

**ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION  
OF THE DEPARTMENTS WHICH SUPPORT  
THE ACTIVITIES OF PARLIAMENT**



**OFFICE OF THE  
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# ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENTS WHICH SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PARLIAMENT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Parliament is composed of the Crown (represented by the Governor), the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. Its functions may be broadly described as legislative, financial and representational. In 1986-87 total expenditure on Parliamentary operations was in the vicinity of \$16.9 million, of which a major proportion of this amount related to the salaries and associated expenses of a staff establishment of approximately 440 personnel. The program structure of the Parliament involves 5 programs, i.e., Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council, Parliamentary Library, Parliamentary Debates and Parliamentary Support Services. Functions pertaining to these programs are described hereunder:

- (1) The role of the Legislative Assembly is to ensure that the business of the Lower House and its Committees is conducted in accordance with the law, standing orders, rules of procedure and/or resolutions of the House. The Legislative Assembly provides administrative and technical services for the House and its Committees. These services include the provision of procedural advice, the recording and certification of proceedings of the House in its legislative expenditure control function, and scrutiny of Government administration.
- (2) The Legislative Council Program aims to ensure that the business of the Upper House and its Committees is conducted in accordance with the law, standing orders, and/or resolutions of the Parliament. The program provides technical and administrative support services for the Legislative Council and 3 Joint Investigatory Committees.
- (3) The Parliamentary Library provides information to Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees and associated research and support staff. The Library selects, purchases, processes and makes available to Members all relevant publications necessary for informed decision making in the legislature. The Library also draws on other collections locally, nationally and internationally via computer networks and inter-library loans.
- (4) The objective of the Parliamentary Debates program is to supply a permanent, accurate record of the debates of Parliament, transcripts of proceedings before Parliamentary Committees, and occasionally Premiers' Conferences, Ministerial Conferences, Constitutional Conventions and Royal Commissions.
- (5) The Parliamentary Support Services program provides ancillary services to facilitate the operations of the legislature. The Joint House Committee coordinates the provision of financial management and accounting services, the operation of the Parliamentary Refreshment Rooms, the maintenance of Parliamentary buildings and gardens and the management of all State Electorate Offices.

## 2. AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

2.1 The overall objective of the audit review was to determine the extent to which the Parliamentary departments are able to support the Legislative, administrative and financial needs of the Parliament in an efficient and economical manner.

- 2.2 The audit mandate did not extend to examining the entitlements, privileges and activities of Members, although observations on administrative support to Members are included in this report. Specific areas excluded from the review include:
- (1) Parliamentary refreshment rooms;
  - (2) Members' allowances, including travelling entitlements; and
  - (3) Members' management of electorate offices.

### **3. MAJOR OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The major observations and recommendations arising from the review are set out below. In general, the comments indicate there is room for improvements to be made in a number of areas, the success of which will depend upon formulation of, and clear communication of administrative policies, objectives and strategies. It was encouraging to note that several new initiatives have already commenced, including computerisation of certain activities and increasing services available from the Parliamentary Library.
- 3.2 The wider aspect of whether the existing structure is appropriate to serve the needs of Parliament was not specifically addressed, as it was seen to be outside the terms of reference of the study. Notwithstanding this fact, it was considered that in view of the need of the Parliament to co-ordinate the activities of the 5 major functional support areas, scope does exist for a rationalisation of the existing structure into a single administrative support unit.
- 3.3 It may also be opportune to examine whether the current method of funding Parliament through an overall appropriation for government services is appropriate. As an alternative, consideration could be given to establishing a separate appropriation as is the practice with the Commonwealth Government. While the level of funding would need to be established after consultation with the Treasurer, a separate Appropriation Act would enable all Members to participate in the process of establishing a budget reflecting Parliament's resource priorities.

#### **Management responsibilities and strategies (Section 4.1)**

- 3.4 Since the introduction of program budgeting, the government has emphasized the need for improved public sector management. Key goals include greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services, through resourcing and effective management techniques.
- 3.5 In audit opinion there were indications of a lack of overall administrative direction, incentive to change, and co-operation existing both within and between the various Parliamentary departments.
- 3.6 Audit considered that a contributing factor is a general lack of awareness by staff of operational objectives, strategies and procedures for Parliament as a whole. There appears to be a need for enhanced human resource planning to provide a framework for improved performance and more effective delivery of services.
- 3.7 A need also appeared to exist to enhance the monitoring of activities through the use of management information systems, staff performance evaluations and the use of performance indicators.
- 3.8 Several inconsistencies were noted in the classification of expenditure, which meant that Parliamentary programs did not provide complete data from which evaluations could be made.

*Recommendations*

- 3.9 *Consideration be given to seeking external advice on development of a corporate plan, to co-ordinate operational objectives, policies, strategies and procedures for all Parliamentary support functions, and having the Joint House Committee assume responsibility for overall co-ordination for planning functions and program evaluation within Parliamentary departments.*
- 3.10 *The Joint House Committee undertake action to ensure that Parliamentary programs reflect the full cost of operations in accordance with program budgeting principles.*

**Security (Section 4.2)**

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**Parliamentary committees (Section 4.3)**

- 3.16 **Audit received a number of suggestions on means of improving administrative support to Parliamentary Committees in relation to flexibility of operations, the provision of Committee secretarial support, and expenditure approval processes.**

- 3.17 Although proposals by Committees for the engagement of private consultants are not referred to the Effectiveness Review Committee for evaluation, advice from this Committee may be of considerable benefit.
- 3.18 Benefits could be obtained from the Parliamentary Library undertaking to catalogue and reference for future research purposes, material gathered and developed by Parliamentary Committees.

#### *Recommendations*

- 3.19 *The present operational procedures, functions and delegations involved in the administration of existing Committees be reviewed.*
- 3.20 *The duties and classification of Committee Secretaries be independently evaluated for consideration by the Presiding Officers. In the interim period, measures be taken to develop existing skills of these officers.*
- 3.21 *Advantage be taken of advice from the Effectiveness Review Committee when major consultancy proposals are under consideration.*
- 3.22 *The preparation of Committee budgets, expenditure recording and accountability could be enhanced.*
- 3.23 *Annual reports on Committee activities be introduced.*

#### **Parliamentary Library (Section 4.5)**

- 3.24 Productivity gains in recent years have resulted in the provision of additional services with a minimal increase in staffing numbers. However, further extension of such services, particularly in the provision of research facilities for Members, would be unlikely to be achieved with existing resources.
- 3.25 Mainly as a result of leniency towards Members, many books are outstanding beyond specified periods, and records indicate that certain books may have been outstanding for 10 years or more.
- 3.26 The last full stocktake within the Library was undertaken in 1948.
- 3.27 Rationalisation of expenditure on books and publications by individual departments could possibly be achieved through the Library controlling such purchases.

#### *Recommendations*

- 3.28 *To assist in any external review of resource levels and capabilities, a strategy plan be devised as to emerging demands, opportunities for changing work practices, availability of new technology, accommodation restraints and the skills and minimum levels of staff required.*
- 3.29 *Every endeavour be made to progressively undertake a full stocktake.*
- 3.30 *Continuing attention be given to recovery of outstanding loans, with consideration being given to advising the Presiding Officers where co-operation is not being obtained from Members.*

### **Parliamentary printing (Section 4.6)**

- 3.31 Proposals involving improvements to Parliamentary printing operations which were referred to the 2 Printing Committees in 1985, have not been addressed by the Committees.
- 3.32 Scope could exist for recoupment of costs associated with the printing of Hansard by a reduction in volume and/or the imposition of appropriate charges for external parties.
- 3.33 The cost of tabling sub-ordinate instruments in accordance with the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 is often high, and cost effective alternatives appear warranted.

#### *Recommendation*

- 3.34 *Standing Orders be reviewed to establish the most appropriate administrative mechanism for making decisions upon matters involving Parliamentary printing, including opportunities for reducing costs.*

### **Reports to Parliament by government agencies (Section 4.7)**

- 3.35 Parliament is not informed of circumstances where annual reports of agencies not subject to the Annual Reporting Act 1983, are not tabled in accordance with statutory requirements.

#### *Recommendation*

- 3.36 *In the interests of public disclosure, audit intends recommending to the Treasurer that action be taken to progressively indentify and report to Parliament, instances where reporting deadlines are not adhered to.*

### **Accommodation (Section 4.8)**

- 3.37 The general standard of accommodation within Parliament House is cramped and in some areas, sub-standard, particularly in relation to the Parliamentary Library and temporary accommodation facilities for other departments.
- 3.38 Despite various studies and recommendations being presented over the years, firm proposals for improvements, accompanied by funding, have not eventuated.

### **Terms and conditions of employment (Section 4.9)**

- 3.39 A considerable number of disparities exist as to the terms and conditions of employment for parliamentary staff, who are not covered by an industrial award. Although a working party has been formed to examine working conditions, audit considers that overall, many anomalies are also apparent in relation to work values, practices, classifications and staffing levels.

#### *Recommendation*

- 3.40 *An external review of productivity, job value and classification of all Parliamentary Officer positions be conducted, with a report being provided to the Presiding Officers.*

### **Personnel and professional development (Section 4.10)**

- 3.41 The existing practice of each department undertaking its own personnel function, usually as part of the duties of senior personnel, and the absence of staff training and professional development programs were not considered conducive to effective management and productivity.

### *Recommendation*

- 3.42 *The role of the Personnel Unit, Joint House Committee be expanded to include the personnel function of all departments, in conjunction with the responsibility for the development and implementation of human resource management policies and procedures relating to such areas as staff development, performance assessment, equal employment opportunity, industrial relations and occupational health and safety.*

### **Use of information technology (Section 4.11)**

- 3.43 The current program of introducing advanced information technology to the operations of certain Parliamentary departments was seen as a commendable initiative. Attention will need to be given to the effective management of such a large project.

