

CORRECTED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into 2003–04 budget estimates

Melbourne – 24 June 2003

Members

Mr W. R. Baxter

Ms C. M. Campbell

Mr R. W. Clark

Mr L. A. Donnellan^{1 17}

Mr B. Forwood

Ms D. L. Green

Mr J. Merlino

Mr G. K. Rich-Phillips

Ms G. D. Romanes

Chair: Ms C. M. Campbell

Deputy Chair: Mr B. Forwood

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms M. Cornwell

Witnesses

Ms M. Gould, President, Legislative Council;

Mrs J. Maddigan, Speaker, Legislative Assembly;

Mr R. Purdey, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly;

Mr W. Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council;

Mr S. Aird, Director, and

Mr H. Barr, Manager, Finance, Corporate Services, and

Mr G. Spurr, Director, Infrastructure Services, Joint Services Department;

Ms G. Dunston, Parliamentary Librarian, Department of the Parliamentary Library; and

Ms C. Williams, Editor, Department of Parliamentary Debates.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the budget estimates for the presiding officers. I welcome the Honourable Monica Gould, President of the Legislative Council; the Honourable Judy Maddigan, 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 Steven Aird, Director, Corporate Services, Mr Hilton Barr, finance manager, and Mr Graeme Spurr, Director, Infrastructure Services, from the Department of Joint Services; Ms Gail Dunston, Parliamentary Librarian; Ms Carolyn Williams, Editor of Debates; and departmental officers, members of the public, Hansard 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, and witnesses 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 budget estimates for the parliamentary departments, I ask that all mobile phones be turned off and that all pagers be turned to silent.

Once you have finished your presentation, we have up to an hour and 50 minutes for questions, so over to you.

Ms GOULD — Thank you, Christine and committee members. I would like to thank you for your invitation to the Speaker and I to attend this morning's meeting. As you would appreciate, we have both been here before in but in different roles — the Speaker on the other side of the table and myself in other capacities.

I would like to hand over to Judy very shortly to give you a broad outline of the Parliament, but before I do; you would have received a letter of correspondence from the presiding officers about the questionnaire that was forwarded on to all department heads or ministers. We believe a lot of those questions are more applicable to ministers and departments than to the Parliament, and you will see in our responses that we were unable to answer a number of the questions because they are not applicable to the Parliament. In that letter to you we offer the opportunity of having Steven Aird sit down with whomever you nominate to come up with a set questions that would be more pertinent to the Parliament than to departments.

As you would appreciate, the Parliament is not necessarily bound by certain government policies on outcomes because of the uniqueness of its independence. We follow certain guidelines, of course, but we put that offer to the PAEC for future meetings, and I think that might assist in the process of these hearings.

I would like to hand over to Judy as the Speaker to give you an outline of what we are doing with our budget allocation for 2003–04, and I thank you once again for the invitation to be here today.

Overheads shown.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I think you have the slide show there, so we will quickly go through them. You will be glad to know that I will not take as long as the Speaker and President did last time, although none of you were here last time except Robert, who sat through it all. I will be a little briefer than that.

The first one is on how we spend our funds. We put the Auditor-General there. Obviously we do not spend those funds, but it was just to show you where the \$116 million is allocated in our parliamentary appropriations bill and where it goes to. It is fairly self-explanatory, I think. Members and staff costs are a major part of that amount.

The next one is the members and staff cost distribution. This covers how the members and staff costs are split up. Once again, the members salary is \$17.7 million. Superannuation is the next biggest one, and the other \$4.1 million relates to other Workcover and payroll tax issues. The rest are the electorate officers salaries and staff salaries.

As to supplies and services, this is how we intend to spend the \$29.6 million that we expect to spend this year. These can be divided into non-discretionary and discretionary costs. The non-discretionary costs include electorate offices — the rent and the fit-out and maintenance. Half of the costs for communications expenses are non-discretionary. There is equipment rental as well as vehicle charges and most of the printing. The discretionary costs include the committee costs of \$5 million and general expenses of \$8.9 million.

There is some of the expenditure at the end of May this year on supplies and services. Just to give you an idea of how that is split up, it includes cleaning costs, about \$400 000; gardening expenses, \$62 000; insurance, \$354 000; maintenance expenses, about \$456 000; office equipment, nearly \$2 million; and postage — always a big item in

everyone's budget, I think — \$367 000. Of that I should point out that \$328 000 is spent by members. Utilities, electricity and water is \$444 000; and training, about \$312 000.

In addition to running the legislature and meeting our 2002–03 output requirements, the following were achieved. I think they speak for themselves fairly much. You are aware of the IT strategic plan. No doubt we will talk about that later.

As to the refurbishment of the Assembly chamber, lower house members will know it was completed almost on time for the first sitting.

The library news service is fully operational.

The airconditioning project is going ahead. The Legislative Assembly area has been completed. There were some problems with Queen's Hall, so I think we have put that aside for the moment and have gone on to the Legislative Council as a high priority, which should please Legislative Council members, especially those who sat through the opening of Parliament.

The human resources management system was upgraded. That is now operational; and although 157 Spring Street has not quite been finished, certainly we have started relocating officers there as well.

The other project identified last year when we briefed the PAEC was the security upgrade. That is continuing. As you know, there is \$1 million in this year's budget to continue that.

We can talk a bit more about the kitchen occupational health and safety refurbishment. We have done some more master planning work, and some more planning will be done on that. The smoke compartmentalisation has been suspended until the completion of the airconditioning project and the implementation of the recommendations of the parliamentary strategic security study, so that will be coming along later on.

The proposed projects for this year, which are the ones outlined in the budget, I think pretty much speak for themselves. As I said, we are doing the planning now for airconditioning the Legislative Council. The work, which has already been planned and which will be done fairly shortly, includes Hansard, the opposition rooms and the Speaker's suite.

The security upgrade involves the additional staff that will be employed. This is from the \$1 million, as part of a whole-of-government security program. That also includes the scanning equipment — scanning of bags and of people who are coming into the Parliament. There will be some further camera and monitoring equipment to make that more exact and to cover more of the grounds, as well as some of the computer support for that.

The two committees based at 157 Spring Street are across there now — the Education and Training Committee, a committee that is oversighted by the Council; and the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee, which also comes under the control of the Council. Those committees have started operating over there.

As for the electorate offices, because of the redistribution there were a number of electorates that did not have an electorate office in them, so our first priority has been trying to get new electorate offices for those people. Danielle Green was one of those people, and I am glad to say she has been in her office since April. So that has been our first priority — to make sure every new member in every new electorate has an electorate office.

We are now working on the next phase, which includes those whose offices are causing difficulties — and Bill, yours is in that mix as well, you will be pleased know. So we have now moved into some of the offices of other members whose offices were unsuitable — and there were a couple like that. For example, Forest Hill, which I think is on the third floor, has no toilets, et cetera. There are a number of offices which do not have toilets that are in shopping centres. They have to use the general toilets in the area. I do not think that is really suitable for members of Parliament, especially when they have constituents coming to see them, so we are trying to fix up the ones there are problems with as the next priority. We have just started the planning for that now.

Money has been funded for the Speaker's ruling database to put Speaker's rulings on computer, so all members can check immediately if the Speaker has made an incorrect ruling, or it can assist them with points of order in making that ruling. That project will be undertaken during the year.

The other part of that is for the 150th anniversary of Parliament. The Parliament had already done some preliminary work last year on organising how we can celebrate that event in 2006. Work will progress on that.

As to how we have been going, one of the things that has been discussed here before is how we look at rating our services to our customers — the members of Parliament — and some of that came from discussions at the PAEC a couple of years back. We have finished the 2002–03 survey, and we have almost finished the 2003–04 survey. We have received, I am glad to say, a very high response rate, both from members of Parliament and also from other staff, although we could have a few more. At the moment 58 MPs have responded, which is 44 per cent of all MPs; and 299 staff have responded, which is 60 per cent of the staff. That gives you a bit of a comparison there of how we have been going. That is pretty much where it is.

You will see there is not a huge change from last year, because a lot of the projects we are doing are ones that are ongoing. They started some years ago and will continue on into the future.

I thought I would go through for you, if you like, the recommendations made by the PAEC last year in relation to its report to Parliament and tell you what we have done with them. I do not know if you have them, but there was a recommendation in relation to a skills audit and training needs. That is currently being done on an individual basis by managers, and it has continued. We have been discussing training as a fairly high priority for the parliamentary staff at all levels. We had a discussion yesterday about some training programs we are going through this year.

Among the key findings which were provided last year was 14.2, which was:

Although staff training needs have not been defined, an extensive online training system has been made available, but less than 10 per cent of parliamentary staff have accessed the site.

That has been agreed, and we have been working on that to make that more available.

... Business plans for parliamentary departments for 2002–03 were not finalised until 30 September 2002.

There is not much we can do about that, I suppose. That has already happened.

Another recommendation was 14.4, which was:

Notwithstanding concerns about the significant turnover of performance measures, the committee believes further improvement to performance measures are necessary provide a greater focus on the achievement of outcomes and outputs rather than on processes and inputs.

The staff at Parliament did not think that was a reasonable response, and perhaps you might like to ask them about that later. They disagreed with that recommendation.

... The Joint Services Department received \$600 000 for the rental of 157 Spring Street in 2001–02, representing a significant —

Blah, blah, blah.

The tenancy of the third and fourth floors has not been resolved.

The third floor now has, of course, and the fourth floor is still under discussion.

... Hansard staff shortages have been alleviated with the introduction of a digital recording system in both chambers of Parliament and in other parliamentary venues.

That was the other finding, which had already of course occurred. So they are the main recommendations we got from you for last year.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much; I appreciate that. I congratulate you on being the one and only group that has bothered to address the recommendations in the previous estimates report. I am sure you are highly motivated to do so, Speaker. Thank you for that. We could hold you up as a model to the ministers, if they would only do the same.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Please do.

The CHAIR — To the first question: could you explain to the committee why you asked the Auditor-General to investigate Parlynet 2, and how do you propose to go about answering these questions?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We both have responsibilities through the staff and the organisation. I am responsible for most of the Joint Services area and my chamber, and Monica is responsible for the library, Hansard and her chamber.

The CHAIR — So you will take questions according to that?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We know what we are responsible for.

The CHAIR — So, the Auditor-General.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not suppose it will come as any earth-shattering revelation to members of Parliament to know that we are not totally satisfied with the outcome of the Parlynet 2 rollout. In fact I was quite surprised in the client survey to see that it rated as well as it did, because as you know there have been ongoing problems, not only for the use of it by members but also for the staff functions.

