

VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2006–07

Melbourne — 20 June 2006

Members

Mr W. R. Baxter

Ms C. M. Campbell

Mr R. W. Clark

Mr B. Forwood

Ms D. L. Green

Mr J. Merlino

Mr G. K. Rich-Phillips

Ms G. D. Romanes

Mr A. Somyurek

Chair: Ms C. M. Campbell

Deputy Chair: Mr B. Forwood

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms M. Cornwell

Witnesses

Mrs J. Maddigan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly;

Ms M. Gould, President of the Legislative Council;

Dr S. O’Kane, secretary, department of parliamentary services;

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

Mr W. Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings on the 2006–7 budget estimates for the parliamentary departments. I welcome Ms Monica Gould, President of the Legislative Council; Mrs Judy Maddigan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; Dr Stephen O’Kane, secretary, department of parliamentary services; Mr Ray Purdey, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; Mr Wayne Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council; departmental officers, members of the public and media.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded, and witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript by email for verification. You have two working days to verify that. Before I call on the presiding officers to give a brief presentation on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the parliamentary departments, I ask that all mobile phones please be turned off. I turn it over to the presiding officers for a maximum of 10 minutes for a presentation.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Thank you very much, Chair, and hello to all members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. We are pleased to be able to appear before you again this year and tell you all the exciting things we did last year and all the exciting things we hope we will be doing in the year to come. I will quickly go through the overview, which you should have copies of, I believe.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Slides shown.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Firstly, as you know, the Parliament is in three departments: the departments of the Legislative Council, the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Services, plus of course the parliamentary investigative committees, some of which report to the Legislative Assembly and some of which report to the Legislative Council.

We have put in there the 2006-07 budget. We have also put in last year’s for you, the estimated actual, just for you to get a bit of a comparison between the two. You will see that there is not a huge difference. Obviously this year, being an election year, is a bit different for Parliament in that our Parliament vanishes in October and presumably will not come back until some time later. The operations for the Parliament in election years are slightly different to what they normally are, and obviously parliamentary committees are different in that they do not sit right up to December.

Of course it is a bit of unknown territory for the parliamentary committees for the next Parliament. It really depends a bit on the upper house — what the configuration is there and what sort of upper house committees might be incorporated. There is a bit of a mystery ahead of us, to find out what happens with the election and how that might affect the way the Parliament operates next year.

Some of the challenges for us — I have really launched into that already, have I not? — are the closure of the 55th Parliament and the opening of the 56th; the co-location of the investigative committees and the Department of Parliamentary Services to 55 St Andrews Place — that should be a great relief to the poor, old staff in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee who must be sick to death of driving their trolleys of papers from one end of Spring Street to the other. I am sure that will be warmly welcomed by them — and the continuation of the Parliament Heritage Asset Management Strategy, which was first funded in the budget last year; and the continuing information technology upgrades that we are working on and we can tell you more about later, if you wish.

I will go back to 2005–06 and the things we have been doing. The regional sittings, in which you all participated, were in November last year. Since November last year we have been running the 150th anniversary celebrations, particularly with our travelling exhibition Bills, Bells and Ballots. So far we have been to Castlemaine, Portland, Ararat, Mildura, Warracknabeal and Shepparton. We are currently in Queen’s Hall and after that we go to Wodonga, Ascot Vale — the showgrounds, of course — Bairnsdale and Morwell.

The main building works we have been doing, as you are also well aware, is the refurbishment of the kitchen. I think we are receiving our certificate of occupancy today for that. The guys are down there cleaning up at the moment so it will be ready to go by the time you all resume for the next parliamentary sitting weeks. We are pleased with that. I mentioned earlier the establishment of the heritage asset management strategy.

Some of the things we achieved last year include the completed implementation of the new structure, which we discussed quite a lot with the PAEC last year; the implementation of the strategic risk management strategy; the replacement of electorate office printers and planning for other IT equipment replacements — of course some of that is occurring at the moment; a successful upgrade of the finance system; and an upgrade of the human resources system. They are some of the general Parliamentary Services things.

I will pass over to the President now; she will do the library and Hansard area, for which she has direct responsibility.

Ms GOULD — Thank you.. Thank you for having us here; I am sure we will be delighted to answer any of your questions in due course.

Since we last met we have appointed our new librarian, Adrian Gallagher. As a result of the survey that was conducted at the end of last financial year, there is a 94 per cent member satisfaction with the services that are provided in the library. They have done eight very extensive research publications. They have placed over 60 intern students. They have launched the Re-member database; a number of members attended that launch and are very pleased with having access to that via the Internet whereas previously it was just on the intranet. There has been the expansion of the library's pictorial collection, the provision of 34 training sessions, and that is very important for members and electorate officers, and the refurbishment of the Parliament's intranet content. They are some of the things in the library.