### **Parliamentary Debates (HANSARD) (Section 4.12)**

- 3.44 Opportunity exists for improved operational efficiency within Hansard through the use of modern information technology.
- 3.45 Use of new technology will impact upon certain work practices and procedures. As a result a number of staff may require re-training and assignment to alternative duties.
- 3.46 Further delays and expense need to be avoided where possible, in introducing new computerised systems.

### *Recommendations*

- 3.47 *The Steering Committee re-examine existing strategies and proposals with a view to implementing priority systems, including word processing facilities as soon as is practical.*
- 3.48 *The Steering Committee, or similar body undertake early action to assess the implications and strategies required arising from the impact of new technologies upon staff and their work practices.*

### **Processing of Expenditure (Section 4.13)**

- 3.49 Extensive delays are occurring in the payment of accounts, mainly as a result of internal procedures and the need to process expenditure through the Department of Management and Budget.

### *Recommendation*

- 3.50 *Consideration be given to establishing cheque drawing facilities under the jurisdiction of the Joint House Committee, which could be assigned responsibility for the certification and payment of all accounts following authorisation from individual departments.*

### **Stores (Section 4.14)**

- 3.51 The stores functions undertaken separately by the 5 Parliamentary departments are costly to operate and provide poor inventory control.

### *Recommendation*

- 3.52 *As soon as conditions permit, a central store be established under the control of the Joint House Committee. Computerised inventory techniques be utilised if practical.*

**Furniture and equipment (Section 4.16)**

- 3.53 Despite the often valuable nature of many items of furniture and equipment, inventory control and asset recording is poor.
- 3.54 No action has been taken on recommendations arising from a survey of the furniture and fittings within Parliamentary House, undertaken by the Public Works Department in 1985.

*Recommendations*

- 3.55 *Guidance be sought from the Department of Management and Budget as to the mechanisms available to upgrade the standard of asset management and accountability.*
- 3.56 *Policies guidelines on asset management be developed for issue to staff.*

#### **4. AUDIT OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Detailed audit observations and recommendations involving the administration of the Parliamentary Departments follows hereunder:

##### **4.1 Management responsibilities and strategies**

4.1.1 In audit opinion, there were indications of a lack of overall administrative direction, incentive to change, and co-operation existing both within and between the various Parliamentary departments. Reasons for this perceived situation are varied, but factors could include:

- (1) The administrative and technical functions involved in maintaining operations have not been regularly evaluated or monitored as to efficiency or effectiveness.
- (2) The traditional nature of the separate administrative support for the two Houses of Parliament has contributed to a lack of co-operation, particularly in relation to resource sharing, between staff assigned to servicing the needs of the individual Houses.
- (3) Career opportunities for staff are necessarily restricted, due to the specialist nature of Parliamentary support. As a consequence it is difficult to provide a wide variety of experience to officers. However, this restriction can result in:
  - (i) lack of incentive to introduce new initiatives or undertake additional responsibilities;
  - (ii) individual skills not being utilised to best advantage; and
  - (iii) staff may be promoted beyond capabilities, an action which may also affect the level of staff morale.
- (4) Officers appointed to senior positions have usually developed skills only in limited areas of activity ie; table officer, parliamentary reporter etc. As a consequence, they may not have had the opportunity for exposure to a wide range of mid-level managerial activities which would develop the skills required of a senior executive.
- (5) Difficulty in providing staff development in the form of regular appraisals on performance, specialist training, professional development courses and seminars etc. Senior management do not have performance improvement plans, as compared to their counterparts in the Public Service.

4.1.2 It was also noted that the Departments of Parliament tended to operate in isolation of each other's activities, which was acknowledged in a letter forwarded from the Presiding Officers to departmental heads in June 1987:

*"... the various departments of Parliament do not have the liason and co-operation that should be expected of an institution such as ours".*

It is pleasing to note that regular meetings are now to be held between Presiding Officers and departmental heads.

4.1.3 In addressing the above problems, audit considers that the administrative support for Parliament should basically be regarded as a single organisation with broad corporate objectives similar to those established by most large government agencies and major private corporations. The role of the Parliamentary departments would be to tailor their individual objectives and strategies towards achieving the overall objectives.

4.1.4 In audit opinion, one of the prime causes for the instances of lack of direction and co-operation is a general lack of awareness by staff of operational objectives, strategies, targets, documented policies and procedures, human resource planning considerations etc; all of which provide the framework for improved staff perception, performance and more effective delivery of services. The very broad objectives outlined in program budgeting documentation are not sufficient for this purpose, but need to be developed further into the more detailed procedures and policies, job specifications etc. needed to provide direction as to how the broad objectives can be achieved.

4.1.5 Prior to the amendment to the Parliamentary Officers Act 1975 in August 1987, most staff appointments were made on the basis of seniority and demonstrated experience in a particular area, often over an extended period of years. Accordingly detailed policy and procedure manuals were not seen as being necessary. Audit view is that staff should be exposed to a wide range of experience where practicable. The development of policy and procedure manuals would provide useful guidance not only for new incumbents to a position, but as a means of documenting for management how broader objectives can be achieved.

4.1.6 In addition to establishing objectives, policies, procedures etc., increasing emphasis is being placed by government on the measurement of performance in public sector programs. Audit noted that with the exception of the Parliamentary Library and limited statistical data in other departments, there was little evidence of the monitoring of activities through the use of management information systems, performance evaluations, and the use of performance indicators. In audit view, use of such measures would have assisted in overcoming at an early stage many of the problems referred to later in this report.

4.1.7 The establishment of management targets or goals becomes an important aspect when attempting to improve management performance. As an example, a target may be to provide all Electorate Offices with a minimum level of equipment and furnishings within a specified period. After capturing all relevant performance data such as levels of furniture/equipment required, orders placed, deliveries received, budget costs as compared to actual etc., an objective analysis accompanied by remedial action would be required if the target was not achieved.

4.1.8 The relevance and reliability of performance indicators is very important and partly for this reason, financial data for a program needs to be complete and accurate. Audit noted several inconsistencies in the classification of expenditure which meant that programs did not disclose full operating costs. Examples include:

- (1) All expenditure incurred in the meeting of Parliamentary printing costs is charged against the Legislative Assembly Program 104, when in actual fact a large percentage of this expenditure is incurred by the Legislative Council Program 103 and the Parliamentary Debates Program.
- (2) Expenditure incurred on WorkCare is allocated entirely to the Parliamentary Support Services Program, although expenditure is incurred by all programs.

### *Recommendations*

4.1.9 *An overall corporate plan for Parliamentary Administration be established. Such a plan would co-ordinate the broad and detailed operational objectives, policies, strategies and procedures for each Parliamentary department. It is acknowledged that this action would involve a considerable time factor and existing staff may not have the necessary levels of expertise required. Consideration could be given to:*

- (1) *Seeking external advice on corporate planning and departmental management systems.*
- (2) *Have the Joint House Committee assume responsibility for overall co-ordination of all planning functions and program evaluation within Parliamentary departments.*

*4.1.10 Management targets and performance indicators be developed where feasible, within operational areas. Performance evaluation also needs to be extended to staff, including senior management. It is suggested that senior management develop their own personal improvement plans on a similar basis to those developed within the Senior Executive Service (SES). Such plans would be directly linked to corporate objectives.*

*4.1.11 In conjunction with the Department of Management and Budget, the Joint House Committee undertake action to ensure that Parliamentary programs reflect accurately the full cost of operations in accordance with program budgeting principles.*

*4.1.12 Consideration be given to requiring each department to provide to the Presiding Officers for tabling in Parliament an annual report upon their operations. Such a report would include financial statements and details of activities undertaken under each program.*

## **4.2 Security**

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## 4.3 Parliamentary Committees

### *Background*

4.3.1 The existing Parliamentary Committee system came into being in 1982, with the establishment of 5 Joint Investigatory Committees supported by administrative and research staff. The 5 Committees formed were the:

- (1) Economic and Budget Review Committee.
- (2) Legal and Constitutional Committee.
- (3) Natural Resources and Environment Committee.
- (4) Public Bodies Review Committee.
- (5) Social Development Committee.

4.3.2 In addition to the above Joint Investigatory Committees established pursuant to the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968, there are other Committees such as a Joint Select Committee known as the Mortuary Industry and Cemeteries Administration Committee. Joint Select Committees are usually appointed by Parliament to inquire into specific matters and to report within a stipulated time frame. After reports are finalised, these Committees normally go out of existence.

4.3.3 The Parliamentary Committee Act 1968 defines the role and functions of the Committee, including the requirement to inquire into, consider and report to Parliament on any proposal or matter referred to a Committee by resolution of both Houses of Parliament, or by order of the Governor in Council. The Act also allows all Committees to initiate inquiries arising from any annual report or other document tabled in Parliament which is relevant to Committee functions.

### *Committee organisational structure*

4.3.4 Each Committee utilises the services of various administrative and research staff. Administrative staff, comprising a Committee Secretary who is a permanent officer of Parliament, and support personnel such as stenographers etc, who are often temporary, are accountable to both the Clerk of Committees and the Committee Chairperson.

4.3.5 Research staff, comprising a Director of Research and research officers are employed on a temporary basis on the premise they are to carry out a specific function only. The research officers are accountable to both the Director of Research and the Committee Chairperson.

4.3.6 The lines of authority detailed in the paragraphs above creates a situation whereby although it is the responsibility of a Director of Research to design and manage a program necessary to support the work of a Committee, he/she has limited ability to direct the activities of support staff essential to the success of the program, as support staff are responsible to the Clerk of Committees. In effect, this situation creates a dual organisational structure which, according to advice conveyed to audit by Committees, reduces the efficiency of the operations.

