort of thing. We have tried to assess the needs identified by members, and we hope to deliver on each of those.

**Mr CLARK** — Specifically, do you think the new system will allow members to access their own data held at their electorate offices from a variety of locations?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Absolutely. As the President indicated, that is the no. 1 issue that was identified through the review process, and it is the no. 1 priority that we have put into the tender documents we are currently evaluating on what is to be supplied for Parlynet 2002. That is precisely the intention, Mr Clark. We want you, the individual member, to have access to your information, your database and your material irrespective of where you are located. It is farcical that we now have a system — let's remember that when this system was designed everyone was acting without the benefit of the hindsight of five years advancement in information technology — that is essentially considered to be too bureaucratic, too closed in and too fireproofed and within which you and I, as members of Parliament, can be at this Parliament and yet cannot access a letter we might have commenced typing in our electorate office, or vice versa.

The whole Parlynet 2002 project is driven by this ideological and philosophical problem that must be addressed and fixed up — and it will be fixed up.

**Mr CLARK** — Thank you.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Within that, are you looking at broadbanding into electorate offices to get that range of services you were talking about?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Yes, Mr Chairman, we are looking at broadbanding initiatives. However, that is not part of phase 1 of this project. The IT review that we indicated we have completed is all inclusive, but it has been broken down essentially into three components: one is what we loosely call the IT catch-up initiative; another component is some core business initiatives; and the third is broadband initiatives. Essentially, although we put it up as a package to Treasury, you can imagine the dramatic dollar values associated with such a project; and Treasury's general belief that we could not possibly do all that in one year even if it gave us the money has by necessity meant that that will be a future stage of this project.

**Mrs MADDIGAN** — Honourable Speaker, in your presentation you referred to the Parliament discovery centre. Perhaps you could give us a bit more information about what is going to be contained in there, or what its function will be.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — I can. Essentially, as suggested by the terminology we have used to describe it, a member of the public will be able to walk into the discovery centre and experience the flavour of what the Parliament is all about. It is the intention not only to have written material in the form of the publications the Parliament produces — and I should point out that we do not envisage it being an alternative to the papers offices when it comes to bills, legislation or indeed committee reports — but also to expand that a bit further so you will be able to find historical publications and current political publications — for example, books that have been written involving either this Parliament or the national Parliament — which will be in two categories. One category will be made available at no cost, as is currently the case in our papers offices, and the other category will be at a cost to the purchaser. We plan to have things such as parliamentary artefacts, parliamentary memorabilia and those types of items which the general public seems to love to buy but which we have not had an opportunity to adequately display other than in the very small cabinet currently in our vestibule.

As a third area of providing access to information we would like to put a couple of computers across there, which would be made available on a similar basis to those in institutions such as the museum, the art gallery and indeed the immigration museum. They would be available to members of the public who want to come and access particular information that is available within the parliamentary jurisdiction and its confines. Of course we will have to manage that just right: we cannot make all the information available in that format, but the information technology people tell me that you can put sufficient firewalls in place to ensure that that information can be separated and made available on an item-by-item basis as the presiding officers and, I guess, the administrative

bodies of this Parliament — the House Committee and the Library Committee — deem appropriate to have out there and available to the public.

**Ms BARKER** — Are you saying that you will have computer terminals at 157 Spring Street which will give you information about the Parliament and all of that? Why would you not just use the library site?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — We can use the library site, but we believe we have a unique opportunity with 157, so instead of simply having yet another large foyer to a government building, as is the case in a number of buildings around town, we can better utilise this facility, which is essentially at street level and therefore just a bit more friendly and accessible to people who might be on the other side of Spring Street. We hope to provide sufficient flavour for them to be enticed to come across and where appropriate use some of the facilities that we have here. The librarian may correct me about this, but I am sure that we do not have a totally open access policy to the facilities that are provided in the library. Essentially I guess that is not because of our desire not to do so but because those facilities are there first and foremost for use by members and staff. More often than not you will find that that is the case, and this will add to that service.

**Ms BARKER** — I meant the library web site. If you have computers over there, why would it not be just the library web site that people access over there? I recommend to all students that they access the parliamentary library web site. One of the greater things that I give out to schoolchildren is the bookmark which the library produces. I am very grateful that they give me enough to give to schoolchildren!