In Hansard over the last year there has been extensive training of all staff in the use of VAT, which is voice-activated transcription, an upgrade of computers for all the staff to accommodate that, acoustic testing in the chambers, and the development and delivery of a grammar workshop series for all Hansard staff. We all know how Hansard makes us sound better than what we actually verbalise; because of that training they are able to improve on that even more. They have met all time lines and accuracy targets. Very briefly they are some of the areas of Hansard and the library.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Could I take the first question. I want to relate it to the Heritage Asset Management Strategy.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

The CHAIR — Could you detail to us, please, the funding allocated and the breakdown of that expenditure?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes; I will make sure I give you the accurate figure. In the last year's budget we put a proposal to the government that this building be treated as a heritage asset, not just a place where the Parliament sits. We sought approval for a change in policy so that we have a continuous program of maintenance on the building to ensure that it remains at the sort of level of building works that is appropriate for a building of this high level of heritage assets.

What has happened previously is that we normally waited until we had some urgent problem and then tried to fix it as best we could. They agreed to that as a matter of principle. In last year's budget they gave three-year funding. What will happen is that as we get towards the third year we will go back and seek further funding on an ongoing basis. The money they have given us was \$1.5 million in 2005–06, \$3 million in 2006–2007 and \$4.5 million in 2007–08. We have had the building assessed by heritage architects about what they saw as some of the major problems. I know some members are well aware of them, seeing it was, I think, John McQuilten who was standing on the back balcony when a bit of stone fell off right next to him, giving him a very nasty surprise, as you would assume it would.

We have had a study that has identified for us the level of urgency of these works. You might have seen that we have started work on the south stone facade — they have just put up the supporting beams to start doing that work. The restoration of the external stone facade of the building was seen as the most urgent one. The other ones are restoration of some external stone balconies and balustrades on the outside of the building — some of those have got some problems as well; some roof waterproofing works over the library dome — there are some leaks in the dome area of the library; and some window replacement and refurbishment works on some of the windows around the building.

The process we went through was a fairly extensive one and actually identified more works than the money we have already had allocated to us. We will do part of the work as we go along each year. We have started the stone facade of the building, but I do not have here the exact amount of money we have allocated for that in this financial year. Do you have that, Stephen? If I have it, I did not see where it was.

Dr O’KANE — We do; it is on page 10.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have allocated \$899 000 for the south wall stonework. That is the work we have started on initially. Some of the other things we will be looking at will be costed as we go along on work. We did not start it right away because we wanted to get the assessment done about what was the level of concern and which ones to broach first. We were also a bit wary about doing any more building works until we had finished the kitchen, as that was a really major project for us, as well as some of the changes to the rooms for the opposition and the government associated with our security procedures and some of the requirements we needed to implement our security strategy. We have been a bit slow starting that off, but mainly because we wanted to get the majority of the kitchen work finished before we started on what is another fairly major project.

The CHAIR — If \$1.5 million was allocated in 2005–06, how much has been expended?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Not a lot of it. Most of it we have asked to be carried over because that is the work we have started doing now. That will be actually paid for in this year.

The CHAIR — So the stone facade will be roughly \$900 000, leaving \$600 000. Did you say you had paid for the stone?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, I am saying that that money has been carried over to next year because we will not be paying for the stonework obviously until it is finished.

The CHAIR — So we are expecting pretty much the \$1.5 million, you would hope, to be carried over if that is allowed by the Treasurer?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, certainly, because of the quite extensive work we had to do in investigation. It was quite a major project to go through the whole of the building and assess it all. There is quite a lot of work that needs to be done over the next 10 or 15 years.

Mr FORWOOD — On 1 February Andrew McIntosh wrote to you concerning the allegation that Craig Langdon had subleased part of his electorate office in exchange for donations. On 8 February you wrote back to say, ‘I can advise that I have arranged for those — —

The CHAIR — Excuse me just a minute, is this privileged?

Mr FORWOOD — Why?

The CHAIR — I do not know, I am just checking.

Mr FORWOOD — Of course it is not.

The CHAIR — I am checking whether correspondence between the Speaker and an MP is privileged. I am just asking, Mr Forwood.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Well, certainly — —

Mr FORWOOD — He has given it to me.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Those letters are privileged, as discussions are between parties in the Speaker’s office. I am surprised you have them. Certainly no-one has ever asked me if they are all right to be published or repeated.

Mr FORWOOD — Are you frightened of what you put here?

The CHAIR — That is not the point, Mr Forwood.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is not the question, Bill. You know what privilege is as well as I do — —

Mr FORWOOD — I do, and we will get to some issues of privilege before we are through today.

Mrs MADDIGAN — You are just being mischievous, Bill.

The CHAIR — I am just checking with the Clerk in terms of parliamentary privilege. I am just seeking clarification, because I know in the Legislative Assembly we are not to divulge communications.

Mr FORWOOD — What are you hiding?

The CHAIR — I am just checking that my understanding is correct.

Mr PURDEY — That is right. Matters that are raised with the Presiding Officer are seen to be confidential between the Presiding Officer and the member that raised the issues. Our practice is that neither party would seek to divulge that information.