4.3.7 In general, the Committee members and Directors of Research indicated that improved efficiency would result from directors having greater direction over the duties of support staff. Specific problems were indicated to audit as being:

- (1) The skills acquired by Parliamentary Officers in the pursuit of their normal duties may not provide the background and aptitude necessary to perform the duties of a Committee Secretary. Accordingly while opportunity should be provided to enable Parliamentary Officers to apply for such positions, benefit could be gained from making such positions available to appropriately qualified officers outside of Parliament.
- (2) Lines of authority and communication between Directors of Research, Committee Secretaries and Parliamentary administration were not fully understood by all officers.
- (3) A lack of control by the Committees over the day to day activities of administrative staff has caused delays in:
  - (i) the preparation of minutes of Committee meetings;
  - (ii) forwarding of inward correspondence to the Committees, and replies to outside bodies; and
  - (iii) the tabling of Committee reports in Parliament, and the printing and circulation of these reports.
- (4) An inability to readily rectify situations whereby staff performance was deemed to be unsatisfactory.
- (5) The lack of ability to employ temporary staff to assist in overcoming delays which may occur in completing terms of reference within specified time constraints.
- (6) Restrictions upon travel, in situations where Committee Secretaries were directed to accompany Committees on inter and intra/State travel in preference to research staff attending. The argument advanced by the Committees was that research staff were of direct benefit to the program, whereas the attendance of Committee Secretaries was not always required.
- (7) Committee staff who are Parliamentary officers obtain approval for recreation leave from the Clerks of Committees, often without proper consultation with the Committee Chairperson and/or Director of Research as to whether the timing of such leave is appropriate. This situation can result in delays in finalising reports due to key personnel being absent on leave.
- (8) Extensive delays in having expenditure approved for essential Committee purchases. This situation arises from the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 which requires all expenditure to be approved by the Presiding Officers and the Treasurer. Delegation of authority to approve expenditure of amounts not exceeding \$200 has been made by the Presiding Officers to the heads of departments. Committee members indicated to audit that improved efficiency and a reduction of delays could be gained if authority was delegated to Committee Chairpersons to approve expenditure up to specified levels.

4.3.8 The Clerks of Committees advised that the present organisational structure is necessary in order that they can control committee activity through:

- (1) Procedural advice, to assist in ensuring the Committees do not step outside the terms of reference.
- (2) Monitoring of funding, to ensure Committees adhere to budgets and do not incur improper expenditure.
- (3) Certifying to the appropriateness of expenditure.

In addition, the present structure can provide a career path for Parliamentary officers.

4.3.9 During audit discussions it was indicated by the Clerks of Committees and Parliamentary officers that there have been problems with the performance of certain Committee administrative staff. To address these problems, meetings have been held with Committee Secretaries whereby minutes and other documentation was examined and discussed. However, it was stated that these meetings have tended to be time consuming and inconclusive as to action required, as compared to empowering a Committee Chairperson to take whatever action was deemed necessary to improve performance.

4.3.10 Comment was also made to audit that Committee Secretaries are normally appointed at an ADM-6 level, a level which, in view of the duties performed would indicate that the position is over-classified. In this regard, attention was drawn to the fact that whereas in the past, Joint Investigatory Committee Secretaries were expected to conduct research and write reports, current duties are confined to arranging meetings, preparing minutes, monitoring expenditure and obtaining procedural advice, as required, from Clerks of Committees. While it was not practical for audit to assess work values, it is considered that this matter needs to be addressed as part of the external review recommended later in para 4.9.9 of this report.

#### *Funding of Committees*

4.3.11 Funding of Committee operations is provided through the normal Government budgetary processes whereby Committee expenditure is approved at the outset of the financial year. In addition, guidelines were issued by the Premier in April 1986 for the purpose of ensuring that budgets for Parliamentary Committee references are thoroughly considered prior to the reference being considered by Cabinet.

4.3.12 It should be noted that one of the few references made since April 1986, was referred to the Social Development Committee without prior establishment of a budget. References ongoing at the time when the guidelines were issued have not been costed.

4.3.13 The approved budgets should classify funds within each item of expenditure. If this classification is carried out correctly, disputes which may evolve during the year between Committees and Clerks of Committees as to why expenditure needs to be incurred, can be avoided.

4.3.14 Audit view is that provided adequate consultation, costing and input occurs in the preparation of Committee budgets, the responsibility for authorising expenditure within budget limits could be delegated either in full or to a maximum amount on individual transactions, to the Chairperson and Director of Research for each Committee. An oversighting function would still be required by the Joint House Committee to ensure budget allocations were not exceeded.

4.3.15 To assist in the monitoring of expenditure to budget, the Joint House Committee currently remits to Committee Secretaries a monthly printout of overall Committee expenditure. The Committee Secretaries regard the printout as only of limited value, particularly as it records expenditure under item classification for each Committee, rather than item expenditure for each individual reference being undertaken by a Committee. Accordingly, each Committee Secretary needs to maintain manual records to enable the monitoring of the cost of each Committee reference.

4.3.16 Audit regards the manual records as a duplication of Joint House records, which could be avoided if the Joint House Committee was able to provide timely management information tailored to Committee requirements.

#### *Employment of consultants*

4.3.17 Several of the Committees from time to time need to employ private consultants to provide specialist advice on areas of review. Prior to the engagement of such consultants, there may be advantage in drawing on the specialist knowledge available from the Effectiveness Review Committee on the capabilities of various consultants.

#### *Procedure manuals*

4.3.18 The Clerk of Committees in the Legislative Assembly arranged for a procedures manual to be drawn up in late 1985. However, to date the manual has not been authorised or officially put into practice. Similar action was also initiated by the Clerk of Committees in the Legislative Council in November 1984. Again, the manual has not been finalised or put into operation.

4.3.19 The establishment of procedure manuals is seen by audit as a valuable aid to the efficient operation of Committees, particularly in that:

- (1) All Committee members become aware of the Secretary's responsibilities to a Committee.
- (2) All rules governing Committees are clearly understood, and the interpretation and application of Committee legislation is made clear.

#### *Committee evidence and documentation*

4.3.20 All Committee evidence, documentation, records and submissions are stored at the locations in which the Committee operates, which are in various buildings throughout Melbourne. Apart from the confidentiality and importance of much of this material, audit also considers that it could be catalogued and referenced to provide a source of information for other enquiries. The Parliamentary Library would be suited to performing this function.

#### *Annual report of operations*

4.3.21 Reports issued by the various Committees are the tangible evidence of output in relation to various matters under consideration. However, the reports do not provide details of each Committee's operational activities.

4.3.22 In recognition of the above issue, it was brought to the attention of audit that the Economic and Budget Review Committee was preparing an annual report detailing their activities, projects undertaken, reporting deadlines etc. Audit considers this action to be a positive initiative that could be extended to all Committees, with the view to public disclosure of activities.

### *Areas in workload*

4.3.23 In the course of conducting the review audit noted that there was a growing backlog of regulations requiring review by a Sub-Committee appointed by the Legal and Constitutional Committee. In view of its importance this function may require additional support.

### *Recommendations*

4.3.24 *It is acknowledged that there are significant benefits associated with the present system of monitoring Committee operations through the involvement of Presiding Officers, Clerks of Committees and Committee Secretaries. Nevertheless, in view of the number of suggestions for improvement conveyed to audit about current operations, there would appear to be a perception that there is scope for improvement. Audit suggestions are as follows:*

- (1) *The present organisational structure for the administration of Committees, including the role of Clerks of Committees, be reviewed.*
- (2) *The duties and classification relating to the position of Committee Secretary could be reviewed by external consultants in liaison with the Chairperson and Director of Research of each Committee. In order to appoint suitable officers to the Secretary's position the following steps could be considered:*
  - (i) *Secondment of officers within the Public Service.*
  - (ii) *Develop existing skills of eligible Parliamentary officers through professional development, secondment to positions outside of Parliament, opportunities for higher duties, acting as assistant secretary etc.*
  - (iii) *In conjunction with the above activities, performance assessments should be conducted after each assignment. In addition, persons appointed as Secretaries need to have regular performance evaluations conducted by either the Chairperson or Director of Research.*
  - (iv) *Issue the procedure manuals currently under development, in order that the functions and duties of Committee Secretaries are clearly defined.*
- (4) *In view of their intermittent workloads, consideration could be given to appointing Committee Secretaries to service more than one Committee.*

4.3.25 *The lines of authority and level of delegations involving Committee members needs to be reviewed, defined in a delegation manual, and regularly monitored. In audit opinion, the overall efficiency of operations could be improved by:*

- (1) *Authorising Chairpersons and/or Directors of Research to incur and approve expenditure up to nominated levels eg; individual items up to \$500. Responsibility for certification and payment would remain with the Joint House Committee.*
- (2) *Permitting the employment or secondment of casual staff at peak periods, provided expenditure is within budgetary constraints.*
- (3) *Assigning responsibility for the day to day control of administrative and research support staff to Directors of Research, with an overseeing role being adopted by the Chairperson.*

- (4) *Seconding Committee support staff, including research officers to other Parliamentary departments in situations where Committee workloads are low, or where Parliament is in recess.*
- (5) *The responsibility for ensuring Committee expenditure remains within budget could be with the Director of Research, with the Joint House Committee exercising an oversighting role. In this regard the existing format of the monthly expenditure report provided by the Joint House Committee needs to be modified in order that expenditure incurred by individual Committees is categorized under each reference.*

*4.3.26 The preparation of annual budgets for Committees is an important issue. This preparation could be a joint exercise between the Joint House Committee, Committee Chairpersons, Directors of Research and Presiding Officers. Responsibility for adhering to annual budgets and supplementary allocations, as approved by the Presiding Officers could be assigned to the Directors of Research, provided they remain full accountable to the Presiding Officers for any budget variations.*

*4.3.27 Consideration might be given to drawing on the experience of the Effectiveness Review Committee when major consultancy proposals are under consideration.*

*4.3.28 Consideration might be given to assigning responsibility to the Parliamentary Library to store, catalogue and reference material produced by the various Parliamentary Committees that may benefit Members and research staff.*

*4.3.29 Consideration be given to producing annual reports upon Committee operations.*

#### **4.4 Victorian Electorate Office Scheme Administration**

##### *Background*

**4.4.1** The Victorian Electorate Office Scheme, which was originally instituted in 1973, provides constituents with access to Members of Parliament by establishing and maintaining State Electorate Offices. The Scheme, which is administered by an Electorate Office Support Committee, has the following objective:

*"The aim and objective of the State Electorate Office Scheme is to provide Members of Parliament, where physically possible, with an office of equivalent standard, which should present a reasonable appearance to the general public and which should be accessible to the public."*

**4.4.2** To assist members in defraying electorate expenses, including operating their Electorate Offices, pursuant to the Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968 the Governor in Council has proclaimed regulations in relation to the following allowances:

- (i) Electorate Office Allowance.
- (ii) Electorate Allowance.
- (iii) Charter Transport Allowance.