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — It is certainly our intention to have available at those desktops whatever we have currently on the Internet and accessible to everybody worldwide; we do not plan to further restrict any of that. However, I believe there is also scope for other things to be added to that other than the library site. It is interesting to note that in the survey we mentioned earlier one of the lesser known facts is that there is also a Legislative Assembly web site and a Legislative Council web site. We certainly do not intend to place any restriction on the information which is already on the Internet.

**Ms BARKER** — I have another follow-up question, but I will leave it to later. I am sure I will be able to find space for it!

I note that one of our recommendations concerned the skills audit and training needs analysis program, and I also note the way those recommendations have been accepted by the presiding officers. It says that the skills audit and training needs analysis program is currently being developed and that the development of a people-management strategy is currently being considered. Last year we talked with Carolyn Williams from Hansard in particular about the need for extra staff in Hansard and the need to train people in that area. As I said, it is really pleasing to note that that recommendation has been picked up by the presiding officers. Could you give me any further detail on that skills audit and training needs analysis program? What stage is it at? How are we going with Hansard in terms of the staff required? As I said last year, I think this building offers great potential in terms of the training possibilities, particularly for young people, in a vast range of areas. Given the need to pick it up and develop it even further, it is great that you have accepted that recommendation.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Before handing over to Ray Purdey, who will comment on the detail of this, as I indicated in my presentation we are very pleased that we are now taking training very seriously as an institution. Two and a half years ago we did not have a training officer and had not had one for a couple of years before that as a result of certain events that were occurring in the parliamentary administration at the time. About two years ago the President and I took a policy decision that training was important, and we proceeded to appoint a training officer. We have further supported that policy decision by, as I indicated in the presentation, allocating half the ground floor of 157 Spring Street to putting in place a proper training facility.

I have been around a number of such centres in Melbourne in the company of Steven Aird to have a look at different models. We plan to have our training officer, Mr Clarebrough, and our education officer, Karen Dowling, occupying the ground floor. They will predominantly be involved with the provision of training not only to parliamentary staff but also to outside agencies such as teachers and schools that come here on tours. Karen Dowling will be able to give them briefings and provide them with information about how they as educators could better convey the message that this Parliament attempts to convey with regard to the importance of us as a legislature and as members of Parliament and of politics in general.

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — Quite a number of parliaments have theatrettes or areas where you can set up mock parliaments. That is one thing we miss here. The Parliament House Completion Authority had included that in its plan, but that is in the past. We have to do it with the resources we have, but we regard that as very important.

I know that when you go into schools you perhaps occasionally split the kids into government and opposition and get them to debate bills in the way we do with our Youth Parliament and our Students Parliament.

**Mr PURDEY** — If I can perhaps relate my comments a bit more to the training side of things, I cannot answer your question directly and say, ‘Yes, we have done the training needs analysis for all departments now’, but it is something that is at the forefront of our mind and has been addressed in our corporate plan. Certainly when they came together the department heads recognised that as one of the big issues that needed to be addressed.

There is a section in our corporate plan about it, and we will now follow that through and address that through business plans as we go through. As Mr Speaker said, we are gradually getting there in relation to this. You cannot do everything overnight. The first thing we thought was important to do was establish our staff training and development committee, which has representatives from each of the departments and is chaired by Gail Dunston. They meet on a regular basis to try to set the framework for the types of training that we will provide generally across the Parliament. In line with that we now have our e-learning up and running. The next phase of it will be addressing the training needs analysis, which we will now develop through from our revised corporate plans.

**The CHAIRMAN** — On the subject of training, as a non-metropolitan member one of the things I have welcomed is that training opportunities from the Parliament are now being undertaken in regional areas and are no longer located just in Melbourne. I think that is a great step forward.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Thank you, Mr Chairman. It is perhaps appropriate for me to announce to the committee that the other area of this is the funding we allow each electorate office to undertake training either at the central level, as has been mentioned previously, or at the local level through appropriately accredited training providers such as TAFE colleges. This year we have ourselves set up courses and training sessions in regional cities around Victoria as a result of direct requests from those of you who represent non-metropolitan electorates about the need to do what we do in Melbourne at a regional level.