Mr FORWOOD — Let me rephrase the question. You are aware, Speaker, I know, of allegations that Mr Langdon has subleased his office for thousands of dollars which has gone to the ALP. You were invited, I know, to investigate those matters. What actions did you take when the matter was drawn to your attention?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am quite happy to talk generally in terms of principle and policy about electorate office budgets and electorate offices and how the Parliament manages them. It is not appropriate for you to ask me questions — —

Mr FORWOOD — Don't you tell me what is appropriate!

The CHAIR — Excuse me. The Speaker is allowed to speak and you are not to behave that way, Mr Forwood.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am not prepared to breach what I and the Clerk consider to be matters of privilege in the Legislative Assembly. As I said, I am more than happy to answer questions broadly. These matters are a matter of privilege. I also understand from newspaper reports that these matters have been referred to the police for investigation. I am not aware that that police investigation has concluded and therefore it would be quite inappropriate for me to make any further statement on those matters at this stage.

Mr SOMYUREK — You mentioned a few times in your presentation and after — what's wrong, Bill?

The CHAIR — Just ask your question.

Mr SOMYUREK — About the kitchen works — we are used to him, it's okay.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It's all right.

Mr SOMYUREK — Just humour him.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Okay.

Mr SOMYUREK — Can you give the committee an update on the kitchen works, and in your update can you please include answers to these questions: was the kitchen update necessary? How much did it cost? What will its benefits be? What is the current level of subsidy in the dining rooms compared with other parliaments?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I think a submission has gone to the government every year for about the last 20 years for money for the upgrade of the kitchen, so I can assure you that the catering staff were exceptionally pleased when they finally got it. The kitchens were a present to us from the commonwealth government when it left here in 1927. I think to a large extent very little work had been done to them ever since. We certainly had some grave occupational health and safety concerns. I might add that that was another part of the building that was falling down, because one of our staff had a bit of the roof fall off just near them at one stage in the kitchens. There were some quite severe structural problems as well as problems relating to occupational health and safety.

We were allocated \$6 million in the budget for that work. We have not quite got the final bills, but we have certainly come in substantially under that amount. We decided that we as a Parliament did not have the capacity to run a major project of that amount. We did not have the staff to be able to do it, so we asked Major Projects Victoria, as they are experts in project management, to run it for us. They have done that, and they have done an excellent job actually. I know they have worked very closely with the catering staff to try and ensure that whatever assistance they needed has been given to them.

The benefits of it are really as part of our financial plan to try and remove the subsidy all together. The subsidy now in Parliament is down to \$50 000. The previous Speaker, Alex Andrianopoulos, started reducing the subsidy quite substantially, and it was down to \$200 000 when I took over at the beginning of this Parliament. As you know, we underwrite the cost of our parliamentary food here by having a lot of public functions here — a lot of weddings and dinners et cetera. We were restricted in the number of those we could have by the capacity of our kitchen to provide large amounts of food of a higher quality. With this upgrade, and we have had some planning done, we expect to be able to make a profit from the dining room in about two years, which, if we can manage it, will then go back into funds to support it.

We will be the only Parliament in Australia making a profit where the Parliament actually runs the food. The commonwealth Parliament has let its contract for all food at Parliament to the Hyatt — it has contracted it out. The subsidies in all other parliaments are over \$1 million. The staff here have done extremely well, considering how poor their kitchen facilities were, to get the excellent result they have. We look forward to that continuing in the future.

The CHAIR — And the aspect of time lines?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is finished now, virtually. They are just cleaning up today — they are washing down the walls. We have the certificate of occupancy. They have a couple of touch-up jobs. By the time you all come back in July the full services will be back there for you. Just to finish, we are doing some training for the staff on some of the equipment and cooking et cetera next week, and then we should be up and running.

Mr FORWOOD — Two supps. What was the total project management fee you paid to Major Projects Victoria, and why was the large kitchen taken away and replaced by two small kitchens?

Dr O’KANE — I can answer the bit about the two small kitchens. That was simply a logistics thing. When we went to get the temporary kitchen, it was already pre-booked by the Royal Australian Air Force for that time, so we substituted two smaller ones of the same size at no additional cost. I can get those figures for you if you wish. Sorry, I missed the other part— —

The CHAIR — The project management fee.

Dr O’KANE — I do not have that with me, but I can get it for you.

Mr BAXTER — Can I ask a supplementary question? Was Major Projects Victoria invited to be the project manager or did you put it out to the market?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, we invited Major Projects after I discussed it with the three major political parties in Parliament and they were agreeable to it.

Mr CLARK — You mentioned in your presentation the movement of staff from 157 Spring Street to St Andrews Place. Can you give us more detail on that, in particular is it intended that all the staff at 157 will move to St Andrews? I also understand that there is some time to run on the lease at 157. Are there any plans to backfill that, and in respect of the opposition rooms, is it proposed that they also be relocated to St Andrews or that they will continue on the fourth floor of 157?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The St Andrews building came a bit out of the blue for us, I suppose, although I did find out later that it was first proposed that we go over there — and you might remember this, Bill — by Ian Smith. Do you remember when he was the Minister for Finance?