When I was given a briefing from the staff, they identified a number of problems they saw with it, apart from the response I got from members of Parliament. It seemed to me that we were not in a position ourselves, because the staff had been intimately involved in the whole process, to be able to assess if the advice we were given by the private contractors at the beginning was correct; if in fact the people who rolled out the project understood the full nature of it; and if there had been problems in that process that gave us an unsatisfactory outcome that we could assess in terms of having that base of information to assist us in other major projects that we want to undertake in the future.

There are two more stages of the Parlynet process, Parlynet 3 and 4, which of course, and not unreasonably, we have not been funded for at this stage. So it seemed to me that the best thing to do was to invite the Auditor-General to do a performance audit of the rollout of Parlynet 2 so we could get independent advice. It seemed to me the Auditor-General was the best person to do it, because most of the other people in the computer industry have some vested interest in the products you are using or the products you did not choose. So I wanted to get an independent adviser and someone who had expertise in that IT area. So the Auditor-General's office kindly accepted my invitation, and they have been going through that process now.

We do not have the results of it yet, but from talking to the Auditor-General, I think that probably will be available next month. They have gone through a very extensive and I think a very useful process with the staff in the IT section particularly, but also with the other users of the system, such as Hansard, the library and the committees. All have had different and individual problems with the system, as well as of course members, and some of you may have responded to the survey they sent around. They certainly spoke to some members about the input into that.

I think at the end of it we will get a very strong basis for assessing where we are now, and also I think we will be able to perhaps convince Treasury and Finance that we are aware of problems we may have had before. But we want them to understand that we are in a situation to undertake stage 3, or Parlynet 3 and 4, and get funding for it; and I would hope we would be getting funding in next year's budget towards some of that work.

The CHAIR — I have a supplementary question, but Mr Forwood can go first, on a supplementary.

Mr FORWOOD — What was the total amount of the contract when we started out? What was the total amount of the project when we started?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Total cost?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes.

Mrs MADDIGAN — This was before I was here, so I will have to rely to a certain amount on my staff. What was the total cost of the project?

Mr SPURR — I think the original contract was signed at \$2.3 million.

Mr FORWOOD — How much have we spent today?

Mr SPURR — I would say \$4 million, without knowing exactly. The Auditor-General has gone through that with a fine toothcomb. There was some suggestion that that actually costed the total project at \$7.4 million, but that includes ongoing costs like Internet access. IT for Parliament, according to the Auditor-General's finding, costs about \$7.4 million, but that is for ongoing costs as well as the new works. Licensing costs have not changed from version 1 to version 2.

Mr FORWOOD — Let me go back a step. What is the standard operating cost of an IT system, no matter what IT system it is — like access, licence fees, stuff like that? Does it change from year to year?

Mr SPURR — It would depend on what the new licensing arrangements are. The whole-of-government licensing agreement was reviewed I think in the middle of last year.

Mr FORWOOD — Okay. Do we have a separate licensing agreement?

Mr SPURR — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Okay. But when we set out to do this project presumably someone said, ‘These are the bits that will stay the same and these are the bits that will be new, and this is the total cost of the IT system for Parliament’, in your scoping sort of stuff.

Mr SPURR — I think we were funded for \$2.3 million, and I think we have spent about \$4 million as a consequence of the project. So if the Auditor-General’s report suggests that we have spent about \$7 million, you can say that three — —

Mr FORWOOD — The difference is what would have been spent whether we had done the project or not?

Mr SPURR — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Okay.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is difficult for me to assess all of it, but certainly there were expenses that came out of the project which I think would be regarded as reasonable and which brought it above that budget figure. I am not quite sure if all those costs would be considered reasonable or not, and I guess we really have to wait for the Auditor-General’s report to see his view on that before we can comment on it.

Mr FORWOOD — I would be really keen to see that, because we are talking about a blow-out of nearly 100 per cent from \$2.3 million to \$4 million.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Which is why I called in the Auditor-General.

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, for sure. The issue that I want to explore is what the process was that was followed that enabled the appropriation or the provision of additional funds over and above those that were originally allocated? What was the process? Who signed off, step by step, to say, ‘Yes, we will spend more money.’?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I think there is some problem with that, because my attempts to look back and follow that process have not always been successful. My view is, and I do not know because I was not involved at the time, that there were two major problems with the project, and one was the planning phase. I think it was brought in far too quickly; it was not tested, and I think that has caused a lot of the problems. But also for some reason, and I do not understand quite how this happened, the process of the whole system seemed to leave the main part of the Parliament, if you like, and be taken off to the side, so that the IT unit — —

Some of the users of the system were not really involved in that. In relation to the decision-making process, I think, in the end, it was the presiding officers who made those decisions.

Mr FORWOOD — We have been through a process. I know this is IT, but do you think the committee could have some assurance that there is no other part of the operations of Parliament where we start to do something and we end up looking at it 18 months to two years later and suddenly discovering that we have spent twice what we thought we would spend?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I think, as I was saying, that this is the benefit of the Auditor-General’s report. I am not quite sure that we have actually covered ourselves with glory as a major project deliverer, and that is why I hope that we will get from the Auditor-General’s report some guidance, if you like, about the way that we can do these things in a better way so they are more accountable and more responsible. I think we have taken some moves together that will strengthen, particularly in relation to IT, that process in relation to the reformation of the IT committee as an expanded committee, and also having that IT committee have some independent advice given to it.

I know you asked about other projects, so yes, I think you can have confidence that we understand the problems with that and are trying to address it. I do not want to go on and on, but with IT I think there has been a problem, and in some ways it is no-one’s fault — and it is possibly our fault as members as much as anyone’s — that the IT

system as far as I can see, and the IT service that has been provided, has just grown up as a response to members' demands since the system was first introduced.

Mr FORWOOD — Good!

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, I do not think it is good. What you have to do is provide an IT service. It is not good, because some members have exceptionally high usage — some of which I think is doubtful as to whether it is related to their parliamentary duties — and some people have very low usage. Most organisations that provide an IT service provide guidance and limits to members on how they use that service — so, for example, your Internet usage should be only for business and not to download strange television programs and things like that.

The other thing we have allowed, and this has caused us some problems in the operation of Parliament — and we are trying to address this now, and you will have received some emails about this — is in terms of supporting members' standardised products. Instead of, for example, having 87 different palm pilots that cost something like \$10 000 to link up to the computer system and then having ongoing maintenance costs in looking after it, which we might be doing for 50 different units, we are now saying, 'We will not provide that service for all those. We will give you 10 at this current time. You buy those, and we will look after them. If you want to get something else, that is fine — we are not stopping you — but you will have to pay for it', because in the end the IT budget does not meet those broad demands.

What we want to do is provide a first-class product to members, but we can do that only if members respond and if we do it as a unit, not as our doing anything you want. That is what I mean in terms of standardising products, so we know what the product is, our staff can be highly skilled in that, and we can actually afford to provide the backup services that members want because we are not being stretched across a whole lot of applications and we have an area that we can manage better. That is what I mean. That will be ongoing and changed as technology changes, but there will be some limits in terms of that service.

Mr FORWOOD — I accept that, but having the needs of members of Parliament factored into the system's growth is important.

The final part of my question is that if we have overspent the budget by \$2 million, what is the source of the funds? Where have they come from?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have mainly had to find it in other areas. I will get Steven to give you the details on that.

Mr AIRD — We have gone to the government and also to the Auditor-General and said we would like to use our reserves from the SAU. So basically we are paying for it out of money from the past, where we have not fully used this money, and we are basically paying for a blow-out in funding. We are not going to the public, we are not going to the government. They have said, 'You mucked it, you pay for it. This way you will learn to do better next time'.

The CHAIR — My supplementary question relates to the fact that you mentioned that members were not involved in an IT committee initially and you have re-established that, which is welcome.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I sort of have, but not on a very broad base, yes.

The CHAIR — That is not what I hear. Has the Auditor-General spoken to a range of members in order to inform his report? He may have, but it has not been mentioned.

Mr FORWOOD — He surveyed me.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, all the members were asked to respond if they wanted to, and there was some face-to-face communication with a number of members who showed specific interest in it as well.

Of course the IT system is not only for members. It has to meet the specific needs of places like the library, the committees and Parliament. That was one of the problems with the Parlynet II run-out that has caused us some problems, in that in the end there seemed to be a very strong focus on the members' needs and therefore it made it very hard. Hansard has had huge problems with it and so have the committees in trying to get the system to work for them as well, so that was part of the planning and process that went through.

The CHAIR — The universal complaint was that the users were not adequately canvassed at the beginning.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Page 16 of the departmental response lists the funds that are held in the SAU at \$7.9 million, of which some is the balance of the retained surplus. I take it that is after we have spent the extra \$2 million?

Mr AIRD — No, this was done before we worked out exactly where we were going with the funding before the Auditor-General had signed off.

Mr FORWOOD — My memory tells me the SAU is a sort of suspense account that you hold funds in for specific purposes rather than to fix up botched programs. It has creditors and liabilities and stuff like that in it as well, hasn't it?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Some of our reserves are kept to meet unexpected needs or unexpected problems that are not budgeted for, and we regard this as one of those things.

Mr FORWOOD — Which aspect of the SAU, which of the line items of the SAU on page 16, have been, to use my word, plundered to fix up this mess?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is not plundered. It is just normal use of the money. Steve has asked Hilton to answer that.

Mr AIRD — Hilton has been doing the paperwork to talk through with the government and the Auditor-General. Again, that money there is basically our reserve.

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, but you cannot go to the balance of employee entitlements and take money out of that.

Mr AIRD — I never said we use the balance of employee entitlements.

Mr FORWOOD — Oh, I am not saying you did.

Mr AIRD — You did.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You just did then!

Mr FORWOOD — I am saying you cannot have done that.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, and we have not. There is no disagreement.

Mr FORWOOD — Let me reword the question. On page 16 you have a list of the funds that make up the SAU with a value of \$7.9 million. Which of the line items listed there is the one that provided the funds to top up the — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, and Hilton is about to answer that for you.

Mr BARR — There are two components you will see, Mr Forwood, in that SAU. One is a balance of retained earnings, and I think that figure is \$1.6 million, and the other one is about \$4.5 million, and that relates to the depreciation equivalents not yet spent.

As to the funding to go to the balance of Parlynet, I think 1.349 has come from depreciation equivalents not yet spent, and I think 1.1-something — it is under 1.150 — has come from prior year retained earnings. You are perfectly correct saying you cannot use creditors funding, prepayment funding and long-service leave and rec leave funding, and those have remained as is.

Mr DONNELLAN — Has the problem of getting qualified Hansard reporters been overcome, and if so, how?

Ms GOULD — I will answer that one since Hansard falls within my responsibilities. What has happened is that the available skill pool of Hansard reporters has dropped off, and that has been an issue for over 10 years

now. As a result of that, especially up until the point of putting in a sound system in the Council chamber two years ago, there was a limited number of Hansard reporters who could work in the Council. Half the staff were not skilled or qualified to work in there. That created enormous pressures on the Hansard reporting and rostering system.