**4.4.3** During 1986, the Government initiated an inquiry into Electorate Office support. A number of changes were subsequently made to the Electorate Office Scheme, including an allocation of \$660 000 (i.e. \$5 000 per Member) in 1986-87 to provide additional office equipment or support staff, as determined by the Member. The allocation has been since increased by approximately 60 per cent to \$1 122 000 (i.e. \$8 500 per member) for 1987-88.

4.4.4 To administer the Electorate Office Scheme, the Electorate Office Support Committee relies on precedents set by and outlined in the minutes of committee meetings. Over time, although various policies have developed, a formal statement has not been drawn up to detail the operation of the Scheme. This situation causes uncertainty as to whether Electorate Office expenditure should be met from Parliamentary Appropriations or from a Member's Electorate Allowance.

4.4.5 In January 1987, after the Committee was given the responsibility of administering the additional allocation of \$660 000 for Electorate Office Support, the Premier requested the Committee to determine the basic level of support required by Members. At date of audit, viz October 1987, the Committee had not made a determination. Consequently it is possible that certain funds have been, or may be expended in a manner which is not entirely appropriate or cost beneficial, particularly as the scheme expands in future years.

4.4.6 The existing financial management information available to the Electorate Office Support Committee does not enable the Committee to fully examine and compare funds expended on establishing, maintaining and operating the individual electorate offices. The new financial management information system to be implemented by the Joint House Committee will allow financial reports to be tailored to enable an evaluation of this expenditure in more detail.

#### *Recommendations*

4.4.6 *Precedents and procedures established in the past in relation to administration of the Electorate Office Scheme, need to be re-assessed and consolidated into a formal statement or manual to provide guidance to all Members.*

4.4.7 *The Electorate Office Support Committee could consider undertaking the following functions:*

- (1) *Determining the basic level of Electorate Office Support, in terms of staffing arrangements, accommodation standards, level of EDP equipment etc.*
- (2) *encouraging members to use facilities offered by Parliamentary departments as an alternative to purchasing items for limited use. As an example, the Parliamentary Library offers research and audio-visual taping facilities, as opposed to the individual purchase of similar equipment and hiring of temporary staff.*
- (3) *Provide projections as to the extent of Electorate Office support likely to be required in the future, given that the level of purchasing of office furniture and equipment will most likely subside after the early years of the scheme.*
- (4) *Evaluating the effectiveness of the Electorate Office Support Scheme by utilising financial data on the Scheme available from the Joint House Committee.*

## **4.5 Parliamentary Library**

### *Background*

4.5.1 The Parliamentary Library provides information and reference services to Members, Committees, Parliamentary staff and to other organisations if information required is unavailable elsewhere. The operations of the Parliamentary Library are monitored by a Library Committee.

4.5.2 Over the past few years various initiatives have been taken by the Library to increase the awareness of services available and to expand facilities offered. The Library encourages the use of services by distributing monthly lists of additions to the Collection, abstracts of periodical articles and available research papers. New services offered in recent years include:

- (1) The provision of research services, usually upon request from Members, but occasionally in anticipation of demand.
- (2) Audio-visual recordings.
- (3) Publication of books and publicity brochures.
- (4) Assistance to Members in familiarising themselves with personal computers.
- (5) Servicing the information needs of the 6 Joint Investigatory Committees.

4.5.3 The provision of additional services, as well as coping with increased demand over the past 10 years, has mainly been accomplished through improved productivity and technological assistance, rather than from increased staffing levels. Staffing levels have only increased by 3 officers in this period, including 2 research officers. While audit considers that the productivity gains achieved are highly commendable, it was also apparent that further improvements in certain areas may be difficult to achieve with existing staff levels. Areas identified include:

(1) *Research facilities*

A most important service offered by the Library is to undertake research for Members, the impact of which directly affects the level of debate and the ability of Members to initiate reforming legislation. The alternative to this service is for Members to employ their own research staff from their Electorate Office support allowance, an initiative which is not often undertaken.

The 2 research staff employed by the Library have been increasingly involved with the provision of public relations material for the Parliament and assisting Members familiarising themselves with personal computers. These extraneous duties in conjunction with existing heavy demands, have reduced the time available to conduct additional research on behalf of the various Members. As a consequence, the research facility is not actively promoted or encouraged. If the research service offered is to be successful in servicing the needs of all Members, the redeployment of resources in conjunction with a reduction of extraneous duties of research staff, will be required.

(2) *Library collection*

The Library collection contains some very valuable books and items e.g. Gould's Birds of Australia, Strut's sketches and scenes of early Melbourne, and approximately 5 000 imprints dating back prior to the 1880's. Many of these articles are deteriorating and are in need of repair, a situation which would warrant the employment of a conservator to identify and arrange for such measures.

(3) *Stocktaking*

Despite the valuable nature of a significant proportion of the Library's collection, the last full stocktake was undertaken in 1948. The importance of progressive stocktakes is emphasised by audit, to assess the accuracy of records and to highlight any instances of loss. In view of the cramped conditions the Library is currently subject to, such stocktakes would also identify additional collections that could be loaned out to other institutions or stored off-site.

Library staff are currently updating library catalogues and shelf lists, a process which at the current rate of progress will take 12 months to complete. Although in theory once this process is completed, a stocktake should be conducted to establish the accuracy of the records, audit was informed that existing resources inhibit such an activity.

#### *(4) Current staff establishment*

Audit was advised that additional staff are needed to compensate for the breakdown in activity when existing staff commence extended leave. Overall, the library was considered to be operating on a day to day basis without the level of resources needed to enable long term objectives to be achieved, including provision of additional services to users, and expanding to include such activities as the provision of a newspaper clipping service for government agencies.

4.5.4 Although prima-facie evidence existed that a lack of resources is inhibiting the capacity of the Library to achieve its objectives, further productivity improvements may be available from further computerisation, assessment of work practices, re-allocation of priorities etc. The overall position should be assessed before submissions could be made to an external review as recommended later in para 4.9.9 of this report.

4.5.5 Following the closure of the Joint Departmental Library, additional demands have been placed upon the Parliamentary Library staff, a situation which further impacts upon the provision of services to Parliament.

#### *Outstanding loans*

4.5.6 Library books are loaned for up to 21 days, after which period the borrower is requested to return the books. However, as distinct from public libraries, fines are not imposed if books are not subsequently returned.

4.5.7 A review of library records disclosed that as a result of leniency and failure to take firm recovery action, it was noted that many books were outstanding beyond 21 days. Instances were observed where records indicated books had been outstanding for up to 10 years or more. This situation results in:

- (1) Restricting the availability of books for other readers.
- (2) Additional expense, as further copies are ordered.
- (3) Obligating staff to devote time to attempting book recoveries, at the expense of more important duties.

4.5.8 Although there is a degree of ongoing activity to retrieve immediate outstanding loans, the librarian has indicated that staff resources would, where possible, be directed towards establishing whether books outstanding for long periods were still in use, had been returned and not recorded, or were either lost or stolen and should be written off.

#### *North Library*

4.5.9 The North Library is an area designated for the use of Members only. While it is acknowledged that an area of quiet seclusion is justified during periods when Parliament is sitting, there is a need for a review of this exclusivity on a year round basis, particularly as it inhibits the ready access of Parliamentary Committee staff.

4.5.10 The North Library contains part of a collection that is of particular use to 2 of the Parliamentary Committees. Should any of these staff need books, it becomes necessary to request library staff to access the North Library for the books and to return them after use, a process which is often time consuming and unproductive.

#### *Library accommodation*

4.5.11 The library accommodation is unsatisfactory due to inadequate space, dated facilities, limited access, and operational unsuitability, factors which are further compounded by the restricted use of the North Library.

4.5.12 Partly as a result of the above situation, it is necessary to store a considerable portion of the Collection in a building in St. Andrews Place, East Melbourne which has recently been upgraded with electronic surveillance. However, audit was advised that the building is not entirely satisfactory as the fire detection system is sensitive to dust, and the automatic sprinklers are likely to activate if dust levels become too high. This situation can occur if windows are left open for a period of time.

#### *Purchase of books and publications*

4.5.13 The Parliamentary departments and Committees all have budgets for the purchase of books, publications and newspapers. During 1986/87 approximately \$24 000 was expended on these items. Rationalisation of expenditure could be achieved if the Library were to review and direct the purchases with a view to encouraging the use of the Library's collection, rather than separate purchases. In addition the Library would be in a position to advise if periodicals were not received during any month, a procedure which is currently not undertaken in individual departments.