Mr BAXTER — I do.

Mrs MADDIGAN — And then I think when he stopped being Minister for Finance, that was the end of the project. Because the Department of Justice has moved down to the Southern Cross, we certainly have had the opportunity to be able to move across there. We propose to relocate all the staff from 35 Spring Street and 157 Spring Street, which we think will be really good for the staff, apart from the fact that it is much closer certainly for the poor old committee staff. They have always been a bit isolated down at the end of the road there, so we think that would be really good for the Parliament.

In relation to the buildings they are leaving, they will revert to management by the state government. I understand they have other staff from other departments who will be taking the available spaces there, but I do not have the details of that.

In relation to the opposition rooms, there is some spare space at St Andrews Place, but I have not had a chance to talk to the opposition yet to see what its wishes are. Certainly our main priority is to try and ensure that the staff are all there before we start the 56th Parliament. So our main focus at the moment is that when we actually start, we have a subcommittee of some staff on the committees and people over the road looking at how we can best have that organised to make the most use of it for Parliament. This will be particularly good for committees, because there will be a number of committee rooms there, so there will be enough space. You will be able to have committee meetings there without wandering around. It is a great opportunity for the Parliament and should ensure that the Department of Parliamentary Services works very well together.

Mr CLARK — Roughly what is the time frame for the movement from 35 and 157?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The state government is going to do some work on that building. I think it needs things like an update on the airconditioning. It is making it an environment-improved building, so it is doing all sorts of things for energy saving. So we cannot go into that until they finish, but we hope to be in there by February next year.

Some of it, we can probably move a bit earlier, but that is our target date at this stage. We are only really very much in the early planning stage and we are only just got the funding, so we really cannot go too far ahead until we have definite approval for it. But yes, that is what we hope to do at this stage.

Mr MERLINO — Based on the presentation, I think my question is for the President. I understand that some changes have been made in the operational processes of Hansard. Could you please outline for the committee what those changes are?

Ms GOULD — As I said briefly in my overview — as a lower house member you would not necessarily appreciate this as much as an upper house member — the acoustics and such and a lack of, for a long time, enhanced sound in the Council chamber never existed before.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The loud voices?

Ms GOULD — Yes. The actual skill we required for Hansard operators to operate in the Legislative Council meant that they had actually had to use the machines. That is a dying art. There is no school anywhere in Australia that actually teaches that craft any longer, so we had to introduce a sound system to allow us to employ Hansard reporters. Technology has moved along and we also have voice-activated technology which allows for the recording of Hansard and for the reporters to go downstairs and transcribe that. That creates other problems — a soundproof room is required. If someone walks past and says something, it gets picked up on a computer and ends up on your greens or my pinks or whatever the case may be. So we have had to go through the process of reconfiguring the Hansard rooms downstairs to ensure they are soundproofed. We have been able to create two rooms, one that can hold three people and one that can hold five, which have soundproofing which prevents them from being disturbed.

The other thing is that the technology for this voice-activated equipment meant that our computers were not capable of handling that technology, so they actually had to be rebuilt. All Hansard reporters had to get new computers rebuilt to a standard which would accept that technology. As a result of that, we have been able to increase the number of Hansard reporters we have. As result of some changes which occurred in the Legislative Council with the Legislation Committee, we have been able to have reporters do that.

We have also undergone extensive grammar training, as I indicated, for all Hansard reporters. Of course, as members would appreciate, the fatigue of taking down all the things we say, retyping it, listening to it, retyping it, checking it and sending it back to us has to be managed. We have to ensure that the staff are well looked after and that fatigue management is taken into account. We are responsible as employers to ensure that the occupational health and safety standards of our staff are maintained. They are a couple of the areas that Hansard in particular has been dealing with.

One of the other things is just this room. The PAEC, as you know, has met here all the time. There is also the Legislation Committee. We have now wired this room so that the recording actually can take place downstairs, which assists in the time: so it is not recorded here, taken downstairs, clicked and dragged across to a machine and retyped. It is actually fed straight downstairs to Hansard, so that is another thing that has improved the lot and fatigue of our Hansard reporters and improved the efficiency of it.

Mr BAXTER — I would like to return to Mr Forwood's first question because I have some concerns about those issues. What is the situation if a citizen believes that an electorate office is being utilised inappropriately? If upon making a complaint the action is private correspondence between the Presiding Officer and the respective member, that does not seem to me to provide any opportunity for the citizen to be satisfied that his or her complaint has been addressed.

Mrs MADDIGAN — In relation to the citizen, I have thought that in the case of writing to the Parliament, which is perhaps different to the privilege that exists between members of Parliament and the Speaker, I would refer it to the staff for investigation.