The reason I said I am announcing this to the committee is that the President and I have further considered that component of training, and we are further finetuning our training policy for members who live long distances from training centres. Let’s face it, some members’ electorate offices are many miles from Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong or the Latrobe Valley, where we have conducted such sessions. We want to make it a bit easier for you to utilise the training money that we make available to cover the long distances that you have to travel to undertake training. We plan to make the announcement very shortly about loosening up, if you like, the use of those funds to allow your electorate officers to use some of the funds, for example, for travelling or accommodation that might be required for those from remote locations.

**Ms BARKER** — I referred to a discussion we had last year about Hansard and its ability to train staff, and I asked what was happening. Can the committee get an update on that?

**Ms WILLIAMS** — I am very pleased to report that we are now in a position where we have overcome our staff shortages. With the advent of the digital recording system that we put in in both chambers — and it is now available at 35 Spring Street as well as in this room and in K room — we can now capture a very good recording of all committee hearings and obviously parliamentary proceedings. That allows us to employ people who do not necessarily have shorthand skills but who have the requisite language skills and so forth. That has increased the size of our recruitment pool.

We have spent a lot of time setting up an in-house training program. Our team of subeditors spend a lot of one-on-one time with people as they come in. We have two people on maternity leave at the moment, and we have been able to backfill those positions, which we have never been able to do before. Previously it has been a case of just having to make do.

In the past year we advertised twice for expressions of interest from people who were interested in parliamentary reporting, and we had hundreds of responses to those. Although we have followed up on only a few of those people, we are now in a position where we have names on file, so if we see vacancies coming up we can contact those persons and see whether they are still interested; and if they are we can bring them in and put them through our in-house training program to get them up to speed so they can step in and fill the vacancies. That has been a really positive impact of the digital recording system.

**Mr HOLDING** — Firstly, I commend all the parliamentary departments on the presentation today. I concur with the comments of Mr President that a tremendous amount has been achieved in the past few years in terms of providing better services to members and improving the functionality of this building. I single out for



praise the parliamentary library and the news centre, which members now have on their desktop. I certainly find that easily the single most valuable thing that I use on a daily basis. It is a tremendous initiative in terms of improving services to members.

I wish to ask about an issue which from time to time is drawn attention to by the media, and that is Commonwealth Parliamentary Association trips. Earlier this year the Premier made an announcement that he would be writing, as I understood it, to Mr Speaker with a set of proposed changes to the administration of CPA trips. My recollection is that his proposed changes included such things as improving the reporting mechanisms and putting an abolition on CPA trips for members who had announced their retirements, as well as a series of other measures including penalties for members who did not concur with the reporting requirements and asking parties to address the allocation of CPA trips.

Mr Speaker, has the Premier written to you in those terms; and secondly, has the CPA executive had the opportunity to consider those suggestions, and will any changes arise as a consequence of that?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — Yes, the answer to the question is that the Premier did meet with me and then wrote to me about what he perceived to be some areas of concern he had with the administration and provision of CPA study tours. I preface my remarks by saying that I am a firm believer in the CPA study tour program in that it affords the only opportunity for us, as state members of Parliament, to go outside Australia, if you like, to explore and to find out how other parliaments go about their business. In many cases it is a real eye-opener in that you see the options that are very hard to envisage when you try to do it through the textbook, if you like, from back here.

Having said that, I was appreciative of the Premier's concerns about some perceived problems with the study tours. He outlined some six or seven points that he believed should be addressed.

That matter, of course, was taken up by the President and me within the CPA executive at our last meeting. We are currently in the process of drawing on some of the suggestions the Premier has made with regard to perhaps altering some of the administrative and accountability mechanisms the CPA currently has in place. We hope to be in a position to make some announcement at the next CPA executive meeting, perhaps at the beginning of the next sitting of the Parliament, with a view to applying those for the next year of parliamentary study tour allocations.

However, I found it a bit difficult to understand, because as I understand it the Premier has requested that of the CPA but has also announced it as government policy. I am not too sure what precisely the distinction is, but as far as the CPA is concerned we are ploughing through some of the suggestions that he has made and we hope to make some announcements after our next meeting.

**Mr HOLDING** — If there were to be changes would that require new guidelines; is that the proper process? What is the administrative process for admitting any changes?