As a result of the technologies introduced into the Council chamber, that issue has been addressed. There is currently an effective full-time staff of 23, which is made up from 33 staff within Hansard.

In the past my predecessors, through arrangements with Hansard through their EBA et cetera, introduced the opportunity of having sessional reporters. These are specific individuals who are employed when Parliament is in session, and they are qualified as keystroke operators, not the Hansard shorthand reporter. So Hansard can use technologies such as voice-activated technology, which is now available in Parliament, and shorthand to produce transcripts. Some reporters use computer-assisted shorthand. Those technologies have now been introduced, and they assist Hansard reporters and the issues we have been associated with.

The sessional reporters are employed for a minimum of 30 hours in a sitting week, and usually when Parliament is sitting that length of time is not hard to achieve. Even though they do not have the skills of the Hansard reporters who use the shorthand machines — you will have seen them come into the chamber, plug into the system with their earphones and just make a couple of notes and then leave — they can then go back and transcribe.

On the issues the Speaker has just referred to issues about IT, they caused some minor problems in this session. I say they are minor, but Hansard might not — and I can see Carolyn having a bit of a laugh over there!

We also have to train the sessional reporters in parliamentary procedures. As the new members would know, that is not easy to get your head around, so that is why we have the same group of people. That will assist with the hours associated with Hansard reporting, because they have to be here as long as we do. It has actually allowed one of our Hansard reporters to be given six months leave without pay to work for the United Nations in Tanzania on the Rwandan war crimes trial. She has been able to do that because of her skills. This would never have been able to occur in the past without the technology that has been put in place.

The new digital sound system makes it so much easier because staff can transcribe straight from the tapes, but we have to ensure that they are properly skilled because of the time-line tightness that we members insist on. So we are addressing those issues.

Mr DONNELLAN — This is a supplementary question, while we are on the subject of recording and so forth, with regard to the President's rulings in the upper house. In the lower house we have a nice little package which has the Speaker's rulings, and in the upper house the President's rulings are on the database but they are not in hard copy. Is that going to come in at a later date — just on adjournment debates or whatever?

The CHAIR — That is hardly a supplementary question on Hansard skills.

Mr DONNELLAN — It is on reporting. It was a long bow to draw.

The CHAIR — A very long bow!

Ms GOULD — That is something I will take on advisement and look at. For your information, in the upper house we have 8 temporary chairs from all parties. We have had sessions with the clerks, and they all have copies of key rulings by presidents to assist them when they are in the chair. When you spread that across 10 out of 44 members in the upper house, that means a large proportion have access to that.

The CHAIR — I have a supplementary question in relation to Hansard skills and the attraction and retention of staff. With the staff who are skilled to the highest level and who are able, I presume, to turn *Hansard* around more rapidly as a result, does their recompense acknowledge their increased skills base over those some of the newer ones who might be starting? For example, I am interested to know whether, if someone is able to do 10 minutes of reporting and transcribe it within 12 or 13 minutes — I do not know how long it takes — compared with someone who might take 20 minutes, their pay is adequately recompensed.

Ms GOULD — I will hand that over to Carolyn, but there are different levels. For example, Carolyn is the head of Parliamentary Debates. They work in groups, and I will leave that to Carolyn to also explain, and there are different levels within the structure of the agreement.

The CHAIR — I know there are different levels. I want to know if the differentiation in the higher skills is adequately recompensed.

Ms WILLIAMS — It is recompensed from the point of view of your skills allowing you to do a longer turn than you could if you are less skilled. The longest turn that our reporters do is 10 minutes, and that has a turnaround rate of about 1 hour and 20 minutes. We also have a 7½-minute turn rate and a 5-minute turn rate. Obviously when we employ new people they start off producing 5-minute turns, so they are paid less than the people who are producing 7½-minute or 10-minute turns.

They are not necessarily recompensed on the skills they use. So if you are a shorthand writer you do not get paid extra because you are a shorthand writer and the person sitting next to you is using voice recognition. Everyone is expected to produce product of the same quality and standard, and it comes down to your skill level as to how quickly you can do it, so that is the difference.

The CHAIR — So for those who are on 5 minutes versus 10 minutes in the chamber, what are we looking at in wage variation — one being able to turn it around in less time? Is there much?

Ms WILLIAMS — Yes, there is a fairly substantial difference. It has been worked out. It is not half, it is a bit more than half; and the 7½-minute rate fits in between what we pay for the 10-minute and 5-minute rates.

The CHAIR — I would be interested if you could provide the committee with a copy of that.

Ms WILLIAMS — I will certainly provide you with the figures for that.

Mr CLARK — My question relates to the savings or cuts to the parliamentary budget which have been required this year and which total half a million dollars. Can you tell the committee how that half a million dollars is being apportioned between the various departments and the Auditor-General? And in respect to the departments, what progress so far has been made in identifying how those cuts will be implemented, and what detail can you give the committee about that?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I will get Steven to answer that for you, because he has done most of the in-depth work on that.

Mr AIRD — The Auditor-General was advised of how much his parcel of the \$500 000 was, and I think it was about \$120 000. He then wrote back to the government expressing his concern. I think he has been having discussions with the government about how he is going to find his savings, so I cannot really comment any further on his savings.

The rest of the savings were then allocated on a pro rata basis throughout all the departments, so each department has to make cuts and look at the way they are doing things and at a way of finding better productivity savings. As for the two smaller departments, which are Hansard and the library, both the Editor of Debates and the Parliamentary Librarian will be able to answer that, but they are in the vicinity of \$15 000, I think it is. The Council I think is about \$14 000, and I think the Assembly is about \$29 000. The remainder \$278 000 is coming out of Joint Services.

I guess unfortunately it has to come back to some of the money that we were going to be looking at for maintenance for members offices, although we are lucky in that we have the money to move the MPs offices as a result of the new election; and we did receive money to refurbish, again as a result of the election. So we will be looking at some money in that area. We are also looking at money in IT. One of the tasks the IT manager has been given is that he has look at his services and pull things back. You have heard the Speaker mention the Internet. We are concerned about the amount of money we are using on telecommunications and the Internet, and that is another area we are looking at.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Would you like Grant to fill you in on some of the money that we think is misspent on the Internet, which we are trying to look at in terms of our Internet policy? Are you not interested?

Mr CLARK — Would it be useful to explain to the committee on what basis the Parliament pays for Internet services?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I would think it would be, if you are interested.

The CHAIR — In terms of apportioned savings — —

Mr CLARK — Are we paying a flat fee, or are we paying per megabyte or — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Graeme, do you want to answer that or will I get Grant to?

Mr SPURR — No, that is fine. It is per megabyte. I did send out an email earlier on saying what we thought the rough costs were for audio and video streaming. There is obviously potential for some savings there as people begin to realise that it is not just a time session but is based on traffic. So hopefully if we get some ownership of those sorts of costs, they will come down. There have been recent examples.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We are looking at some fairly simple things. For example, if every member goes in to read the Channel 9 news separately, that is an extra cost for every hit; but if we could have an icon that says 'Channel 9 news' that one member goes into and everyone hits that icon, you only pay for it once. So it is just refining it. Grant has been doing quite a lot of work on smarter ways that we as users of the Internet can assist in cutting the costs with no actual decrease in the service. So it is just doing more intensive work on how we access some of those services which are very frequently accessed by a large range of members and probably parliamentary staff as well.

The CHAIR — In terms of efficiencies and savings and how they are being apportioned, has any work been done on what may be fairly cumbersome methods of account payment and approval? I am just familiar with what seems to me to be the inordinate amount of time that needs to be spent on paying or getting approval for fairly minor matters that would normally be attended to in the course of a committee's budget.

Mrs MADDIGAN — In actual fact at previous hearings members of the PAEC made it fairly clear to the Parliament that they wanted to have the right to approve every account that came through their office, so in fact members are now sent more accounts for approval than they used to be, if that is what you are referring to.

The CHAIR — No, I am talking about my experience as a committee chair. We have to seek approval for what seems to me to be fairly ordinary and mundane matters, which seems to me to be a cost-time at a committee level and a cost-time from your side of the table as well.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is part of the act that sets up the committee, requiring that process to be gone through. There are probably some other reasons as well, though. The way the committees have been funded in the past has meant that they have not had to submit a business plan, and they are reportable, of course, to the chambers that oversight them in terms of their administration. So there have not been, I guess, some mechanisms for the Parliament to know what those committees are doing — and that has been one way this committee has been aware of what Parliament is doing. Of course, under the change in funding, all committees will be required to do a business plan, so we are looking forward to seeing yours in the near future.

The CHAIR — And it will be in on time.

Mrs MADDIGAN — But it is in the act at the moment. I think committees can do it in a number of ways. Sometimes payments for \$10 come up which have to be approved by the Speaker or the President, which seems to me a rather bizarre way of doing it. However, what other committees do is tend to submit a large number at once, so that you will sign off for \$4000, which is perhaps 30 invoices, et cetera, which in that way is more administratively sensible. The only thing is, though, that if you do not get a whole lot of bills at once, it means that some of the people who put bulk bills to it are paid — —

The CHAIR — That's right.

Mrs MADDIGAN — But I guess that if you have a problem with that, you will have to speak to the government, which provided the bill relating to the parliamentary committees.

Mr CLARK — I wonder if the departmental heads could say a few words on how in their respective departments they propose to implement the budget reductions?

Mr FORWOOD — How much for Hansard?

Ms WILLIAMS — I thought it was \$16 000. From what Steven has said I could be wrong there, so I will have to get back to you on that — but I thought it was \$16 000. Certainly we cannot take it out of any salaries cost. We would be looking to cut down our printing costs — that is the first area we would be looking at — and that would mean cutting down on the distribution of free *Hansard*, and probably we would be looking at former members in that area first. We can make significant savings in printing. That is obviously a large cost for us, but that is my initial target.

Ms DUNSTON — The director of Corporate Services has advised the library that our share of the cuts is \$10 000. I prefer not to touch services to members, so my proposal is to forgo the trip that the Parliamentary Librarian would normally take to the International Federation of Library Associations conference, where there is a meeting of an international group of parliamentary librarians. That will not take the full \$10 000, but forgoing that trip will go a long way towards saving the \$10 000.

Mr TUNNECLIFFE — In relation to the Legislative Council, the figure, as I understand it, is \$14 000, and that will be just spread across our provision of outputs funding. Obviously we cannot touch salaries, and we are locked into things like payroll tax, long service leave, Workcover and so forth. The provision of outputs funding covers things such as office expenses, printing, some office equipment, travel, marketing and things like that, and the \$14 000 will be just apportioned across that category. There is nothing specific that we have in mind at the moment.