Mr BAXTER — So you are drawing a distinction in this particular case because the originating complaint came from an MP rather than a citizen?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The situation between MPs and the way that the Parliament Speaker's office operates is different between MPs and the Speaker and is based on a number of previous decisions which can be seen in *May* and other documents on which Parliament exists. It has certainly never been — and I'm surprised Mr Forwood has letters — —

Mr FORWOOD — Take me to privileges. Feel free.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am not quite sure if you can take in upper house member to privileges in the lower house. It is an interesting procedural matter. We will have to investigate it.

The CHAIR — Can we get back to Mr Baxter's point, please, Speaker? That would be helpful.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am not quite sure if you can do that. But certainly the discussions I have had with Liberal Party and the Labor Party whenever they speak to me are never made public, nor were they made by previous speakers. It is only following a situation that has always been in this Parliament.

Mr SOMYUREK — President, I am not really familiar with the intricacies of the Legislative Council sound system, so you may have possibly answered this question in response to Mr Merlino's question. The Legislative Council sound system seems to break down a fair bit, and it is annoying. I am sure Mr Forwood will agree with me.

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, I do.

Mr SOMYUREK — I am sure he is the cause of it.

Ms GOULD — You do not really want an answer to that comment, do you?

The CHAIR — No reflections on members; we are trying to attend to the details of budget estimates as they affect Parliament. Thank you.

Mr SOMYUREK — What steps have been taken to fix the system?

Ms GOULD — Thanks, Adem. As you would be well aware — or you may not be aware, but Bill and I are well aware that the sound system was put in a number of years ago.

Mr BAXTER — And Mr Birrell and I did our best to stop it.

Ms GOULD — Yes, and I was not far behind you with respect to that in those days. But the sound system was put in place and it was never switched on. It was just used as a source for Hansard. The amplification of the microphones was not used.

Over the years things have changed in the Council chamber. One of the major things that occurred was that airconditioning was put into the Legislative Council chamber. Since the system has been turned up to enhance the volume, it has broken down on a couple of occasions. The Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly sound systems had been joined together up until about six months ago. As a result of the breakdowns that have occurred in the Council — and it is a different issue for the Assembly; I am aware of them, but it is more appropriate for the Speaker to speak about the speakers in the Assembly — we have discovered — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — You seem to be a bit tongue-tied there, Monica!

Ms GOULD — It was a good play on words, I thought.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, very good.

Ms GOULD — Because the Council kept breaking down, the only way it could get fixed and rebooted — which would take 45 minutes or more — would be to survive with a court reporting machine operator, a Hansard reporter coming in, waiting until the house rose at lunchtime or dinnertime, as the case may be, to allow it to be rebooted, because it was connected to the Assembly. And if you tried to do it whilst the Assembly was sitting, its sound system would go.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We would get very cross.

Ms GOULD — Yes, they would get very cross, very angry, and they would be having some difficulty. Work has been put in place to separate the matrix, as it is called, so there is a separate one for the Assembly, a separate one for the Council and a separate backup for each. The second-to-last time it broke down investigations took place and it was discovered that when the airconditioning was put into the Legislative Council chamber it was put on top of the cabling, which actually broke the cabling, so the cables were squashed in between the airconditioning units and the floors, and that had resulted in the damage.

The next thing that happened was the matrix system basically wore out, which happened last week or the week before. But because the systems were separated, we rose for about 6 or 7 minutes, it was rebooted because we have the backup, and we were able to start again.

As a result of that obviously we have had some concerns, and we have been successful in the budget this year to look at fixing that. We are doing all the detailed work to get a new system put in place. With the change that occurred in the Legislative Council with the extension of the balustrade around the balcony on the upper level, we did an acoustic sound testing, except that was done prior to that being completed. Initially it would have been all right except that we were required to put glass in on the inside of the railing, which will change the acoustic sound so new testing has to be done for that. Once that has been done the process of upgrading the sound system in the Legislative Council will be completed and we will be able to install the new system, which is separated from the Assembly, and prevent those irritating breaks in the sound system so Hansard can record everything we say.

Mr SOMYUREK — There might be a week or so of interruptions when we get back?

Ms GOULD — No. We have got to put out the contract; we have got to prepare all the technical work. That is done in conjunction with Hansard and IT people and to ensure the proper financial processes are put in place so that everything that gets done here is done properly and to make sure we have a system that works.

Mr MERLINO — Picking up on the President's suggestion, Speaker, are there any improvements for the speaking system in the Assembly?

Mrs MADDIGAN — You would want to know because you are in the hot spot where you are, aren't you?

Mr MERLINO — Yes, that is right. I am in the third row and it is often difficult to hear.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Oddly enough it seems to be the government side more than the opposition side that has that problem. I cannot quite work that out. The problem with our sound system is not that it breaks down, but if you to turn it to a volume that is comfortable for the people in the front row, the people up the back row cannot hear. And if you turn up the volume so that it is comfortable for the people in the back row, the people in the front row just about get blasted out of the chamber. There is also a problem with people being able to hear in the public gallery as well.