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — The guidelines currently in place were recently reviewed and some changes were made, particularly to the accountability requirements that we now place upon members. We have provided in my view a substantial improvement on reporting. The presiding officers are now obligated to report to each of our respective houses which members have taken CPA trips and when. Just as importantly, they are obligated to ensure that all members have reported by the due deadlines and to name those members who have failed to meet the reporting deadline as well as impose financial penalties on those members who failed to do so. I guess the fact that it is reported to the house has gone a long way towards making the whole process far more transparent and accountable.

One of the further suggestions that I am attracted to as part of these discussions we are having at the moment concerns a proposition that essentially comes from the Premier as well as the librarian, that perhaps the next step in reporting requirements should be that it be done in electronic form — lodged on the Internet through the parliamentary web site — so they would be available in all their grandeur for all and sundry to see.

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — To add a couple of issues to that, there is no doubt that there is an uneven quality to the reports that are made, but the vast majority — if I had to put a percentage on it I would say 90 per cent — are first-class reports. We have now instituted a system of mentoring so that if, say, a member of a government party is travelling and wants some advice that member can go to one of their members on the executive to have them look at the report beforehand. That is important.

To go to your question of who sets the guidelines, it is the CPA executive, so the letter from the Premier is regarded purely as a suggestion. He is one of the members of that executive, although he does not come along to our



meetings; neither did his predecessor, by the way. So he has made the suggestions and we have taken them seriously. The system we have of naming of members who do not produce their reports in time is a pretty severe disincentive, so last time when the cut-off date came we were able to announce in both our chambers that all of our members who were required to report had in fact done so.

I would like to say that one point that has had a fair bit of media attention that has to be put into perspective is the question of whether the member has copied elements of their report from some other document. If you are visiting another legislature and you want an authoritative statement as to how that legislature handles particular issues it is better to use the source document rather than to paraphrase what you have been told, which you may or may not get correct.

**Ms BARKER** — You should quote it and footnote it.

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — Yes, and attribute it to show where it has come from and that it is an authoritative statement. I can remember some years ago I went to Jiangsu Province, our sister state, with an all-member delegation, and I drafted the report for them. I wanted to say something about the atrocities in Nanjing during the 1930s, which is an issue which is very important to the Chinese. I was not going to try to paraphrase that, so I went to an authoritative, historical report about what happened in Nanjing — the so-called rape of Nanjing. I think we have to be aware of saying to members, ‘Look you cannot use source documents’. However, I have to say that some members’ reports are so big and the documents that accompany them are so much bigger — in other words, they go around, collect a whole lot of documents and make them up in their report — that what we have done is say, ‘No, you give us the report that is your work and keep the source documents or the add-ons in your electorate office and make them available to the members who might seek them’. So we are trying to improve. We think the quality has improved and will continue to improve. As the Speaker said, having them in electronic form would make them more accessible to more people — and if members of the public are reading the reports, that is good.

**The CHAIRMAN** — I take up a couple of issues that relate to Hansard, and one follows on from what was said before. Last year I asked in this committee whether Hansard was able to cover committee work across the board, or how that was to be allocated given the problem of sourcing that sort of reporting from outside Hansard, and whether some committees were paying much more for that service than others. Could I have some comment on the current situation with that issue?

The other issue I take up relates to Hansard as well, but it is probably a little more general. It concerns some media publicity last week about a court case involving a former employee wanting to work at home. While I do not want to go into the details of that case, the media reports indicated that there may be an appeal, or that an appeal was being considered. Again, I do not want to go to that. The issue is that if an appeal in fact goes ahead, as I understand it from those media reports it would be on the basis that it creates a general precedent for employers not just in Parliament but elsewhere. The question, which has nothing to do with the legal aspects of it, is: would Hansard be required to fund that appeal out of its own budget or would it be sourced elsewhere? If it did have to do it out of its own budget, what would be the implications of that?

**Mr CHAMBERLAIN** — Can I go back to the areas you did not want to explore. The fact is that in this case, which has been running for some time, a former employee, Ms Schou, took action under the equal opportunity legislation and said that we had discriminated against her because she was a carer of young children. That went to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). There were 17 grounds of claim against us; 16 were dismissed and 1 was upheld, that being that we had not given her the opportunity to work from home via a modem.