#### *Recommendations*

*4.5.14 As part of the external review recommended later in para 4.9.9 of this report, the issue of additional staff resources for the library needs to be addressed. However, in the interim period, the Library needs to develop a strategy plan as to the level of services demanded by Members, improvements to be gained from new technology and changing work practices, accommodation limitations, timetables for the introduction of new initiatives, cost benefit analyses of proposed new services, and the appropriate skills and minimum levels of staff required.*

*4.5.15 The above strategy plan would also need to take into account the requirement for specialist expertise, such as research staff and a conservator.*

*4.5.16 The need to progressively undertake a full stock-take is emphasised and the Library should make every endeavour to obtain and direct resources to this exercise.*

*4.5.17 Continuing attention needs to be given to outstanding loans. In this regard it is suggested that the Presiding Officers periodically be given an accurate listing of those Members who have not justified the retention of books beyond a 3 month period. The Presiding Officers could exert influence upon such Members for their co-operation.*

*4.5.18 The Library Committee consider allowing greater access to the North Library when Parliament is not sitting.*

*4.5.19 The Library Committee conduct a survey as to the types of periodicals and books currently being purchased by the various departments and committees with a view to rationalisation and cost savings.*

4.5.20 It is recognised that the issue of Library accommodation is a long term problem which can only be solved through government accommodation initiatives. However, the problems with the temporary storage need to be addressed urgently with the Department of Property and Services.

## 4.6 Parliamentary Printing

### *Background*

4.6.1 Parliamentary printing evolves from the operations of the departments of Parliamentary Debates, the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. Printing relates to Hansard, Public Hearings of Committees, various Bills, Amendments and Acts, and various other Parliamentary Papers, etc.

4.6.2 The Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council provide for the appointment of individual Select Committees to consider all matters relating to printing undertaken by order of Parliament.

4.6.3 The above 2 Committees last sat jointly in July 1985, at which time a decision was made to form a sub-committee to consider a number of issues relating to printing. The sub-committee met in September 1985 and referred various recommendations back to the 2 Committees for consideration.

4.6.4 In view of the Committees not having met since 1985 resulting in the sub-committees recommendations remaining unresolved, there may be a need to review standing orders in order to rationalise the existing Committee structure. In the interim period, decisions on outstanding issues need to be made at an administrative level.

### *Orders to Print*

4.6.5 Up until the last meeting in July 1985, various economies have been effected by decisions of past Printing Committees over the years, including:

- (1) A reduction in the number of recipients of free Parliamentary Papers.
- (2) Reductions in the number of bound Parliamentary Papers.
- (3) Dispensing with the Second Edition of Hansard and a reduction in the provision of bound volumes.

4.6.6 Despite the above actions, scope may exist for further reductions in cost of printing undertaken, particularly as the number of reports currently printed is largely based upon a listing prepared in the early 1930's. Additions to the listing are determined within each House.

4.6.7 Printing of parliamentary publications cost approximately \$1.1 million in 1986-87, excluding storage and administrative costs. In view of this level of expenditure, it is considered essential that the Printing Committees should continually keep operational costs and efficiency under review.

### *Cost recovery*

4.6.8 At the present time, Members are entitled to nominate 30 individuals or organisations to receive weekly copies of Hansard free of charge. Municipalities and Educational Institutions desirous of receiving Hansard are also entitled to free copies. Each Ministry receives 5 copies each week for distribution. The Parliament also distributes on request, free copies of Bills, Notice Papers and Committee Reports.

4.6.9 Notwithstanding the need to provide access to Parliamentary debates, audit considers that scope could exist for charging certain organisations for copies of Hansard, in a similar manner to charges levied upon copies of government gazettes. Such a charge would be in line with the emphasis placed by government upon recoupment of costs, where possible, in the provision of government services.

#### *Subordinate instruments*

4.6.10 A subordinate instrument is defined by Section 3 of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 as an instrument made under, or pursuant to the provisions of an Act and includes:

- (1) Statutory rules.
- (2) Instruments other than statutory rules that contain regulations, rules, by-laws, proclamations, Orders in Council, orders or schemes etc.

4.6.11 Section 32(2) of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 states that if a subordinate instrument makes provision for a matter in a document, that document must be laid before Parliament.

4.6.12 In December 1986, the Legal and Constitutional Committee tabled a report involving a review of Section 32 of the above Act. The report noted the high cost incurred by various Bodies in complying with this particular Section. During the period of audit, it was noted that the cost of compliance with this section on one occasion, was estimated to be \$9 000.

4.6.13 The Committee recommended the re-enactment of Section 32(2) of the Act to ensure the public became fully aware of its implications. In the Committee's opinion, Section 32(2) of the Act was the most viable way of guaranteeing public knowledge and access to the law, as it required all documents to be laid before Parliament. A more cost effective way of guaranteeing public knowledge and access to the Law was also outlined in the following submissions made to the Committee:

- (1) The replacement of Section 32 with a notification in the Government Gazette advising where copies of the subordinate instruments may be obtained.
- (2) A requirement that government agencies retain one copy of the relevant subordinate instruments.
- (3) The substitution of the requirement to table all accompanying subordinate instruments with a provision, to the effect that all subordinate instruments be included in a schedule citing by way of descriptive title, all writing applied, adopted or incorporated by that instrument.

#### *Recommendations*

4.6.14 *It is recommended by audit that:*

*Standing orders be reviewed to establish the most appropriate administrative mechanism for making decisions upon matters involving Parliamentary printing. Matters that need to be considered include:*

- (i) *Whether reductions can be achieved in the number of reports currently ordered to be printed.*
- (ii) *Adequacy of criteria used when decisions are made to order that reports be printed.*

- (iii) *Opportunities for recoupment of costs involved in the printing of Hansard, possibly through the imposition of charges or reductions in the volume printed.*
- (iv) *Measures by which the cost of compliance with Section 32 of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 can be reduced. In this regard the cost saving measures submitted to the Legal and Constitutional Committee could be reconsidered.*

#### **4.7 Reports to Parliament by government agencies**

##### *Background*

4.7.1 The Annual Reporting Act 1983 currently governs the reporting requirements of all departments, major Public Authorities, and selected superannuation funds. In addition to these major entities, there exists a diversity of other public agencies whose size and scale of operations varies considerably. The reporting requirements of these agencies are normally contained in their governing legislation.

4.7.2 The date of tabling of annual reports is recorded at Parliament. However, apart from the Auditor-General's reviews, and with the exception of agencies subject to the Annual Reporting Act 1983, there is no established mechanism for Parliament to be progressively informed of the timeliness of agency reporting i.e. reports outstanding beyond legislative reporting deadlines are not brought to Parliament's attention.

4.7.3 Audit considers that an effective follow-up process is necessary in order to monitor compliance with legislative reporting deadlines, and to improve public accountability and disclosure. Where there are instances of delays, the circumstances need to be made known to Parliament.

##### *Recommendation*

4.7.4 *In the interests of public disclosure, audit intends recommending to the Treasurer that action be taken to progressively identify and report to Parliament, instances where reporting deadlines are not adhered to.*

#### **4.8 Accommodation**

4.8.1 Parliament House is one of Victoria's most important historic buildings. The original building, which was designed in 1856, has never been completed, with the last major works taking place in 1930. Over the years additional accommodation has been provided from make-shift partitioning of passage ways, refurbishment of basement storage areas and temporary portable accommodation.

4.8.2 In 1981 the Joint House Committee commissioned the former Public Works Department to prepare a report on Parliament House accommodation, to determine how improvements could be made. No action was taken on this report, with funding constraints being seen as the most probable explanation for the inaction.

4.8.3 In 1985 the former Public Works Department was again directed to evaluate accommodation problems and 3 options were presented to Cabinet in December 1985. These options were:

- (1) Completion of the North Wing in accordance with the original building plans. (Estimated cost - \$33 million)
- (2) Constructing a modified North Wing and upgrading existing accommodation. (Estimated cost - Stage 1 - \$20 million)

- (3) Relocation of certain staff and Parliamentary Committees to 1 Macarthur Street, Melbourne. (Estimated cost - \$25 million)

4.8.4 Further information on the options was requested from the former Public Works Department, but was unavailable at date of this report. An amount of \$100 000 was appropriated for further studies in 1987-88.

4.8.5 The need for improved accommodation is readily obvious from an inspection of the premises, particularly in relation to facilities provided for the Joint House Committee and the Parliamentary Library. The Joint House Committee is currently located in a portable building of unsuitable dimensions and standard at the rear of Parliament House. The Parliamentary Library staff are located in various parts of the main building, and the Library itself is so cramped that it is necessary to store certain of the Collection offsite.

4.8.6 In view of the above conditions the need for further accommodation studies is considered unnecessary unless a firm commitment to funding is obtained.

4.8.7 Audit supports the need for improved accommodation, particularly as savings could be achieved from centralisation and rationalisation of certain activities, e.g. provision of support services to Parliamentary Committees.

#### **4.9 Terms and conditions of employment**

##### *Background*

4.9.1 The officers of Parliament are employed under the provisions of the Parliamentary Officers Act 1975. As regulations detailing the terms and conditions of employment of Parliamentary Officers have not been established, the Public Service Determinations are used as guidelines. It was noted however, that the terms and conditions of employment of Parliamentary Officers vary on occasions from Public Service Determinations, depending upon which department they are employed in.

4.9.2 The normal hours of duty while Parliament is not sitting range from 25 hours per week up to 37 hours 30 minutes per week, depending upon the duties involved. While Parliament is sitting extended hours are involved. However, overtime is only paid to certain officers while other officers are granted time off in lieu. Recreation leave varies from 4 to 6 weeks per annum, depending on duties performed.

4.9.3 While certain officers are classified as being equivalent to SES levels within the Public Service, these officers do not receive performance allowances, nor are performance evaluations undertaken.