We are going through a project as well, which will not be done until we have got six weeks spare time, so it will not be done until we have finished the October sitting. The speakers are down here, and so we are working on putting them up near your ears, which probably will make it more useful, and changing the switching so that you can have it at a higher volume in the back row or a higher volume in the public gallery, but you can have a lower volume in the front there so that they do not have a problem. It is really doing some finetuning to the system to make it better so that people can hear better.

The CHAIR — Was that upgraded when the seating was upgraded?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Part of it was upgraded. The microphones — —

The CHAIR — What was the cost of that of upgrade of the non-working sound system?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, it was a different part of the upgrade that was really involved. The last upgrade was only a partial upgrade in that new microphones and speakers were put in, but all the wires and the rest of it were not changed, so this is a different upgrade.

The CHAIR — Okay, that is heartening to hear that.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That happened before I was Speaker; I do not know offhand what that cost. You would have to check back in you files.

The CHAIR — That is all right. We have not paid for an inefficient system; we have just had new mikes.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, it is a different part of the system we are looking at, just a routine improvement.

Mr FORWOOD — Speaker, I have some general questions on the use of electorate offices. Is it permitted for members of Parliament to allocate dedicated space in their electorate offices for use by outside, independent parties for extended periods of time — that is, matters of years? If so, should permission be sought by the MP and if so who from? If an MP does enter into such an arrangement and should receive funds in return, do the funds belong to the Parliament or to the member of Parliament? And finally, what action would you take if such a matter were brought to your attention?

Mrs MADDIGAN — In relation to members electorate offices, there is no capacity in the lease that they have to sublease it. There is a capacity in the lease for the Parliament to sublease it. That is put in there in case for some reason we change the position of the electorate office, but there is certainly no provision in the lease agreement we have for members to sublease it. If a member did sublease it and charged money for it, those funds would be funds belonging to the Parliament. But they are not allowed to do it; there is no provision in the lease to allow members to sublease offices.

Mr FORWOOD — I did not mention the word ‘sublease’. What I said was, ‘Is it permitted for members of Parliament to allocate dedicated space — that is, a room — in their electorate offices to an outside, independent party?’

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am not aware of any rules of the Parliament that prevent that. Are you, Stephen?

Dr O’KANE — No.

Mr FORWOOD — There are no rules that prevent it; is permission required before you do it?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Not that I am aware of.

Mr FORWOOD — Right. And if MPs receive funds for doing so, are the funds theirs?

Mrs MADDIGAN — If they receive any funds that relate to an electorate office, those funds would belong to the Parliament of Victoria.

Mr FORWOOD — Hang on.

The CHAIR — That is quite clear.

Mrs MADDIGAN — But there is no provision in the leases for anyone to be able to lease or receive funds for that sort of activity.

Mr FORWOOD — Finally, if somebody brought to your attention the sort of circumstances I have outlined where a dedicated space was used for some years and money was received for it, some thousands and thousands of dollars, what action would you take if it was brought to your attention?

Mrs MADDIGAN — If it was brought to my attention I would ask the parliamentary staff to investigate it and then would respond to the individual, depending on what those investigations were.

Mr FORWOOD — Would make a public ruling about whether that is appropriate or not?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not know, you are in a hypothetical area. It would depend on the circumstances.

Mr FORWOOD — No, I am not; I am in an actual area.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No you are not. I have understood we were discussing it generally. If you are insisting you are doing something else, then you are being less than honest with the committee.

Mr FORWOOD — Don't you talk about being less than honest!

The CHAIR — Excuse me. Mr Forwood, would you care to withdraw that kind of comment?

Mr FORWOOD — Well, I would if you asked me to, but I cannot see why you would.

The CHAIR — Would you withdraw that comment, please?

Mr FORWOOD — Certainly.

The CHAIR — Good, very good.

Ms GREEN — Speaker, last year you outlined that some of the structural changes in the management of the Parliament that had just begun. I was just wondering whether you could update the committee about that how that project is proceeding.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes. We are quite happy with the way we have been going during the year with this. The staff have put a great deal of effort into it, particularly the clerks and Stephen O'Kane from Parliamentary Services, so I will take the opportunity to thank them for all their good work. As you know, we have split the Department of Parliamentary Services. It was amalgamated and we have split it back into three units: organisation development and finance; precinct and property management; and library, communications and information technology. The reason for this was that we felt that previously the Parliament tended to operate in silos and the departments did not work very well together. We feel that this way has encouraged a stronger sense of collaboration. I guess one of the best areas to show that is the area that Monica has been talking about: cooperation between the library, IT and Hansard, where we have made some significant changes and improvement in the year. This was done to improve efficiency, not to save money like the federal system. It has been on a cost-neutral basis, so we have been able to make the changes to the organisational structure without further cost to the Parliament.