Mr PURDEY — Ours is \$29 000. What we propose to do is to put it against some of the efficiencies we have made in the parliamentary printing area. We do not print the same number of versions of bills that we used to print. Every time a bill was introduced we used to print it, then we would print another copy at the second reading stage and then print another copy when it went to the Legislative Council, irrespective of whether the house had amended the bill or not. We have now reduced those prints down to two standard prints for the Legislative Assembly, unless the house amends the bill, and then we print another copy. So we have saved some money in our printing area, and I would be using that money to meet those costs.

Mr SPURR — I think generally it will be across the board in efficiencies, again to do with property and across the IT area.

Mr FORWOOD — There will be no change in staff?

Ms GOULD — No.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The Parliament can meet the costs without having to reduce staff. We never even contemplated that as a possibility. I very much doubt if members will see much differences in the services that are given to them. They will probably continue to improve as they have in the past.

The CHAIR — You keep referring to printing. How many copies of *Daily Hansard* are printed?

Ms WILLIAMS — I am sorry, I could not tell you that off the top of my head. I would be guessing, so I will provide that.

The CHAIR — I know there is a lot that goes to waste. How many copies of bills?

Mr PURDEY — We print about 100 copies of a bill when it is introduced into the Parliament. Then I think our print run is about 260. Our second-reading reprint is 350 to 400.

Ms WILLIAMS — When you picked up on *Daily Hansard* going to waste, we print a number of copies that we have downstairs in the Hansard corridor, and most of them are taken; and we then have situations where they are gone and members are asking for additional copies. So if you could let me know where you have seen them going to waste, I would appreciate it so I could follow it up. I am very keen on cutting it down.

The CHAIR — Excellent.

Ms GREEN — Speaker, I have raised with you in the past the issue of catering invoices, and as a new member I think it took about four months before I actually got one, and my guilt got to me so I raised it with you.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You did, and we thank you for it!

Ms GREEN — A number of other new members were in the same situation. But since receiving those catering invoices, and even though I have been around a while as a staff member, I am finding them a bit difficult to read and to work out, and my staff have found that as well. I am just wondering if there will be any changes that you would foresee that could improve this service to members?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, and indeed I share your problems with the bills, which I think are very hard when you try to work out exactly what you have spent where and why. We have a contract for the system that we use which expires at the end of this year or early next year, I think it is, so we are starting to look for a different

supplier to change it across. The product we have is one we cannot adjust, and it has some of those really crazy credit memos and backwards and forwards accounts which we cannot even remove from them. It also means that the date that is listed there as the service date is not necessarily the date you got the service. It is the date it is recorded, so it makes it very hard for members to check why they spent that money — for what purpose or on what day.

We are looking at trying to change that system to get a service that is more responsive. There are not a lot of programs for what we do, because very few catering outlets operate the way we do. The product we have now is one that comes from the commercial area, but very few catering venues allow people to run a monthly tab and then pay it off at the end. Most of those systems are made for pubs or restaurants where you are normally expected to pay before you leave the premises.

We have had some problems with collection of moneys owing to the dining room, including from some members in the past, and we have had to do some work on trying to reclaim them, so we have two processes we are going through to try to ease that. One is to try to make it easier for members to pay the bill, and the June bill you will get next month will have the credit slip there so you can pay with your Visa card or by your credit card. We are also at the moment investigating, I think, and introducing a B-pay system, so you will be able to pay your bills when you are sitting in your electorate office or late at night waiting for Parliament to finish sitting.

We are trying to do things to make it easier for members to pay the bill. But not only are we going for the carrot system, we are also going for the stick, so you will be getting a memo shortly, if you have not received it yet, explaining some new credit arrangements from 1 July this year, which means you will be required to pay your bill within a month of the date of receipt, which in some cases is two months after you have received the service. If you do not pay that, you will be charged interest of 11 per cent and after a period of three months where you have not paid further bills — I will go to other users in a moment — you will only be served on a cash basis, and if people still refuse to pay their bill after a further period of time they will be refused service altogether.

I do not want my staff to have to go through the process we have had to go through before 30 June this year of having to beg, threaten and borrow to try to get members to pay their accounts.

In addition some of our other corporate clients have also been fairly slack in their payments, particularly departments, so we have changed the business terms in relation to their payments as well to try to keep our catering accounts more orderly and more up to date, but also in relation to members particularly to try to make them easier for members to pay and to understand what they are being charged for. Sorry, Bill, what did you say? 'It is awful'?

Mr FORWOOD — I think people should pay their bloody bills.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I could not agree with you more, Bill. That is why I brought in these rules. I think it is outrageous that people would assume — we pay our gas and electricity bills on time; I fail to see why we cannot pay our parliamentary dining bills on time.

Ms GREEN — Speaker, you referred to the difficulty of getting payment out of some members. Have you had any issues with members from the previous Parliament?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think it is really appropriate in a public place to say who those members are.

Ms GREEN — I was not asking for names.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, we are still seeking some moneys owing from members in the previous Parliament in a range of areas.

Mr BAXTER — I would like to explore, if I may, the terms of the contract with CSM. What provisions did it have in it in terms of pricing? Clearly it was not a fixed-term contract, because it has been reported that it has blown out. What sort of, for want of a better word, performance measures were in the contract to ensure that the system was actually installed and working, because it is clearly still not, certainly in minor ways, and I am not sure about major ways. Mine is a case in point. It is still not operating properly.

Mrs MADDIGAN — These questions are difficult for me to answer because I was not involved in any of the process, so perhaps to get a more accurate response I will ask Graeme to answer that one for you.

Mr SPURR — Certainly. In the tender documentation it was left open to each of the tender respondents to come to us with a proposal, whether they would sell us the equipment or we would take it on lease. Each of the different tenderers had different ideas as to the best way of supplying the hardware. In the end we have continued with the idea of leasing the electorate office equipment, and all of the equipment in the parliamentary precinct we have actually purchased ourselves outright with a view to everything then being leased in three years time.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am not quite sure if you are answering Bill's question. Bill wants to know about the contract that the Parliament signed with CSM: were there performance measures in it, were there clauses in it relating to extra costs and who would meet them? That is what you were asking, is it not, Bill?

Mr BAXTER — Yes, that is what I am trying to get at.

Mr SPURR — The contract was based on the standard government contract.

Mrs MADDIGAN — There was a standard government — —

Mr BAXTER — This is the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. Surely when we are spending public money we are entitled to know what the bottom line of the contract was. What was the Parliament expected to be paying, and why has it blown out to what it has, and what measures were in that contract to ensure that the contractor delivered what he said he was going to deliver?

Mr SPURR — It was a fixed-price contract.

Mr BAXTER — What was the fixed price?

Mr SPURR — It was \$2.3 million.

Mr BAXTER — How did it get to \$4 million? What was in the contract to stop this blow-out? Why isn't he bearing that cost?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Because the presiding officers approved, as I understand it — not as I understand; the presiding officers approved — extra work that raised it to that amount.

Mr FORWOOD — Variations in the contract?

Mr SPURR — I think there are nine variations in all. One of the major ones was the prospect of a member of Parliament being able to use their laptop anywhere in the world, to be able to access the data on their servers. That was out of the scope of the original contract and was factored in as a consequence of the steering committee and the presiding officers' requirements.

Mr BAXTER — Can the committee then get a handle on how much of the blow-out from the \$2.3 million to whatever we are now up to is because of variations which were made afterwards and how much is due to the fact that the system has not worked as it was contracted to work? For example, I understand it has been necessary to put in a call centre over the road, or something like that, because the number of people ringing the help desk went up exponentially once we got this thing. How much is being spent? I do not like giving my example, but I am familiar with that; mine still has what I understand is a noisy hard drive fan. It has been replaced once. There was no improvement. We are now eight months down the track. Who is paying the cost of rectifying that? Are we paying it or is the contractor paying it?

Mr SPURR — That is certainly not the contractors' obligation. They were told to deliver the new hardware and the new software according to IBM specifications by a certain date. They have met that.

Mr BAXTER — But how could they have met it when mine has never worked?

Mr SPURR — It has never worked? Have you got a PC that does not work?

Mr BAXTER — I have a PC on my desk which has this annoying noise that operates when I switch it on at quarter to 8 in the morning. It usually takes about 5 hours before it goes off. It is an occupational health and safety hazard. It is why I think I am getting a lot more migraines than I used to get. It has been reported umpteen times. It has been replaced once. It is still not satisfactory. I want to know whether the contractor is paying for that or the Parliament is paying for that. And I use that as one example.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You are saying the Parliament is paying for that, aren't you, Graeme?

Mr BAXTER — Why is the Parliament paying for something that is not satisfactory, may I ask, Speaker?

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is one example of many of the problems we have and one of the reasons we have asked the Auditor-General to assess both the contract and the work coming out of it. It has been awkward for the IT staff because they were not involved, and this is one of the problems in how we have been able to use the system once it was introduced. I do not understand how this occurred, but the IT staff were not involved in the process of selection of the contract, nor were they trained properly to be able to deal —

Mr FORWOOD — Who did it?

Mrs MADDIGAN — From what I can understand it was a subcommittee set up by the presiding officers, but the IT staff had very little involvement in that process. Some of the problem has been that when the IT system landed here our staff had not had the opportunity to be involved in it or to understand it fully and in fact had not been trained in how to deal with the problems, and there were a lot of problems.

I do not know what the Auditor-General is going to say, so this is only my view — he might disagree with me. It seems to me that when the system was introduced in the office, it was introduced in a hurry, and mainly because I think there was a lot of pressure from members to get it done properly and quickly. I think it would have been better to do it much more slowly and in fact to do bits of it at a time instead of all of it at the one time; but it is easier in retrospect to make these decisions. Our staff were not trained and did not have the opportunity to have full familiarisation with the system before they started having to try to fix problems.

What I was going to say and forgot is that certainly my experience of the rollout in my office was that we were still asking questions about it when, for example, one person said, ‘I have to go now because I have to be in Dandenong in half an hour to do the next one’. So explaining how to operate the system was a problem, too. I think the IT unit has a sense that a third of the calls they have had for assistance have been from people who do not know how to use the system properly either, so I guess possibly you could extend that out to electorate officers as well who did not have enough training at the time.

Your problem is slightly different, from what you are saying. You have had a problem which you have identified, and several attempts have been made to fix it. I am not sure if anyone here who is familiar with that problem can answer that. Obviously I am not familiar with it.

The CHAIR — He used it as one example, and there are many people who could raise examples who presumably have given them to the Auditor-General. The simple question is who is paying, and the answer as I understand it is the Parliament is paying.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is right.

Mr FORWOOD — It would be under warranty of course.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Parts of it are, which is why it is in some ways difficult to answer. Some parts of the problem we are responsible for; some parts of the problem with the warranty, like the printers, are under contract, so they have to deal with it. To a certain extent who pays for the problem depends on what the problem is.