4.9.4 Appeals regarding the appointment of Officers are presently determined internally.

##### *Work environment*

4.9.5 After recent claims by Parliamentary staff for overtime payments, the Government Industrial Relations Task Force established a working party comprising Officers from Parliament, Department of Labour and the Victorian Public Service Association. The Working Party was to:

- (1) Examine problems resulting from various methods of calculating overtime.
- (2) Co-ordinate discussion between the Victorian Public Service Association and management on current Union claims and/or management initiatives with significant industrial relations implications.

(3) Examine an appropriate model for award coverage of Parliamentary Officers.

4.9.6 The working party also developed a proposal for an award for Electorate Office Staff, although negotiations for implementing this proposal have not been finalised. The importance of expedient implementation of an award is stressed, due to the effects on productivity and staff morale.

4.9.7 Creation of positions or re-classification of existing positions is facilitated by individual job evaluations undertaken by the Public Service Board. Following such evaluations, recommendations are made to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Governor in Council approval for the positions is subsequently obtained.

4.9.8 Currently, the Joint House Committee is requesting certain positions be upgraded by one or more levels. However, reclassification of the Joint House Committee positions will only partly address a need to ensure that all Parliamentary positions are appropriately classified.

In this regard, while it was not practical for audit to fully evaluate the duties and levels of responsibility of the Officers of the Parliament, the following disparities were noted:

- (1) Officers of equivalent status to the Public Service Senior Executive Service do not receive performance allowances and are not subject to an annual performance evaluation.
- (2) Many inconsistencies exist between classification levels of officers in individual departments as compared to officers performing equivalent duties in other departments.
- (3) Certain position classifications are comparable with equivalent Public Service positions, in terms of duties performed. Other positions are classified higher than positions involving similar functions in the Public Service.
- (4) Position duty statements do not necessarily relate to duties performed.
- (5) Hansard reporters are remunerated at a different level to Committee reporters, to reporters employed in the Public Service; and to reporters in other Australian Parliaments.
- (6) Certain senior positions have assistants, whereas equivalent senior positions with a similar workload in other departments, do not have assistants.
- (7) In audit opinion, certain areas have a surplus of staff, as compared to other areas with similar duties and workloads.
- (8) Certain positions have been regarded as temporary for periods of up to 10 years.

#### *Recommendations*

4.9.9 *It is recommended that external consultants be engaged to undertake a complete review of productivity, job value and classification of all Parliamentary Officer positions, with a view to:*

- (1) *Assessing whether the historical and ad-hoc creation and reclassification of positions properly reflects current work activity.*
- (2) *Assess the merits of introducing performance pay for officers equivalent to SES levels, provided however that annual performance evaluations are undertaken.*

- (3) *Bringing to the attention of the Presiding Officers instances where assignment of duties appears inconsistent within or between departments.*
- (4) *Advising where permanent employment is appropriate, in order to provide security of tenure. In evaluating this aspect, consideration could be given to whether there is a basis for providing permanent employment for research staff employed by Standing Parliamentary Committees, particularly in view of the often high level of expertise acquired.*
- (5) *Determining whether there is a need to redeploy staff in instances where, due to changing circumstances, positions are surplus to current requirements.*

#### **4.10 Personnel and professional development**

##### *Background*

4.10.1 The Government has publicly stressed the need for reforms in resource management to improve overall efficiency of operations and improved productivity.

4.10.2 To deliver program outputs more efficiently, positive measures are needed to ensure staff are given the opportunity to maintain and improve job skills. Each department therefore needs to be part of an overall Parliamentary strategy to improve the management of human resource skills, provide staff development, develop equal employment opportunities, and to generally promote an acceptable working environment.

4.10.3 The present practice of each department undertaking its own personnel function, usually as part of the duties of senior personnel, and the absence of formalised staff training and professional development programs is not considered by audit to be conducive to effective management. Attention is drawn to the following aspects:

- (1) Although an accurate assessment could not be made, the overall cost of administering the parliamentary personnel function is likely to be high, particularly as up to 4 officers in each of the 5 departments are involved in this function to varying degrees ranging from staff recruitment to maintenance of leave records.
- (2) As the Heads of the various departments participate in personnel matters that could be dealt with in the main by a personnel officer, this aspect impacts upon time available for managerial functions.
- (3) Although the Legislative Assembly and the Joint House Committee each employ their own Personnel Officer, such officers are only on occasions available to the other departments or the Parliamentary Committees. Accordingly these departments and Committees do not always directly benefit from the professional expertise offered by a qualified personnel officer.
- (4) Failure to centralise the personnel function in a single location has also indirectly meant that Parliament has not been able to gain benefit from the use of computer packages, such as the government's human resource management system known as PERSPAY. Although it is envisaged that the Joint House Committee will introduce a personnel package as part of its computerisation program, use of this facility is not intended for use by other departments.

4.10.4 A centralised personnel function would ensure that all Parliamentary departments would abide by similar personnel practices. Advantages could include:

- (1) The proper formulation of personnel policies with due consideration to the basic needs of all departments and personnel without discrimination.
- (2) The stability and continuity of practices irrespective of management change.
- (3) The formulation of policies to assist in the measurement of performance.
- (4) Encouraging personnel development by establishing policies that reflect the principles of equal opportunity and promotion by merit.

#### *Professional development and staff training*

4.10.5 Professional development and staff training is considered vital in promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of the operations of Parliament. Audit noted a lack of an overall commitment to staff development and training, an important component of the personnel function.

4.10.6 Professional Development for the Table Officers is of special importance to Parliamentary operations, as they are required to exercise a high level of discretion, ethical behaviour and judgement. A professional development strategy needs to be established for these officers to ensure they continue to acquire knowledge essential to their positions.

#### *Recommendations*

4.10.7 *The following is recommended:*

- (1) *The role of the Personnel Unit, Joint House Committee be expanded to include the personnel function of all departments, and to be responsible for co-ordinating the development and implementation of human resource management policies and procedures, in areas such as staff development, performance assessment, equal employment opportunity, industrial relations and occupational health and safety.*
- (2) *A professional development program be established for all staff.*
- (3) *Implementation of computerised human resource management technology where benefits are identified and it is cost effective.*
- (4) *The Manager of the Personnel Unit act as a liaison between Parliament and external bodies such as the Public Service Board or the Department of the Premier and Cabinet when issues of reclassifications, creation of positions etc, arise. This officer also needs to be accessible to all personnel.*
- (5) *Measures for monitoring and reviewing human resource management, productivity and activities should be clarified and documented in procedure manuals available to all personnel.*
- (6) *Consideration be given to introducing staff assessments on an annual basis. The objective of such a system would be to identify deficiencies in development and to agree upon remedial action.*
- (7) *Department heads need to remain involved to varying degrees in the selection and promotion of personnel, and approval of leave. However, the administrative duties associated with these functions should be rationalised and undertaken by the Personnel Unit, Joint House Committee.*

## **4.11 Use of information technology**

4.11.1 Existing use of information technology by Parliamentary departments is limited to a small number of word processors and micro-computers for personal use. This situation has been recognised by the heads of the 5 departments, and plans are underway to develop an information technology strategy to be implemented over the next few years.

Progress to date includes:

- (1) The completion of a study into the computerisation of the Parliament (Dillon Report) where opportunities for improved efficiency and effectiveness from increased automation were identified.
- (2) The distribution of a request for information document to prospective computer suppliers for the purpose of seeking possible solutions to the information technology project at Parliament.
- (3) The submission to the EDP sub-committee of the Priorities Planning and Strategy Committee of Cabinet for funding approval of the proposed investment in information technology at Parliament.

4.11.2 To provide co-ordination among the 5 departments, an Information Technology Steering Committee comprising the heads of each department was established. This Committee is responsible for the project and is assisted by a senior computer systems officer on secondment to Parliament. In addition, an Information Technology Operating Committee Printing Office was set up to provide a means for consultation and staff involvement.

4.11.3 At this stage the project is roughly estimated to cost \$3.4 million and will be implemented in 3 phases. Phase I will cover the computerisation of Notice Paper, Proceedings, Question Paper, Member List and Hansard Reporting. Phase II will integrate the bills processing, library, personnel and financial management functions. Phase III will make the information technology facilities available to Members of Parliament through the provision of a wider network.

4.11.4 The introduction of information technology is often complex and subject to considerable cost escalation if monitoring procedures are not in place. It usually involves changes to work practices, procedures and skill requirements. For a relatively small organisation such as Parliament, the task is made even more difficult by the limited experience, resources and in-house expertise on the subject matter.

4.11.5 Industrial considerations need also be taken into account where the introduction of information technology directly impacts upon the duties of employees. Audit was advised of the initial concerns of Hansard staff in relation to the implementation schedule, and although not the direct responsibility of Parliament, the potential effects upon employment at the Victorian Government Printing Office.

4.11.6 From discussions and examinations of relevant documentation, it would appear that positive steps have been taken by the Steering Committee to resolve these problems.

It is too early to comment on the management of the project. It is however, worth-while highlighting the key risks of the project, which are:

- (1) Time-table - Whilst a timely implementation is important, care should be taken to set an achievable and realistic schedule.

- (2) Cost Benefits Analysis - Some degree of conservatism should be exercised to ensure that costs are not under-estimated or benefits overstated. To ensure accountability, procedures should be developed to ensure that regular reports on the total cost of the project are provided to the Steering Committee.
- (3) Consultation with Staff - Co-operation from staff is an important element in ensuring the success of the new system. Continual consultation and involvement of staff in the decision making process are a means of maximising co-operation.
- (4) Expertise and Resources - Whilst today's technology is highly developed, there is nevertheless a risk in selecting inappropriate technology, suppliers failing to deliver, or systems not meeting original expectations. To avoid these potential pitfalls, sufficient expertise and resources should be provided to select, implement and support the proposed systems.