The achievements in the first year have included the establishment of the new structure, the development of a three-year business plan for the Parliament, the development of a three-year information technology strategy, the progressive implementation of a strategic risk management strategy, the completion of a range of major building projects, including electorate office refurbishments, the new parliamentary kitchens, the opposition rooms, the

Legislative Council chamber and members offices in Parliament, the finalisation of enterprise agreements with parliamentary officers and electorate officers and the establishment of a contracts and consultancy registry.

In relation to the governance structure of the Parliament, we have set up some management structures that cross those departments whereas before they did not exist. There are actually now three levels, if you like, of management inter-relations between us: there is the Parliament executive group, which is the two clerks and Stephen. They meet with Monica and myself on a regular basis. We have also the parliamentary senior management group, which comprises the deputy clerks of the Assembly and the Council and the three group directors from the Department of Parliamentary Services. We also have the parliamentary management group, which comprises managers from the Assembly, the Council and DPS. That is seen as something for training and to grow our staff as well.

These groups meet on a regular basis and consider issues on a Parliament-wide basis. We have found they have started to operate very well. We have had some excellent suggestions about improving efficiency and working together through those groups. We are fairly happy that we are getting a Parliament now which not only provides a more logical management structure for Parliament but also entrenches the independence of Parliament in that structure very well.

Ms GREEN — Last year you said there would be no job losses in the process. Has that turned out to be the case?

Mrs MADDIGAN — All except one. There was one staff member who in the end was not willing to take the jobs that were offered and who we then did an extensive training program with. It does not appear in these figures, but they just left their employ last week or the week before. That is the only one.

Ms GREEN — What is the overall cost of the restructure?

Mrs MADDIGAN — There really has not been a cost in terms of salaries et cetera. Some of the strategies themselves have involved money, like the development of the strategic risk management structure, but that would have happened regardless of what the structure was. In terms of the structure, there has not been any major cost that we have identified as going to the Parliament. In fact, we have saved some money in some areas because of the collaboration of departments in working together in some ways and sharing resources, which did not happen as much before.

Mr FORWOOD — I just want to return briefly to the matter I raised previously.

The CHAIR — Surprise, surprise!

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, surprise, surprise! You said in your previous answer that in the circumstances I outlined, if a member received funds for doing so, those funds rightly belonged to the Parliament. If, for example, a member received some sort of donation towards printing, phone calls and office supplies, would you seek for those funds to be reimbursed to the Parliament?

Mrs MADDIGAN — If there were evidence that that occurred, yes.

The CHAIR — President, I would like to take you to the *re-member* database. What is the cost of that, how many staff were involved in it and what are your KPIs for it?

Ms GOULD — The Re-member database is a database that holds information on the 1600 members of Parliament since 1856 to today. It is a project that the parliamentary library has undertaken. It was on our intranet site for some time, but now it has been launched out for the public onto the Internet. The program is used extensively by people doing research on family members, genealogists and historians. You enter the name of a member of Parliament — take Christine Campbell — and the bio details will come up. If you wanted to know about any member of Parliament who happened to be, say, the mayor of Melbourne, you would type in ‘the mayor of Melbourne’ and you would find that there were in the 1850s through to the 1890s six members of Parliament who were former mayors of Melbourne.

It is a research program that has been put online. Two books were written, and the Parliament has been able to obtain the copyright to them. We have had some difficulty with it because one of the authors had died — the one that was alive had no problem with allowing the Parliament to use it, but the family of the author who had died was

not too keen. After some discussions with the library staff to ensure it would be on the Parliament's webpage, they gave us the approval to launch it out to the public. That was done in late May, and you can pull up every member of Parliament.

The CHAIR — Do you have a cost?

Dr O'KANE — It is a bit difficult when you ask that question. We can come up with a costing, but a lot of the process was also on the basis of staff time.

The CHAIR — That is what I mean.

Dr O'KANE — There was a considerable amount of staff time. We could estimate that and come up with the final figure, if you like.

The CHAIR — No.

Dr O'KANE — People invested a lot of time and energy, and where possible we did as much as we could — —

The CHAIR — The library staff are far too overworked for them to go back and calculate how many hours they put into it. If you had that, you might like to — —

Dr O'KANE — I have got to say it was more of a labour of love, because I think people actually really quite enjoyed going through the process.

Ms GOULD — The thing was to get some of the photos by writing to family members. Most of them have a photo of the individual, and family members were delighted to be able to pull them out. It is just a great resource that is out there in the general public, not just restricted to members of Parliament, which people are interested in.

Mr BAXTER — What was the cost of raising the balustrade in the Legislative Council to meet OHS requirements, and why was it necessary to put the glass facing on it? Was that for OHS or security reasons or something else?