Mr SPURR — In terms of the noisy fan, IBM have responded to our demands. They say it is within the specifications of the equipment: if you work in a quiet office environment it sounds noisy, but it does not exceed any specified noise limits. We are working with them. New software has been released. The fan operates like a thermostat as the hard chip starts to heat up; it does not turn off as regularly you might like it to. We are working with IBM to get it fixed.

The CHAIR — This is at 8.00 a.m. I do not know how many other people have it, and we do not want to go down the personal path, but this is not uncommon. I can testify to having exactly the same problem.

Mr SPURR — The noisy fan is a general complaint, and we are working as hard as we can with IBM, who have responded to it. We are working to fix it as best we can.

The CHAIR — So it is IBM’s problem, and IBM will be the ones who will replace it.

Mr BAXTER — I just want the committee to get an understanding of what are the performance measures in the contract, because eight months after the event if we are still having problems with something as simple as a

fan it seems to me the contract is dreadfully deficient, and if I can I will ask a further supplementary in terms of the printers.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr BAXTER — Why were the perfectly good small printers replaced with one which is so large and heavy it cannot be moved by some electorate officers without an occupational health and safety problem — and don't smile, because I have an electorate officer who is probably one of the best IT operators that Parliament has, and she is unable to move this printer. If it breaks down when I am not there, if there is a paper jam or something else, she has to get someone down the street, seeing I have only one staff member, to come and shift the thing. I am having to have the office modified now. That to me is an indictment of this contract, and I think the committee is entitled to know who is responsible for this and why the Parliament has got itself in such a dreadful bind over it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is why I have called in the Auditor-General, and presumably we will have a lot of those questions answered, and other ones I have raised, when we get the report, which I hope will be next month.

Mr FORWOOD — I have a follow-up.

The CHAIR — On the terms of the contract with CSM?

Mr FORWOOD — Absolutely. Page 1 of Parliament's response states:

Parliament has serious concerns about the performance of the system and is investigating and discussing these issues with the contractor.

Do you anticipate that we will end up in court over this contract? If so, what allowance has been made for funding to fight it?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think we can answer that until we have received the Auditor-General's report. The answer to that is we do not know if we will end up in court at this stage. I do not know that there is any suggestion that we will, because I think there has been an attempt to resolve those matters, such as the problems we have had with the Epson printers that were covered by the contract, even though it has been a slow process.

Mr FORWOOD — What are we discussing with the contractor?

Mrs MADDIGAN — A whole range of issues in relation to the operation of the system, not just one issue, but a whole range of operational issues concerning problems we have found in the applications that various users of the system have identified — often things like clashes between software and hardware; things like that. So there are a number of issues. I do not think there is any major issue as such that I am aware of, anyway. They are more operational things that we are trying to fix, problems we have found, particularly ones relating to Hansard and the library. They are probably some of the major ones, apart from the members' ones, which of course you are familiar with.

Mr BAXTER — Could I ask a supplementary? Could the committee be provided with a copy of the contract, so we can see what it actually said, please?

The CHAIR — Yes. I was going make sure we got that afterwards. That can be taken on notice.

I would like to raise a question in relation to a totally different topic. It is one that would not surprise the Speaker. It is my interest in making sure the Parliament is accessible to all members of the Victorian community. By way of a congratulatory note, can I congratulate those involved in making the Assembly chamber far more accessible. There have been a lot of very positive comments about that, and also the chook house is now accessible. Having, with three other people, carried a woman of significant weight up to get into the chook house in her wheelchair, I am very pleased that it is now accessible with that back ramp, so congratulations. We should not, I suppose, have to say congratulations, but I do because Parliament should be accessible.

My concern goes to continuing improvements around Parliament and making it accessible. I note that this year we have not yet had signing in Parliament, and I wonder if any discussions have occurred between the presiding officers about having signers in, just as a matter of course, a couple of times each parliamentary session so that people do not have to come on one day only. There could be three or four occasions during the year.

Also, on accessibility in terms of mobility: there are still tiny what I would call hazards for those with mobility issues who are walking or for those in wheelchairs moving around the Parliament that make it quite difficult. I imagine that with fairly minimal work they would be able to get around in a wheelchair much more easily and those with limited mobility will not trip as easily — and for those who are not quite as agile as others in running to the chamber when the bells ring, it would also cut down an occupational health and safety risk.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have done some work. I will start with the signing. It seems to me that rather than having a couple of days where you sign as a matter of course, it would be more useful to have it when there are actually people who are coming in to benefit from that signing. My view would be that if we know people are coming we would be more than happy to organise signing for them, as far as finances permit.

Perhaps part of our process of making Parliament more open and accessible is to make that more widely known from our web page et cetera, including some of those processes we have incorporated in the Legislative Assembly refurbishing such as wheelchair access in the public gallery and wheelchair access for members of Parliament if necessary. In addition the hearing loops in the Assembly have been improved for people with hearing problems.

Parliament being a very old building, it is hard to make it useful for all people in the community. Certainly where we have been able to, we have tried to level off surfaces. Often it is difficult to tell when you are looking at it that there is a problem, so it is helpful if people report to us when they do have problems. Certainly the chook house was one, and I am glad to see the ramp for the disabled there at last. It took us a lot longer than expected, but we cannot put anything under the Henry Parkes historical tree, which is why it is on a rather odd angle — if anyone wonders why the disabled ramp looks like a more solid construction than the chook house; I think that, anyway. However, it should be fairly right to go up and down on. I hope the floor of the chook house does not fall out when you get in there. We will be going through a continual process of making it physically accessible.

We welcome the community using Parliament House as much as possible, so we are trying to go through some steps to make it a less forbidding building. If you walk past Parliament and all you see is an imposing building with a security guard standing out the front, it is not a very welcoming place for people to go, and certainly still a lot of people think you cannot come in here whenever you feel like it. We are awaiting approval from the City of Melbourne for signs out the front telling people it is open and that tours are available here.

We had our open day last Saturday, which was very successful. More than 3000 people came through to look at Parliament, which showed that people have a real interest in Parliament and in politics. Certainly Monica and I were here the whole day, as well as a lot of staff, who did a terrific job. The questions we got from people were sensible and showed a really good desire to know more about Parliament and how it operates, something which I think we need to continue working on in the future. It is a great shame that there are many people in Victoria who have never been inside their Parliament, and I think our aim should be that every Victorian resident should have been in here to gain an understanding of how their laws are made, so we will be working further on those processes in the future.

The CHAIR — On your concluding comment, if that approach were adopted more readily, we could through our web site perhaps advertise when there is signing in Parliament as opposed to asking people to request signing so that once every month or so there is a signer at a particular time. For example, on the open day, if people had not brought their own signers, they would not have had the chance. We have started and it is terrific, and we have to keep going.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have a bit of a problem with that. I see no point saying we are going to sign once a month if no-one turns up here, because it is an expense and we run on a fairly tight budget. You might be able, from your previous role in this Parliament, to think of some more strategic way of having Parliament accessible to people who might need signing.

Mr FORWOOD — I wonder if you could outline for the committee the process by which you decide whether the equipment of the Parliament will be leased or bought. My understanding is that we are about to go through a replacement of our fax machines. I do not know how long I have had mine; it does not seem very long.

Mr BAXTER — I have one that is perfectly good in my office.

Mr FORWOOD — Mine does everything I wish it to do, and frankly my electorate officers are able to drive it better than I can but even I can operate it. I guess the question I am getting to is that we continually seem to be going through these recycling of photocopiers, computer equipment and fax machines, and it is a question of whether we would not be better off in some cases just buying the stuff outright and using it for the term of its life

when we need to. What is the process by which we have decided? Is this immutable, that we will now be a leasing organisation or what?

Mrs MADDIGAN — As I understand it these things are assessed fairly carefully by the staff — which one is of the greatest financial benefit while at the same time giving best service to the staff and the members? — but I will ask Steven to give you all the details on that.

Mr AIRD — For us the value of leasing is attached to all the problems we have getting someone out to service it. At the moment the deal is with Ricoh, and they come out and service the photocopier. They also talk to members about whether they want to change the print cartridge. It means we have not got to turn around and deal with things through Parliament. It is also easier for us in the sense that we can budget to put the lease over the three or four years so we have a steady state in our cash flow rather than having one big expense item once every three or four years. The current faxes have been upgraded because you have had them for four years. We have a new model that has come out from Ricoh that we have been able to upgrade for the same cost as the current ones, and we think we are getting a good deal, including — I think I am correct — that Ricoh is providing a new printer cartridge with the new fax.

The CHAIR — The question was about the process by which this happens.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The process is really a decision by the staff and their judgment on which is the best way to go.

Mr FORWOOD — It is a mathematical exercise, isn't it?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes. It is at no cost.

Mr BARR — It is a rental.

Mr AIRD — I thought it was an operating lease.

Mr BARR — It is not an operating lease, it is a rental. The original issue was that the Parliament wanted to fix its costs. You wanted to have your costs fixed each year, so by using an operating rental on that type of equipment you actually knew what your costs were year after year instead of having peaks and troughs.

Mr FORWOOD — So at the end of the rental agreement do you go back to tender or is Ricoh just rolling this over?

Mr BARR — We went to tender, and that was before the House Committee. We went out to three companies.

Mr FORWOOD — Was that tender on a rental basis only or on the basis of purchase and renewal?

Mr BARR — The tender was on a rental basis, but the cost per unit was given in the event of us wanting to purchase.

Mr FORWOOD — Is there is residual value at the end of the rent, or is it just a straight rent?

Mr BARR — No, it is a straight rent. If it causes concern, the cost of that machine that the contract has been awarded on is exactly the same as the cost you are paying now. The issue with this type of equipment is that technology changes and suppliers will no longer want to service old equipment, so you are getting a machine which is being maintained and serviced at the same price and which has better features four years later.

Mr FORWOOD — Bring it on!

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have some good management systems here in trying to save money for our members, Bill.

Mr AIRD — As part of the rollout there will also be training for the members.

Mr DONNELLAN — Would the introduction of a fixed four-year term for government have any effect on the leasing of MPs' offices?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes. It should provide us with savings and also better services for members, because we will now be able to write leases, which we will be doing, for six months after the election, which means that members will have more flexibility if there are changes of members and also if we have other circumstances, as we will have possibly in the next election with changes of electorates. We have been working with our staff now.

The system Parliament has used in the past has tended to be a four-plus-four — a four-year lease with a four-year option, which in some circumstances has caused us some problems with wasted rental et cetera. We are now working on a system when we are taking out new leases, as we have been with the new electorate offices, of making them within that six months after November 2006, and we are attempting at the moment, where we have leases for four-plus-four which will take us to well past that date, to negotiate with the landlord who wants to bring them back to that date.