4.11.7 In relation to each of these risks, audit was advised that:

- (1) The Steering Committee is reviewing the time-table on a regular basis.
- (2) A more detailed and accurate cost/benefit analysis will be performed as part of the tender evaluation program.
- (3) Staff are being kept informed about the progress of the project, both formally and informally.
- (4) External expert consultants will be used in evaluating the recommended tender.

#### 4.12 Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)

##### *Background*

4.12.1 The broad objectives of Hansard are to prepare an accurate record of the debates of Parliament and of Parliamentary Committee public hearings as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. Hansard also prepares an index of Parliamentary debates in order to provide a reference source.

4.12.2 During the 1986-87 year recurrent expenditure within Hansard was approximately \$1.079 million of which the major proportion was expended on salaries and associated costs. In addition to this amount, approximately \$1.434 million was expended on the printing of Hansard by the Victorian Government Printing Office (V.G.P.O.).

##### *Work Practices*

4.12.3 Since the inception of Hansard as a Parliamentary department in 1865 there has been little change in work practices. Reliance is placed upon shorthand reporters to record transcripts which are then typed by typists. Extensive editing of the typed transcripts then occurs at various levels prior to forwarding to the V.G.P.O. for printing.

4.12.4 Use of modern technology to assist in the above process has been minimal. The most recent initiatives were the introduction of limited memory typewriters in 1986 and the use of FAX machines in 1985 to transmit final transcripts to the V.G.P.O.

4.12.5 The preparation of Hansard and recording of Committee public hearings is a costly and labour intensive process, being basically a manual operation involving specialist staff. Due to the intermittent nature of Parliamentary activity working hours of staff employed can range from as low as 25 hours per week while Parliament is in recess, to days commencing anytime from 10.00 am onwards until Parliament rises, with no overtime payable. An accurate indication of hours actually worked or duties performed was not available, as Hansard staff are not required to complete daily time sheets as is the requirement for most staff in other Parliamentary departments. As part compensation for the extended hours worked on occasions, 6 weeks annual leave is granted.

4.12.6 During the lull in activities while Parliament is in recess, duties mainly relate to the manual referencing of Parliamentary debates.

#### *Use of Technology*

4.12.7 The advantages of utilising modern information technology within Parliament's administration have been acknowledged for some time. However, as referred to in section 4.11 of this report it was not until a consultancy review was completed in November 1986, that planning for a future information technology strategy actually commenced, with the formation of a Steering Committee to oversee progress.

4.12.8 The apparent reluctance in the past to improve efficiency through computerisation can be illustrated by the fact that Hansard has not made use of word processing facilities, which have been available for several years. The advantages to Hansard of word processing would include:

- (1) ability to edit transcripts of debates upon a computer screen, thereby reducing the expense and time involved with the current system of manual editing of individual transcripts by up to 5 various officers; and
- (2) enabling tapes to be sent to the V.G.P.O. where disk conversion can take place prior to computer typesetting. This facility would eliminate the existing cumbersome process of FAXing transcripts to the V.G.P.O. where the documents need to be re-keyed for conversion to typesetting. This process at the VGPO is particularly time consuming due to the editorial amendments of up to 5 persons on a single document.

4.12.9 In August 1987 the Steering Committee sought information from interested suppliers as to options available for computerisation of certain processes, including those of Hansard. Audit was not granted access to the supplier submissions and accordingly an evaluation could not be made of strategies that could be adapted for Hansard.

4.12.10 Following receipt of the supplier submissions, an EDP strategy proposal, prepared by a seconded officer with EDP experience, was submitted to the Committee for consideration. Audit has since been advised that further input into the proposal was seen as being required. A submission has been made to the Department of Management and Budget to engage another consultant to advise on future strategies.

4.12.11 In view of the objective of Hansard in preparing records of proceeds in a timely, cost effective and efficient manner, use of modern technology should be regarded as inevitable. For this reason, while it is commendable that action is taking place to develop future strategies, concern is expressed that continued delays and further expense do not continue to occur *ad infinitum* in improving operational efficiency in this manner.

4.12.12 Future computer applications within Hansard, apart from word processing facilities, could include use of computer facilities for storage and easy reference of debates, and eventually computer assisted transcribing of Parliamentary proceedings.

4.12.13 It is recognised that use of information technology will impact upon staffing levels and work practices. It therefore becomes crucial that proper consultation and planning occurs at an early stage and that staff are given opportunities for re-training and re-allocation to other duties. In this regard, the impact of using computers to reference Parliamentary debates would further reduce the already limited hours devoted to these duties by certain Hansard staff while Parliament is not sitting. Consideration at this stage could be given to utilising the skills of these officers in other Parliamentary departments e.g. Library, for stocktaking purposes or research assignments.

### *Recommendations*

*4.12.13 After 2 years of studies the proposal to engage further consultants needs to be re-assessed. It is recommended that the Steering Committee re-examine existing strategies and proposals with a view to implementing priority systems, including word processing facilities, as soon as is practicable. If necessary, consultants could be engaged to advise upon and/or manage installations.*

*4.12.14 The Steering Committee or similar body undertake early action to assess the implications of new technologies upon staff and their work practices. Where appropriate, plans will need to be developed for retraining and/or redeployment of affected personnel.*

*4.12.15 Consideration be given to the introduction of time sheets within Hansard so as to enable work patterns and actual hours of duty to be evaluated, with a view to obtaining maximum output from available resources.*

## **4.13 Processing of Expenditure**

4.13.1 The Joint House Committee's Finance Unit is responsible for the preparation and processing of all accounts in accordance with the procedures specified in the Department of Management and Budget Regulations 1981. Audit noted that considerable costs and delays are being incurred in the processing and payment of accounts, mainly as a result of the following:

- (1) All invoices received need to be referred back to the initiating department to certify receipt of goods and to provide an approval to pay.
- (2) Claim forms are not always prepared by the individual departments. In these circumstances it becomes necessary for the Joint House Committee, after receiving an approved invoice, to prepare a claim form. The claim form is then forwarded back to the department for certification by an authorised officer.
- (3) Following receipt of certified claim forms, a schedule of accounts is prepared by the Joint House Committee and forwarded to the Department of Management and Budget, which arranges for cheques to be drawn and forwarded to claimants.
- (4) Pursuant to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968, a further step needs to be taken in relation to Parliamentary Committee expenditure in that the Treasurer, and either the Speaker or President must approve the expenditure prior to schedules being processed for payment.

### *Rail travel administration*

4.13.2 The Protocol Branch of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet issues vouchers for Members' travel entitlements. The Serjeant-at-Arms, (ADM-7) and the Usher of the Black Rod, (ADM-8) within Parliament also administer the travel arrangements and maintain records. Money is appropriate for Members' travel to Premier and Cabinet Program No. 604.

4.13.3 The involvement of 2 departments to administer Members' travel arrangements would appear unnecessary, and savings could be achieved if moneys were appropriated directly to the Parliament for this purpose.

### *Fringe benefits tax liability*

4.13.4 The value of Members' rail passes during 1986-87 was \$18 000, Ex-Members \$31 000 and Members' spouses \$6 000. Fringe benefits tax paid on the value of the rail travel during the year was \$16 905. However, it was noted that the fringe benefits tax payable did not take into account the value of air travel undertaken by Members, nor rail travel undertaken by Parliamentary Officers. This aspect is currently being examined by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

### *Recommendations*

4.13.5 *Audit considers that improved efficiency could result from the following measures:*

- (1) *The Permanent Head of the Joint House Committee be appointed as the certifying officer for all Parliamentary accounts.*
- (2) *In the event of a centralised store function being established, all invoices could be retained by the Joint House Committee, with payment being dependent upon receipt of a properly authorised purchase order, certified by the Storekeeper as to receipt of goods.*
- (3) *Where the provision of services was involved, the purchase order would need to be certified by an authorised officer within the relevant department as to the actual provision of the services.*
- (4) *Where items other than goods and services were involved, e.g. personal travelling expenses, payment would be dependent upon receipt from the relevant department of a claim form authorised by the Permanent Head.*
- (5) *Consideration be given to amending the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968 to remove the obligation for the Treasurer to independently authorise expenditure incurred by Parliamentary Committees.*
- (6) *Consideration be given to establishing cheque drawing facilities under the jurisdiction of the Joint House Committee to enable this department to pay all accounts. Reimbursement of the advance account from the Department of Management and Budget would be dependent upon the submission of properly authorised schedules.*

4.13.6 *Consideration be given to appropriation of moneys for Members' travel directly to Parliament, in order to minimise duplication of the preparation of travel arrangements.*

4.13.7 *The issue of the fringe benefits tax liability on allowances payable to Members and Staff be established as a matter of priority.*

#### 4.14 Stores

##### *Background*

4.14.1 Each of the 5 departments of Parliament undertakes separately the responsibility for ordering, approving payment and maintaining levels of stores necessary for departmental operations. The actual value of total stores purchased each year is relatively low, being in the vicinity of \$74 000. The costs of administration, including salaries of staff involved, is borne by all 5 Departments.

4.14.2 Although costs of the stores activities undertaken by the staff are unknown, it is evident from the number of staff involved in the stores function, certain of whom are highly classified, that the administrative costs are significant. In addition, the time involved by a number of staff could be spent on more productive activities in accordance with government philosophy on resource management.

4.14.3 Apart from staffing costs, the failure to have a centralised stores function has led to additional cost in that:

- (1) Physical control over stores is minimal.
- (2) Benefits are not obtained from bulk purchasing of common items.
- (3) Optimum order quantities or predetermined stock levels are not established, which means that when stocks run out, purchases are often made from the nearest retail store.
- (4) Various storage areas are located throughout the building, thereby utilising space that could be used for other purposes.