We subsequently took the matter on appeal to the Supreme Court. We thought it was wrong in law and also that the precedent had considerable implications for Parliament. Our view that the law had not been properly applied was upheld by a single judge of the Supreme Court. He sent the matter back to be heard again by VCAT according to law. The matter was subsequently heard by Judge Duggan of the County Court, who is the deputy president, and in a detailed judgment he came to the conclusion that the original award was correct, although perhaps he may have given different reasons for doing so. So we are faced with a situation of whether to allow that to stay as a precedent, and a precedent which could affect every working place in Victoria, and to leave that as law settled by a judge of the County Court. We have taken the view that an appeal should be lodged. The appeal will do two things. It will say that we were correct in the sense that the staff of Hansard bent over backwards to assist her in managing her twin responsibilities of being a mother and a professional employee. A lot of attempts were made to assist her in that role.

As to the implications of it, I put the question to one of our senior advisers whether if, for instance, the chief of Hansard decided to leave and we wanted to advertise that position we could stipulate that the position had to be fulfilled at Parliament House. We were told we could not do that because that was potentially discriminatory. The implications of that are extraordinary, so we have taken the decision to appeal, and we will be doing so. I think that goes to a full bench of the Court of Appeal. Today Mr Speaker and I are advising the Premier and the Minister for Industrial Relations accordingly.

In relation to your question, until now Hansard has funded it from its own resources. If it got to the stage that it had implications for the operations of the Department of Parliamentary Debates and we could not fund it from other resources of Parliament, we would be seeking assistance from the Premier.

**The CHAIRMAN** — On the other matter I referred to, could you give the committee an update on the matter I raised last year about servicing committees?

**Ms WILLIAMS** — Once again, the advent of the digital audio recording system and the fact that we can use it at 35 Spring Street as well as at Parliament House means we are now able to use all in our team of reporters to report committees. In the past we were not able to use our non-shorthand reporters to cover committees at 35 Spring Street because the recording was not good enough to be the sole source to rely on. As a result of that audio system working, we have almost doubled the number of reporters we have available to cover committee hearings. That does not mean it is at no cost to committees. When I have to employ sessional reporters, they have to be paid in addition because they are not on salaries. Some costs still flow to committees as a result of that, but it is certainly cheaper than using a freelance firm, and it gives us the ability to provide the expected standard of transcript.

**The CHAIRMAN** — In effect you get them at the contract rate to Hansard, and that is passed on rather than the rate the committee may have to pay if it were done from outside?

**Ms WILLIAMS** — Yes, and it means that if we had two committees sitting today, for example, I could call in additional reporters and spread the cost among the committees. You would not have one committee paying for six additional reporters. You can minimise the cost. Hansard also bears some of the cost. It is an issue of staffing. When I decide to call in an additional reporter because I think we may produce the transcript more quickly, Hansard pays for that.

**Mr CLARK** — I raise a question about workplace safety. Is it correct that there has recently been a Worksafe inspection of Parliament? If so, were any improvement or prohibition notices issued? Have there been any major concerns raised? If so, what provisions are made in respect of the 2002–03 budget to deal with any of those matters?

**Mr AIRD** — Some provisional improvement notices were made but no prohibition notices were made. Within the following month we invited Worksafe back again to look at the improvements we had made. They lifted all those notices in all the areas identified. They have given us some guidelines of where we can go to further develop things, and that is part of our process. One of the issues is that the occupational health and safety committee that now exists in Parliament is making recommendations directly to the department heads, and we are continuing to progress it. There is nothing specific in the corporate plan, but included in all our business plans is that we will be looking at workplace safety.

**Mr CLARK** — Are there any specific outstanding issues that need to be tackled?

**Mr AIRD** — Not to my knowledge. The only one left was the spray paint booth, and we are not using that. We are looking to close that down unless we can improve its ventilation.

**Ms BARKER** — This is a question that Mr Davidson may help us with. Mr Holding referred to the electronic news service, which is fantastic. I think you indicated, Mr Speaker, that the proposed project was funded to \$300 000 for ongoing years; I think that is what you said. How is that costing arrived at? Does that mean that if you have \$300 000 and members are using it a lot, the funding runs out? How do you guarantee it for 12 months?