I think in most cases that will work, because the Parliament of Victoria is a good tenant. It pays its bills on time, so it is highly regarded in the rental market.

We have looked at the leases that are coming up in the next couple of years and what sorts of costs might be involved if we cannot renegotiate in relation to some of those terms, which might not mean that we will have to relocate offices. We believe we will have enough funding for that, but if that happens it would be a very isolated incident. It does mean that it will make it a lot easier for us in terms of financial management of our leases and we will not end up paying dead rent as we have in the past.

It also means that new members will have more opportunity, if they need to or if there are some changes in boundaries et cetera, to be able to change their office in a fairly short period of time rather than having to wait until the lease runs out. If there are changes in circumstances they can be addressed in a more reasonable way. One of the advantages, I think, of the fixed term offices — and I think there are a number of advantages — for the parliamentary administration is that we will be able to undertake leases of equipment with much more certainty about when it is appropriate for us to renegotiate them. It should be really good, I think. We have just started the process of getting that into place now.

Mr CLARK — I have a question relating to staffing. You mentioned in your response to our questionnaire the difficulty of attracting suitable people to some positions given the salary levels that we are able to offer. Do you have strategies in place to tackle that problem, and also could you comment on the question of when you advertise positions internally only versus when you throw them out more openly? I gather there are some positions relating to the Assembly that are being advertised internally only at the moment.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Most of the difficulties, as I understand it, with staff have been in the Hansard area, not broadly across Parliament. I am not aware of any other problems. I think Parliament is regarded by many people as a great place to work, so we get a good range of applicants for any jobs we advertise, and also we have some excellent staff inside. What we have tried to do is balance the injection of new people with being able to promote people who we believe are very skilled inside the Parliament. What we do is normally assess — in the short time I have been here, anyway — when jobs become vacant, if we believe we have a range of staff who are qualified to do that job and if we should give them the opportunity. So in some cases we would advertise internally first if we thought we had a large range of very skilled staff. If we were not sure, we would probably advertise externally. It is a management decision that the staff, in association with Monica and myself, would make according to each individual job as most managements do.

Ms GREEN — Speaker, the previous committee was advised during the 2003–03 budget estimates process that the tenancy of the third and fourth floors of 157 Spring Street had not been resolved. In the response to the questionnaire you state that the occupants of the fourth floor are still to be determined. When would you see that this issue would be resolved?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is a bit difficult in a way at the moment because there are a number of problems in relation to the security of Parliament House that may affect the way we use that floor. In a security report that was provided about a year ago, there were some concerns about some of the offices in this building and some of the security aspects. I suppose the major one that was highlighted was in fact the office of the Premier. If you look at the arrangements for the Premier, they seem to be very bizarre. Whoever the Premier is or whoever their guests are, the guests have to stand outside in the corridor before they go into the room, so there are some locational issues there.

Certainly members of the opposition have expressed some discontent with their rooms, or the state of their rooms, although there has been some undertaking by the government to give them some funding to update that area. What

we are trying to do is work out, if you like, if we need to change rooms within the Parliament to meet those security measures and if that then means that we may need to move staff across the road. So I think it will take some months yet before that is finalised. We have just been granted \$1 million in this budget for improving security, and we are still looking at that as part of that whole security plan, so I would expect it will be some months before we have finally concluded that.

The CHAIR — Why would it be taking so long?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Because there are quite a large number of recommendations in that security report. If we do decide that we think the Premier should go somewhere else, we have to work out where we think it would be appropriate for him to go in this building, and therefore it would probably mean taking offices that other staff already have. It would then possibly mean relocating those staff in some way. In fact, one of the offices that was suggested as suitable was the Speaker's office. We have not gone into discussions with the Premier about this yet, because we want to come up with some alternative arrangement, but if we move the Premier and his staff somewhere, it will mean we will have to relocate some staff or myself or someone else in that process, so there is a bit to go through yet.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr BAXTER — On the matter of location of electorate offices, were any offices cabled for this new system that were obviously going to be redundant because of the redistribution? In other words, why did we proceed with this computer upgrade when the election was imminent?

Mrs MADDIGAN — As I understand this — and I can only speak on the basis of what I was told after the event by the previous Speaker because I was not involved in any of the process, so some of these questions I find difficult to answer; what we are trying to do is fix it at the moment — there was a huge amount of pressure, and perhaps the staff might add to this, mainly from members of Parliament, to get it done as quickly as possible. I am not quite sure if that is right or not.

Mr FORWOOD — I reckon there was more pressure to delay it until after the election. We all knew the election was going to be held.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not know that we knew it was going to be on 30 November. You might have early on; I certainly did not. But, as I say once again, these questions are difficult for me to answer because I was not involved in the process.

Mr BAXTER — I accept that, Speaker. I am not directing them to you.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I will ask the staff if they can throw any light on it for you, Bill.

The CHAIR — As to the timing of the rollout?

Mr SPURR — The initial instruction to me in April of last year was to get these new computers rolled out before November. Tenders were conducted, and contracts were signed in August. The election was not called until 4 November. Because of the contract we did face significant financial penalties if we did try to defer it, and as a consequence it rolled on.

Mrs MADDIGAN — If you are asking would it have been better to have deferred, I do not think there is any doubt the answer would be yes, in retrospect, Bill.

Mr BAXTER — I would have had it deferred because we could see some wasteful expenditure occurring.

On a supplementary on electorate offices, in terms of their location, is there any consideration given to serving the electors? I ask that because I note we now have three electorate offices in the one road in a relatively small population area on the Mornington Peninsula, and I wonder whether it is purely where the member wants the office or whether any consideration is given to serving the people we are elected to serve.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, it is entirely up to the member to have their electorate office where they want it. But in saying that, I say in relation to what the Parliament can afford and other financial factors —

Ms GREEN — And if you can find something.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, until you can find one. But in terms of making the decision about location, members are given the right to decide where they want to have that electorate office.

The CHAIR — It was not really a supplementary, but given that Luke had great leeway, so have you. Thank you.

Mr FORWOOD — My supplementary is allied to the issue of the cabling. I understand that just before the contract was let some departments of the Parliament were actually buying IT equipment which was subsequently therefore redundant or obsolete or not part of the system within six months and had to be sold. Is that true?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is a question I cannot answer. Once again I have the same problem as before.

Mr SPURR — Not that I am aware of.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Anything specific?

Mr FORWOOD — No, it is just members' scuttlebutt.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have not heard of it, but then I was not around at the time. Graeme has not heard of it either, but if you can find the members — —

Mr FORWOOD — Sorry, members' staff scuttlebutt is a better expression.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You had better ask them for more details.

Mr FORWOOD — If you could ask for more details.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You, I meant. Graeme is saying he is not aware of anything.

Mr SPURR — We did have Compaq PCs that were relatively new that we are using across the road. Electorate offices have standardised on IBM. JSD across the road has some Compaqs.

Mr FORWOOD — I was not talking about members. It was other departments of the Parliament.

Mr SPURR — The surplus equipment has been sold off through auction houses and things like that in the proper way.

Mr FORWOOD — Surplus equipment that was sold off was nothing that was purchased in the two or three months beforehand?

Mr SPURR — No.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think the departments would have had any money to buy any.

The CHAIR — If you could confirm that, because it might be a question a notice. Thank you.

I would like to take you to the business plan which is going to be developed for the entire Parliament, as I understand it. Could you advise what the framework is for the delivery of this plan and what funds have been allocated for this project in the forthcoming financial year? Will individual business plans continue to be developed by the parliamentary departments and, if so, will they be completed by the commencement of the financial year? And might I say that if you achieve this again, like you did at the beginning, you will be held up as a model client.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The situation is that Parliament at the moment has a corporate plan and then each department has its business plan, but there is no business plan overall for the Parliament itself. I think that is probably a reflection of the political status of the houses to a certain extent over the years more than a management function of the Parliament. So this year we are going through a process of filling in that gap, if you like, of the business plan, which will make it better for us to be able to support our budget initiatives as well, I think, to provide a central focus from the Parliament rather than as operating in separate departments.

We are using funds that we have already. There is no specific funding allocation in the budget for it. We are using training funds and other funds that are available to us through the normal departmental matters to organise that. What we often do on these occasions is that if there are six departments involved, they will all pay part of the cost from their budget, so we manage to fund them in this way. We have started the process.

I will just very briefly go through with you how we intend to proceed. We have had a seminar, which is the first time it has been done, with the presiding officers and the departmental managers, to talk about what we see as the strengths and weaknesses of the Parliament and how we intend to address those in the future and how they can be addressed via the business plan.

The next stage will be the middle managers and some of the staff going through a similar process, because we want all the staff to have more involvement in the Parliament and have a more democratic workplace, if you like, in terms of input from the staff. It is an ongoing program that we have just started, and we hope to have the business plan as a result of that available by the end of the year, which will give us a guide for this term of Parliament about what we want to achieve and how we might achieve those things.

In looking at it, whilst it will be, I suppose, an operational guide for us to a certain extent only to the end of this Parliament, Graeme has already started doing some work in relation to maintenance schedules and the needs of the building and other equipment in the Parliament over a longer term as well, and that will become part of that process.

The CHAIR — Thank you. A supplementary.

Mr FORWOOD — Why do we not have policy and guidelines on corporate governance?

Mrs MADDIGAN — There are a lot of policies that we have that are spoken but not written in the Parliament. We have started writing some of those down — for example, our policy on the location of electorate offices and what the processes are. I will ask the staff, because they may have something to say, but whilst there is a good understanding of corporate governance and the requirements of corporate governance, I suppose the corporate plan in a way was an attempt — and once again I was not involved with the process, so I am not quite sure what was involved — to bring some corporate structure into the Parliament. But I am not quite sure if Ray wanted to say anything further in relation to that.

Mr PURDEY — I think probably you have hit the nail on the head. A lot of our processes have not been fully documented. Certainly since Steven came on board we have started documenting a lot of our processes, and we have a lot of policies now up and on the Internet and we are gradually working through a variety of those things. I would think probably a policy on corporate governance will be something that will most likely flow from our business planning process. What the Speaker is talking about is a business plan for all of the Parliament, which we have not had in the past, so I think from that will flow these extra benefits that we have not had in the past.

Mr DONNELLAN — A quick question. With the maintenance of Parliament and so forth and setting up a facility plan for the whole of the Parliament, do you think you will be bringing in outside consultants to do that, because obviously there are all types of things you have to look at like airconditioning, and so forth, so I am wondering would —

Mrs MADDIGAN — I would not think so. We do not have any funding for it, for a start, and we certainly have not allocated that. But Graeme has already done a lot of work on this, since it has come across to Graeme, so a lot of the work has already been done in a way. It has just perhaps not been documented in a way that is easily accessible to all of us, so Graeme can fill you in on what he has done so far.