##### *Recommendations*

4.14.4 *As soon as conditions permit, a central store be established, the control of which should be assigned to the Joint House Committee.*

4.14.5 *If cost beneficial, a computerised stores system be established to monitor inventory levels, provide accurate costing information for program purposes, and to identify abnormally high levels of usage in individual areas.*

#### 4.15 Maintenance

##### *Background*

4.15.1 Maintenance activities at Parliament House are the responsibility of the Joint House Committee. An Engineers' Unit staffed by 10 officers within the Joint House Committee undertakes minor works, with the Public Works Department being responsible for major works.

##### *Cost control*

4.15.2 The financial information retained in relation to maintenance activities was regarded by audit as unsatisfactory due to an absence of cost centres for each department, and the failure to cost individual jobs undertaken. The lack of financial information means that costs are not allocated to the programs of individual departments in accordance with program budgeting principles, nor can an analysis be made as to the cost and effectiveness of each job undertaken.

4.15.3 The annual budgets for maintenance expenditure are established with regard to historical expenditure and predictions of the cost of major works. The introduction of a new financial information system in the Joint House Committee should enable improved budgeting and monitoring of overall expenditure to be undertaken.

#### *Stock control*

4.15.4 A system of stock control utilising stock cards is not in place. Stocks are simply ordered when stock levels are deemed to become low. A central stores function as previously recommended, should improve overall stock control and enable staff resources within the Engineers' Unit to concentrate upon maintenance functions.

4.15.5 The Engineers' Unit also needs to exercise better control over stock usage, by comparing actual job stock usage to predicted job usage, and by the reconciliation of stock usage to stock on hand. This process would necessitate the use of stock requisition forms.

#### *Maintenance planning*

4.15.6 A minimum level of preventive maintenance occurs as a result of regular inspections. Most on-going maintenance is initiated by the receipt of Job Orders from the 5 departments.

4.15.7 Records maintained within the Engineers' Unit do not disclose the total number of jobs outstanding or the period of time elapsed since the original request. Jobs are mainly prioritised by the amount of pressure that is exerted by officers within the departments on having the work undertaken.

4.15.8 On 1 July 1987, the Joint House Committee received a delegation from the former Public Works Department to conduct or contract out work up to a value of \$10 000. This delegation should facilitate quicker response times to maintenance requests, but will necessitate the development of a minor works schedule, in order to prioritise jobs and to follow up their completion.

#### *Administration*

4.15.9 Some concern was raised in audit discussions by the Maintenance Engineer as to his increasing involvement in clerical activity. The Engineer felt that the Unit should have access to a Clerical Assistant to enable the Engineer to concentrate upon maintenance activities.

#### *Recommendations*

4.15.10 *Provided the volume of stock turnover justifies such a system, inventory control should be improved through the introduction of a perpetual inventory system incorporating the use of stock requisitions for each job.*

4.15.11 *A minor works schedule and a cyclical maintenance program need to be developed in order to prioritise and schedule workloads, and to order stocks in advance of requirements. Jobs in progress should be periodically reviewed to identify and rectify undue delays.*

4.15.12 *The use of administrative support staff, possibly on a part time basis, needs to be examined in order to assist the Unit in meeting its priorities.*

## 4.16 Furniture and equipment

### *Background*

4.16.1 In January 1985, the Joint House Committee employed the former Public Works Department at a cost of \$8 000, to survey the furniture and fittings of Parliament House. The study was to record all items, and to make recommendations as to appropriate use, location and preservation. The following recommendations were made:

- (1) Paintings, sculptures and photographs warrant separate investigation and cataloguing.
- (2) Although a certain degree of wear and abrasion is inevitable, a number of significant items require delicate treatment in order to minimise such damage.
- (3) The repair and restoration of various individual items needs to be undertaken as soon as practical.
- (4) The location policy needs to be reassessed.
- (5) Furniture storage is inadequate and requires a complete review.
- (6) A curator be appointed to oversee the cataloguing, use, upkeep and location of all significant items, and to co-ordinate public access and viewing of the building and contents.

4.16.2 Since the study was completed there has been minimal effort taken by Parliament to implement the recommendations made by the Public Works Department, despite the historical nature and high value of much of the furniture and fittings.

### *Government initiatives on asset management*

4.16.3 The government has recently emphasised its commitment to upgrading the key area of asset management and control within the Public Sector. As part of this commitment a project has commenced within the Department of Management and Budget with the following concurrent thrusts:

- (1) Improvement in existing manual records and recording systems for physical assets.
- (2) Development of a computer based asset management system, capable of being interfaced with major accounting systems in use within the budget sector.
- (3) The progressive preparation and issue of accounting policy papers covering each of the major classes of assets. Issues addressed would include policies on asset revaluations, insurance, recording requirements, depreciation, etc.

4.16.4 The Treasurer's intention is that all agencies will have completed a revaluation of physical assets (including furniture and equipment) by 30 June 1989 for inclusion of values in financial statements. With this intention in mind, action needs to commence as soon as possible to progressively identify, record and value all furniture and equipment within Parliament House.

### *Administration*

4.16.5 The 5 Permanent Heads of the Parliamentary departments are responsible for the furniture and fittings located within each department. However, there is no overall policy for the acquisition, custody, disposal, location and upkeep of such items. The value, both financial and historical, of the furniture and fittings of Parliament House warrants the development of clear and co-ordinated policies as to treatment and use.

4.16.6 It was noted by audit that although certain departments within Parliament undertake annual stocktakes of furniture and equipment, inventory listings compiled were not reconciled to the former Public Works Department's inventory compiled as part of the survey in 1985, to ascertain if any items were missing, or records were incomplete.

4.16.7 Audit observed that various items of furniture surplus to immediate requirements were stored in the basement and in the corridors of Parliament House. While certain items of a valuable nature had the potential for restoration and use within the building, most of the furniture could have been disposed of by auction, or through the Public Works Department's store at Port Melbourne. This aspect is also important in view of the shortage of storage areas within Parliament House.

### *Office furniture and equipment in Electorate Offices*

4.16.8 A listing of furniture and equipment located within the various electorate offices is maintained by the Property Officer attached to the Joint House Committee. This listing however, does not record asset values, nor are items uniquely identified through the assignment of an asset reference number to each item.

4.16.9 In addition to the above listing, items purchased as a result of the additional allocation for electorate office support are recorded on a separate listing by the Budget Officer. Audit considers that this action is of limited value as compared to the Property Officer being responsible for maintenance of a recording system for all assets.

4.16.10 It was also established that, despite the often substantial value of furniture and equipment in electorate offices, there has been no direction as to the maintenance of subsidiary inventories at these locations. Accordingly, overall control over these assets is considered to be poor due to:

- (1) A general lack of inventory records at individual locations, a factor which also creates difficulty in accounting for furniture relocated as a result of offices being vacated.
- (2) Regular stocktakes are not conducted, and as a consequence discrepancies may not be brought to the attention of the Property Officer.
- (3) Assets are not uniquely identified, which creates a possibility that inferior items could be substituted for the original purchase.
- (4) The accuracy of the listings maintained by the Budget Officer and Property Officer cannot be independently verified from Electorate Office records.

### *Recommendations*

4.16.11 Consideration be given to:

- (1) *Appropriate action being taken on recommendations made by the Public Works Department.*

- (2) *Seeking guidance from the Department of Management and Budget as to the mechanism available for upgrading asset management.*
- (3) *Developing policy guidelines on asset management for issue to staff.*

4.16.12 *Action be taken to ensure that stocktakes are conducted annually in all departments, and that any discrepancies are investigated and brought to the attention of the Presiding Officers.*

4.16.13 *A survey be undertaken of all furniture surplus to immediate requirements with a view to either restoration, relocation, temporary storage pending relocation, or disposal through auction or tender.*

#### **4.17 Public access and awareness**

4.17.1 The former Public Works Department's Heritage Access Program outlined in the publication "Victoria the Next Decade" proposes to utilise Victorian public buildings of historical and architectural significance for tourism purposes. Parliament House is ideally suited for this activity which is expected to commence in mid 1988. The Heritage Access Program anticipates cost recovery through the possible collection of entry fees, and sale of publications.

4.17.2 Parliament already undertakes certain activities to increase public awareness of Parliament House and Parliamentary functions. These activities include the conduct of guided tours, the free issue or sale of brochures and publications, and the provision of information to the public.

4.17.3 As public access and awareness is not recognised as a program of Parliament, this activity incurs expenditure without any assessment as to what has been achieved in terms of effectiveness or whether alternative strategies should be developed.

##### *Recommendations*

4.17.4 *Prior to the public access program commencing, it is recommended that an Education Officer be appointed as being responsible for such an activity. Duties would include the development of objectives and strategies relating to public information and awareness.*

#### **4.18 Declaration of interests**

##### *Background*

4.18.1 Circular No. 84/3, issued on 16 February 1984 by the Premier states:

"The Government has accordingly determined that a declaration of interests will henceforth be required from:

- (1) Heads of departments and agencies;
- (2) Their immediate deputies and heads of divisions or equivalent administrative units within organisations (Ministers to have a discretion in respect of small statutory bodies);
- (3) Full-time Crown appointees;
- (4) Ministerial advisers;

- (5) Any officer, employee or appointee holding a financial delegation in excess of \$5 000 (this figure may be varied for certain organisations by agreement between the relevant Minister and the Premier); and
- (6) Any other officer, employee or appointee occupying a position assessed by the Minister as warranting a declaration on account of its policy, financial, contractual or other responsibilities giving rise to a potential conflict of interest."

4.18.2 In view of the sensitivity of the Parliamentary environment, it is essential that officers do not engage in any outside interests or activities that could be construed as being of a conflicting nature with parliamentary duties and obligations.

#### *Recommendations*

*4.18.3 Consideration be given to requiring key personnel to lodge declarations of interests in a similar manner to the provisions of the Premier's circular.*