**Mrs MADDIGAN** — Is it a set fee or does the cost change according to usage; is that what you are asking?

**Ms BARKER** — Yes.

**Mr ANDRIANOPOULOS** — As I understand it — and Mr Davidson will comment on it — it is \$300 000 in the first year. From memory — and I stand to be corrected — it is \$262 000 in the following years on an ongoing basis. I will ask Mr Davidson to comment on the detail.

**Mr DAVIDSON** — Thank you for the committee's strong endorsement of the system. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Gail Dunston and Victoria Spicer, because this was not just bought off the shelf. It has been a long and tough road to develop a system that would actually meet the needs of members of Parliament. It has been developed in conjunction with Australian Associated Press (AAP), which is a large organisation to be changing its business offerings to satisfy our particular needs. It has been developed specifically for the needs of members of the Parliament of Victoria.

At present the cost basically is about \$500 per licence. If we had a licence for every electorate office or every member that would represent \$10 a week. I maintain that would provide very good value for money. We have to be careful in that we are in the developmental stages of this and one licence per electorate office is probably not enough to satisfy AAP. They watch our usage. Our vision is to provide two licences per office, so there would be an exclusive licence for the member and another licence for the office staff. That accounts for a lot of the money.

We are also spending money on developing an online training package for this, and work on that is going on now, so you can train staff in your office at their desks in the intricacies of how to use it. One of the important things is that if we are to put this sort of money into it we have to make sure that members and their staff are using it effectively. That involves a commitment to training. Right now some members are using it extensively, but that does not mean they could not be using it more effectively, so there is work in training.

That also involves staff costs in going around to electorate offices and enhancing the skills of electorate officers and members in using it. Basically, the full cost of Newscentre for next year in terms of what we provide to members is \$190 000, there is \$61 000 for training and support and \$45 000 to develop associated products that would come from electronic news services. It is all right to say you have the print news stitched up, but we know members are relying more and more on radio and television, and we are developing systems to take account of digital television. We are already dealing with digital radio, and we have the capacity to email audio clips to members' offices. We are doing that right now. That is basically where the money is going to go.

I would like to tell you that I think it is providing good value for money because I know this is a large sum of money to be allocated to the library. We looked at various providers of this service. There are various ways of charging. We have to be in a system that allows us to put it onto members' desks and let them go for it — in other words, that they can use it and abuse it and we do not go through our budget as a result of it. It has to be a fixed cost. I think that was the basis for part of the question.

**Ms BARKER** — Yes.

**Mr DAVIDSON** — Some of the vendors that provide this service charge by usage. In the last six months we have had 220 000 page views or prints — that is where people actually open up the article and read it — and if these were provided by some of our —

**Mrs MADDIGAN** — There are 200 000 here!

**Mr DAVIDSON** — I just said you can use it as much as you like, and we are very keen for it to be used extensively. Some of the providers charge by the unit; and \$1 is a reasonable rate but some of them charge \$6. You can quickly work out that on the basis of 220 000 downloads, we would be going through a lot more money than we are at the present time.

I should also mention that within this money that we have been allocated for next year is money to develop with AAP local and regional newspapers. We have to be a little bit careful about this because we are putting the pressure on and we are not sure they have the wherewithal to do this properly. These newspapers are not all generated in the same way as the big dailies. But we are working on regional newspapers and local newspapers to give you a comprehensive service. Members have told us that the service is everything they want it to be except that it does not have the local and regional papers in it. That is the next step.

**Ms BARKER** — Perhaps your efforts to get the locals on side will push them more into new technology anyway.

**Mr DAVIDSON** — That is what needs to happen.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Thank you. In concluding this session, I believe, as I am sure do other members of the committee, that the service provided by our library and the steps that have been made in the provision of that service over the last few years have been a terrific resource to members. I note that our library does it with probably significantly less resourcing than most parliamentary libraries around the country, particularly, I might say, the commonwealth library, where I think they have something like 27 research staff alone without other library staff. I think we are indeed very well served by the service from our library.

That concludes the time allocated for consideration of the estimates for the parliamentary departments. I thank the presiding officers, the various departmental heads and parliamentary officers for their attendance here today. It has again been a very useful session for us. There may be some matters that the committee will follow up with you at a later date and some questions that may be forwarded to you in writing later.

**Committee adjourned.**