Mr SPURR — We actually have, through a tender process, appointed a firm —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Sorry, have we? I beg your pardon.

Mr SPURR — That is all right — who are also working with Heritage Victoria, and we would hope that the whole plan of 10 to 15 years will also be endorsed by Heritage, so that as we go through each little different stage we do not have to apply for a separate permit. It has only just recently been undertaken, and one of the issues that has come up is that there actually are not any detailed, measured drawings of existing conditions, so where we have electrical engineering and all that sort of stuff all over the place there are not any measured drawings. We hope to be able to identify some money to do that. It is a tortuous process. That is why we have brought in consultants from outside to assist with that, just because it is so substantial.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I thought Graeme could do it all.

Mr SPURR — I think he would be a tortured and very miserable bugger at the end of it!

The CHAIR — I thought our experts around the Parliament would probably be able to do it. The guys that look after this building are absolutely outstanding.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Some of them will be retiring shortly, so no-one will know where anything is then, and we will be in all sorts of trouble.

Mr FORWOOD — I refer to pages 13 and 16 of the department's response. The first part of the question is, 'Why do we operate with a \$400 000 overdraft?', but more to the point is in part (b) on page 16, no. 9, where you say:

To 29 May 2003 no retained surpluses have been applied to additional outputs or initiatives ...

Given that you have already responded that \$1.349 million has been allocated to bail out the computer project, am I not entitled to say that that answer is disingenuous?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, because a decision was only made very recently to use the reserves to pay it out. We did try to encourage the government to pay for it at first, but when they suggested it would be more appropriate that we used our reserves, that decision was made, so it was only just made recently.

Mr FORWOOD — But surely you had paid the bills, or not?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, we had paid the bills.

Mr FORWOOD — So in fact what you were doing was raiding the retained surplus to pay back — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, what we were doing was going into the overdraft, probably, that you identified there to pay it. Hilton, do you want to — —

Mr FORWOOD — I am not quite finished asking the question.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Sorry, I thought you had.

Mr FORWOOD — And could you provide a list showing the composition of the \$1.8 million that has been spent on asset acquisitions funded from accumulated depreciation?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think we can now, but we can get it to you.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr FORWOOD — We are going to get an answer on the \$400 000, I think.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Page 13, first line.

Mr BARR — If you have a look at the top, you will see it says 'including the output of the Auditor-General's office'. That \$400 000 in brackets does not belong to the Parliament. The Parliament operates on the — —

Mr FORWOOD — Come on!

Mr BARR — That is exact, Mr Forwood. If you check that, you will find the assets and liabilities will match exactly with the balance sheet in your budget paper, and that has not been broken down, and that is what we have said there — 'including the output of the Auditor-General's office'.

Mr FORWOOD — What else in this document relates to the Auditor-General?

Mr BARR — The Auditor-General has receivables in there. The Auditor-General has assets in there. Because of the way we do our business management system, the Auditor-General is an output of Parliament, and I cannot break that out of this.

Mr FORWOOD — Cannot break it out?

Mr BARR — I can. Sorry, let me rephrase that. I can; however, I anticipated that if I did that and it did not match with BP3, I was going to get a question.

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, you would, but the answer would be that that belongs to the Auditor-General. One of the issues we keep coming across here is how do you track something if they are external areas over which you have no control?

Mrs MADDIGAN — He has the figures.

Mr BARR — I can put a balance sheet out straight away. The reasoning for preparing that over there was: did that have to match budget paper 3? I assumed yes; therefore, I included the Auditor-General. If you want a balance sheet output without the Auditor-General, it is not an issue.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Do you want us to get that for you?

Mr FORWOOD — No, that is all right.

The CHAIR — My question goes to patronage in the parliamentary dining room now it has been open to the public, which I think is a very welcome inclusion of the Victorian community into this place. Having been in the dining room after one of the dailies had quite a spread on how accessible the dining room now was to the Victorian public I overheard a couple of comments from citizens saying how great this was. I am wondering if we have kept any kind of notation on the number of citizens who are attending the parliamentary dining room — both the strangers corridor and, as I understand it, the upstairs cafeteria, which is also open to the public — as a result of having them open.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The upstairs cafeteria has always been open to the public.

The CHAIR — Right. Could we have some indication of patronage levels and whether this has helped balance the accounts down there?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not have the patronage levels here, but I can get them for you. I can give a brief summary of how it is going, which I guess is the critical part. We need to attract between 30 and 50 people to make it financially worth while. At this stage we have not been able to attract that on enough days to make it worth while. It was an initiative in particular of Alexander Andrianopoulos, the last Speaker, and as it really only started over the last Christmas or the summer break I think the returns were good. If we really want to do it seriously we have to consider a lot more advertising and a lot more active strategies. At moment we are still assessing whether we think it is financially viable or it is appropriate for us to continue with that program.

Mr DONNELLAN — I have a supplementary question. Just as a thought, would it be worth trying to link it in with the food and wine festival — to have some type of event there — which is obviously run by the state government through Tourism Victoria and the Victorian Wine Industry Association? Would it not be worth trying to open it up to something like that as a special event to have, as you say, advertising but advertising without having to spend any money, I guess.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is a bit problematical because the expense of opening up and gearing the dining room for a possible full house is very high. If a whole lot of people come, that is good; if they do not, it is an expense against the catering budget. I am trying to decrease the subsidy, and in fact the subsidy to the dining room has been cut by \$50 000 this year.

Perhaps if I can continue on to a wider answer: we are assessing how that it is going — whether we think it is worth while, whether it is worth continuing with, whether we can make it work and whether it will be of financial benefit to the Parliament — and I do not know the answer to that at this stage. We have some problems with the dining room, and more particularly the kitchen. I do not know if you have ever been down there but it is a fine kitchen of the 1950s, I would think.

Mr AIRD — The 1930s.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The 1930s. So there are some problems with it in terms of catering at a high standard to a large number of people on an ongoing basis. What we have done, and it is referred to in the budget documents here, is to have some initial discussions with Treasury and Finance about an upgrade of that kitchen, about seeking funding in next year's budget for an upgrade of that kitchen. You will be glad to know, particularly Bill, that we have actually worked on a business plan for it with the assistance of some of the officials from Treasury and Finance, and they will be doing some further work on that on some of the costings and some of the other things we are looking at with Treasury and Finance. Depending on the response from that and whether the kitchen is upgraded in the short or long term also has an effect on the answer to your question, so they are still things that are being assessed.

Mr FORWOOD — A quick supplementary: I wonder when the attendants are showing visitors around Parliament whether they suggest that they buy afternoon tea in the strangers corridor and whether that little camera that sits there could be used to take a photograph of them sitting in there as they have their coffee and their Parliament high tea. A lot of people walk through the door, and you need to get only a handful to pay. There are lots of cameras in the library.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes indeed. The staffing levels in the catering unit when Parliament is not sitting are of course much lower than when Parliament is sitting, so a whole lot of issues have to be costed out properly before we can work out whether it will be worth while for Parliament, and we are too early in the process to be able to give you a definitive answer on that. This time next year we should have some more information.

Mr CLARK — There are two aspects of the coordination at 157 Spring Street: first of all I understand that according to your response you are still looking for occupants for the third and fourth floors.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, the third floor is full — it has the committees.

Mr CLARK — The Parliament's response refers to identification of occupants of the third and fourth floors, but the third is now all right?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, it has the two committees in it, Robert.

Mr CLARK — Okay. What is the situation regarding the fourth floor, and more generally, how is the financial performance of 157 Spring Street tracking against the business plan prepared initially to make the case to establish that accommodation?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I will start this in a more general way and then if you want more specific details either Hilton or Steven can give them to you. As I understand it initially the fourth floor was going to be for Hansard. There were problems with that, particularly in relation to Hansard's access to Parliament with the tunnel and all the rest of it, which was not funded, so in the end it was decided that Hansard should stay where it is.

I partly answered this before in relation to the security report, which has identified the Premier as being in a position that he possibly should not be in. To move the Premier is fairly difficult. One of the areas that has been suggested is my office, but consequential on that move some relocation of staff or other people in Parliament would be necessary, so we will not be making any decisions on that last floor until we have worked out how we are going to meet the requirements of that security report. As I was saying before, it will be some months possibly before that is finalised. So that is a slower process than we would have wished, but it is important to get those security things right.

In relation to the funding cost I will get Steven to respond to you. We might have to send that to you later, I do not know if we have it here.

Mr AIRD — Could you clarify with me the questions on funding?.

Mr CLARK — I suppose it is a general question. When the decision was made initially to lease 157 Spring Street and to do things with it there would have been a business case prepared to justify it and the costs involved and the potential savings and benefits that would be achieved for Parliament from that. I am wondering whether there has been any assessment of the actuality compared with what was expected, and how it has gone in fact. Has what has been expected from the businesses case been fulfilled in practice, or has it proved to be more or less beneficial than was initially anticipated?

Mr AIRD — I would have to have a look. I must admit I have not seen the business case to get us across there so I cannot really answer the question, but I can go and have a look. I have not seen the documents so I can

say we have not done a comparison to see if any savings we were meant to save have actually accrued. One of the problems was it took us a long time to make a decision as to who went into the third and fourth floors, so that would have some effect obviously on what the initial assumptions were to moving across to 157.

Mrs MADDIGAN — However, I can say that the cost of housing the two committees at 157 is significantly less than some of the government's attempts to find spaces in this area for it, so even though it was not in the original business plan it may have been beneficial to us in the long run.

Ms GREEN — I have a question, and I think this would be for the President, on an update on the progress of the Legislative Council air conditioning project. It is referred to in the presentation, but could you give us some more detail?

Ms GOULD — There are three parts to the air conditioning. It is all managed through the Joint Services Department. As you are aware, the air conditioning has been done in your chamber, and work was done downstairs in what used to be the housekeeper's residence. The question we have with air conditioning in the Council chamber is to have it lined up with air conditioning in Queen's Hall. The architects have advised us that it is not necessarily a viable thing. Those of us who are Legislative Council members and those who attended the opening of Parliament in the Legislative Council know that the Council chamber is very stuffy. We are looking at meeting the heritage obligations, as occurs with any works that take place within this building.

The Legislative Council chamber is designed differently from the Assembly chamber. The pillars are in the chamber whereas in the Assembly they are all pushed back, so in the Council there are corridors down the side and also balconies right above circling the chamber. That makes it difficult to run the works into the chamber — it has to travel more distance — and of course there are issues about drilling through our heritage bluestone, and all those things need to be addressed.

Funding is available for it. We have meetings this week with the architect, who is ensuring that we will meet the standards that are required by Heritage Victoria. We have to get appropriate permits et cetera. Because our Council chamber has not changed significantly over the last century we want to ensure that we protect it in any works in this place. We will have to put units behind the members, the backbenchers, between the pillars, and we will have to encase them. We want to ensure that that is done in a way that is appropriately aesthetic to the council. If you were in Parliament for the opening you would know that people who sit there cannot see anything because of the pillars on the four corners. We would probably put units in there.

We are working with the engineers and the air conditioning company to ensure that all processes are done in line and thoroughly gone through before we go to Heritage — ensuring that we get the appropriate work permits et cetera. The long and short of it is that we hope the Legislative Council will be air conditioned by the beginning of the sittings in 2004, and I am sure Council members would appreciate that. As we get to ensuring that we cover the heritage issues we will of course be consulting with the Council members, because we do not want to change too much the aesthetics of the chamber but we also want to ensure there are reasonable conditions in there.

Mr DONNELLAN — On that issue, there was also an upgrade of accommodation in Parliament, from what I understand. What was undertaken?

Ms GOULD — Changes were made to the housekeeper's residence after he left. What we tried to do in the Council was have not more than two members in any room. That has now been finally achieved with the upgrade. We have a couple of ministers in the rooms downstairs. That made it a bit difficult because we allocated that there be two people to a room but being ministers there is just the one in some offices. We have ensured that the total costs are within the budget that was allocated.

The next stage will be looking at putting in a shower and toilet facility. The issue we have is that we have to check that the pipes and sewerage can take any additional toilets or showers we put in place. The plumbing is already there, because it was the housekeeper's old accommodation. However, no-one can find the original plumbing plans of 150-odd years ago when the building was built — surprise, surprise! Based on the fact that the plumbing is there we expect that to be okay. There have been significant improvements in the accommodation of Council members and staff.

The CHAIR — In terms of no-one finding the original plumbing of 150 years ago and in light of an earlier comment that some staff of extremely long standing in the maintenance area will be looking to retire in the not-too-distant future, I presume their significant corporate knowledge is being documented?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have certainly been asked to start documenting some of their corporate knowledge. Also the process that Graeme was talking about in terms of the maintenance of the building et cetera will incorporate some of those things as well.

The CHAIR — Yes, because they just seem to know where everything is.

Mr BAXTER — As an aside, I do not think the air conditioning of the Legislative Council is a matter of urgency at all.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The other members of the Council beg to differ with you.

Mr BAXTER — As we open only once every four years we can put up with a bit of discomfort.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You sit more often, Bill!

Mr BAXTER — Going back to the request earlier to supply the committee with the IT contract, could we also have the brief that went out to the tenderers, and the nine variations that have been made?

My question goes to the issue of security. When the Premier sliced into the staffing arrangements for the upper house he said that the savings would then go to the security of this building. Has that followed through or has it all got lost in the overall budget?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It went to security, as I understand it.

Mr BAXTER — In terms of security, can we — I think I can ask this in the terms of this committee even though it is not strictly in our brief —

Mrs MADDIGAN — We will try and answer it for you, Bill.

Mr BAXTER — I acknowledge the need for security and upgrades of security, but can we just make sure that we take members' convenience into account as much as possible, and that we do not make decisions to lock off certain points of entry that might make it more easy for the officers who are responsible for securing the building — and I acknowledge the task they have — but make it very, very inconvenient for some members. I ask that we give consideration to restricting entry at some points to members who specifically request access via those points rather than having it open to everyone, which I understand is the current difficulty.

Mrs MADDIGAN — In answer to that, I guess it is getting a balance, because we try and make it as user friendly as possible. In the end there is not much point in spending \$1.5 million if we then ignore the recommendations of the people who are telling us how to make the building more secure. So while we work with members as much as we can, in some circumstances, unless we take the advice of the people who have provided the security advice to us, we are really defeating the whole purpose of it. It is trying to get a balance of those both things.

The CHAIR — My concern is in relation to the library. You pointed out that one of your efficiency savings might have to be your inability to go to what I consider to be a fairly important conference. Through the presiding officers, are there mechanisms in place if a particular department has been cut to the bone — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think the department has been cut to the bone!

The CHAIR — Are there mechanisms in place to have variations in what might be considered appropriate levels of funding? I say this because from my experience the library has been absolutely sensational.

Ms GOULD — I will get Gail to answer that, but to reiterate what Judy said, I do not think the line items of the departments have been cut to the bone. There are certain budget allocations specifically to the Department of the Parliamentary Library and the Department of Parliamentary Debates in the budget. They manage that quite well. There are corporate ones across the Parliament, and one that has taken up a considerable amount of time during the course of today's hearing is IT. All these departments share it so all are involved in the costs associated with it. Gail, do you want to respond to the question?

Ms DUNSTON — First of all, Chair, thank you very much for those supportive comments. The decision to cut our \$10 000 in that way is purely my own. It is a cut of \$10 000 in a budget of \$2.4 million, so I do not think

that the library will be seriously disadvantaged by my inability to attend the IFLA conference. I will endeavour to compensate for not attending by keeping in email contact with my colleagues overseas.

One of the novel examples that we have in a place at the moment is that we have a member of the House of Commons parliamentary library working with us on a shared basis between ourselves and the Assembly.

So he is learning about us, we are learning about them, and when we he goes back to his home place I am sure that will result in an ongoing close relationship with that institution.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr FORWOOD — I have a quick follow-up question through you, President, and let me echo the Chair's words about the fine service we all get from the library.

Ms DUNSTON — Thank you.

Mr FORWOOD — Your budget has increased by \$390 000 from last year to this year. I presume that that is the amount that is the additional cost of the electronic news service.

Ms DUNSTON — The electronic news service, from memory, is some \$291 000.

Mr FORWOOD — Per year?

Ms DUNSTON — Per year. The initial allocation was \$291 000, and then it is a lesser amount for the out years, because in our original submission to the ERC we factored in an increase for training in the first year for the new Parliament, recognising that there would be a large number of new members and new staff to train, and it was our expectation that we could taper off in the following years.

Mr FORWOOD — And you think that will happen?

Ms DUNSTON — That was the plan. We shall see.

Mr FORWOOD — In relation to the electronic news service, which is an extraordinary use for all of us — it is just terrific — have we reached where you want to get with it or is there still more to come in relation to the electronic news service?

Ms DUNSTON — There is more to come. President, do you want to comment?

Ms GOULD — No, you can go for it.

Ms DUNSTON — The submission that we put to the ERC was much broader than the Newscentre service that you are enjoying and using to a tremendous degree. If I can say a little bit about that: since the beginning of this session of this new Parliament 81 per cent of all members use it every week; each month there is an increase in use; and we have outstripped the peak use that we saw around election time. So we have delivered over 357 000 full text articles via that system; trained 132 users just in this new Parliament; and helped people set up around about 400 personal profiles. And you would know, and particularly Mr Clark would know, the value is in being able to filter the news to your particular purposes. He is our star user, I have to say.

In respect of what else we want to do, we want to be able to deliver an on-line training module so that when you get a new member of staff, particularly perhaps if you are in the country, they can get it up and running straight away rather than having to wait for us to train. But we do train, and part of the money that was allocated was so we could put on extra people to provide a help desk service and a training service which involves going to electorate offices; doing small groups — which we do on a party basis; doing one-to-one training; and also doing tutorials for people to shape and reshape their personal profiles so that they fit their changing requirements.

Part of the vision overall is that we can do perhaps not quite as sophisticated but similar sorts of things in respect of what we call broadcast media, which is radio and television.

Mr FORWOOD — Excellent.

Ms DUNSTON — We already have as a prototype a broadcast media database, which involves capturing the radio and television — unfortunately only from the metropolitan news — that relates to members of our Parliament — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Don't tell Robert this.

Ms DUNSTON — This is a summary: what we are experimenting with at the moment is digitising the sound clips so we can deliver them to you either by the database or more instantly by email, so that you can hear exactly what has been said. We have been doing some work over the years — so I cannot really claim it out of this project — on having the press releases there, both government and opposition. The opposition press release database we created ourselves, and what we are working on currently is a news archive so we can give you access to print news that is longer than six months old.

Ms GOULD — Excuse me for interrupting, the one downfall of the news system we have is that it only goes back six months, so we are looking at whether we can have the archive so that you can then go back beyond that; otherwise it just tips off at the edge. And sometimes that is not helpful because, as you would appreciate, an issue may go for a considerable period of time and you just cannot use this system, so we are looking at that.

Ms DUNSTON — The money that was allocated also allowed us to do special in-depth analysis for the election period. We were very mindful of what rural members had said to us about our inability to monitor news in regional and rural Victoria, so we commissioned outside media monitors to give us some high level analysis of how the election issues were playing on the regional radio, television and talk back in particular, so we were providing a special high level service for the election period.

So in answer to the question, the money that was allocated for electronic news was really about a much bigger service than you got in the first rollout — and since you got the first rollout we have added some local papers; the Leader papers are all there as well — but it is part of a much broader vision. Whereas at the moment we have three or I could say four of those databases available, what we want to build is a single interface so you have a one-stop shop for news that will bring you print news, radio and television, press releases and so on. Then we will build on that so that we can bring in other resources where one can track what Mr Forwood has said on such and such a topic and bring it in from other sources like election policies, *Hansard* debates and so on. We think it will be a very powerful tool. I can tell you that none of our colleagues in other jurisdictions provides Newscentre to their members and no-one else in the Australian parliamentary jurisdictions is looking at providing a sophisticated service like this that will answer the question, 'Who said that? What did they say?', bringing in all the resources that are available.

Mr FORWOOD — Brilliant.

The CHAIR — Did you develop that yourself or did you pick that up from external study?

Ms DUNSTON — No, the idea has been developed within the library on a collaborative basis.

The CHAIR — Congratulations.

Ms DUNSTON — We have different teams of people working on different things. I have to say that there are big technological problems as well as librarian-type problems in homogenising six different databases to search from one single screen, but that is the challenge we have set ourselves for the next election.

The CHAIR — Thank you. A quick supplementary.

Mr DONNELLAN — A lot of us do company searches and things like that. Has there been any thought of linking into the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to allow us to do company searches as well?

Mrs MADDIGAN — You can do company searches, but you have to pay for them.

Mr DONNELLAN — I am looking for freebies.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You have that wonderful electoral budget you can use for that.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much to everybody concerned with this morning's presentation. That concludes the budget estimates hearings for the parliamentary departments. Thank you to the Presiding Officers, departmental officers and staff. It has been extremely useful and very interesting, and there will be a couple of issues that we will be following up with correspondence. Thank you very much.

Mrs MADDIGAN — If you do get your staff to talk to Steven before next year, we can tell you even more about the Parliament.

Ms GOULD — And please fill in our questionnaire.

The CHAIR — Yes, we will do that. Thank you.

Committee adjourned.