Ms GOULD — The reason we had to raise it is that it is 600 millimetres high and under Victorian and Australian standards it needs to be a metre high, so it needed to be raised 400 millimetres. There were a number of designs that were put to me to achieve this, of which all but the one that is in place now I rejected. There were suggestions to put glass on the inside, which would lean out in an oval shape — I do not know how to describe that for Hansard — to arch into the chamber, which I thought was inappropriate. We looked at increasing the size of the brass work on it by putting another layer of that on. The cost of that was prohibitive.

Our own engineering staff came up with the suggestion of putting on a plinth to raise it up, painting it and decorating it, and that was the suggestion that I thought was terrific and one that we ought to go ahead with, so we had the architects design that. We had Heritage Victoria approve it. The plinth that has been put in — I do not know whether you ever saw it before the decorative work that has been put on it — is designed so that you can run cables through it, so that in the future if sound systems or technology improve there is plenty of room to run stuff through it.

Heritage approved the design. Everything was going fine. When we took it to the building inspectors, they said it was all fine, except that they still need to put glass on it because people can climb up on it because the brass works is open. So we were forced to put the glass on the inside as a better protection, so that it met the occupational, health and safety standards building requirement. A lot of work has gone into it. Some of the rails had warped. They have been taken away, steamed and straightened. People had fiddled with some of the balls on it. A few months ago, one dropped down and just missed the Hansard reporter's head.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It sounds like a dangerous place to be.

Ms GOULD — It can be. There was an enormous thud, and we discovered it was a lead ball that had actually fallen down where the person operates the microphones. They have all been refitted, resoldered on and are safe and secure. We were required by law to do that because it was just too dangerous.

As a result of those works, we also undertook a structural engineering analysis of the balcony itself to ensure that it was safe to have a number of people up there. Tests were done. That has all been approved and meets the standards that are acceptable.

Mr BAXTER — What was the cost of the work?

Ms GOULD — It was \$250 000, roughly, but I can get you the exact figure.

Mr BAXTER — That is an accurate ballpark figure. I am happy with that.

Mr SOMYUREK — The important celebration of 150 years of Victorian Parliament will continue until November. A key element of that is the travelling exhibition Bills, Bells and Ballots. Could you please comment on the overall success of this exhibition.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Do you want to do that, Monica?

Ms GOULD — You can kick in, and I will supplement if necessary.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have been very pleased with the travelling exhibition. I met Bill up at Shepparton when we were there. I went through with you before the towns we have been to. It has been very well received. Our education officer and some of the attendants have had a very busy time taking school groups through. We do an assessment for school groups, which they send back to the Parliament. They have invariably been very good and enthusiastic.

Another thing we had earlier this year was the cartoon exhibition. That got quite a lot of media coverage. It certainly gave a lot of people the opportunity to see how Parliament has been portrayed over 150 years and also the opportunity to see that some issues do not go away; they keep recurring during those 150 years.

We had an inaugural lecture by Brian Costar as part of our association with Swinburne University of Technology, and a number of other actions as well. We have a petitions exhibitions starting here in September or October this year, and of course we finish with the election on 25 November, which is probably the best way to celebrate 150 years of parliamentary democracy.

We have been pleased with the response from the country towns we have had the exhibition in, although a couple of country towns have complained that they were not included on the list. It is often difficult for schools to get to Parliament, with the cost of buses and the rest of it. The exhibition has given those schools a great opportunity to have a real parliamentary experience. Parliamentary attendants have worked on it, as have other staff in Parliament. We have had a wide range of staff who have worked in it — I have worked in it, as has Ray and Stephen. Monica and Wayne have also been up there.

It has given the Parliament as a whole an opportunity to help staff those exhibitions. In a number of country towns, historical societies have also participated in doing tours. We have had quite a lot of other groups, probably more recently, such as Probus clubs and Rotary clubs which have brought their groups through as well. We are feeling happy with the process of it. Of course it will be out at the Showgrounds as part of the redeveloped show in October, so that should be an exciting time for all of us as well.

The CHAIR — I might have been distracted, but did you give the cost of it?

Mrs MADDIGAN — That was in last year's budget. I forget how much money we got from the government. I think we got \$400 000.

The CHAIR — Is that for the whole exhibition?

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is for everything.

Dr O'KANE — It was \$300 000 in 2005–06, and there is another \$140 000, which is just in my budget. That does not include the cost of the project officers. So all up it is about \$400 000, but I can get some accurate figures on that.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is for all of the things that we have been doing. I hope you are all coming to the former members' and members' function on Friday night, to which you were all invited.

Mr CLARK — I would like to raise the subject of the wireless LAN around Parliament which, as you know, has been very pioneering and very successful over many years. You may have noticed I am quite a big user of it myself. I also note that fixed high-speed cabling is being installed to many places, which is another enhancement. Nonetheless the wireless LAN is a very important tool for members when they are moving around different parts of the building.

There seem to be a number of striking areas of non-availability of the wireless network. My impression is that some of those areas of non-availability may have increased. For example, I am not sure that coverage has been restored to the downstairs dining room now the renovations are over. I also do not think there is coverage to the upstairs dining room. There is no coverage in the old ALP room, which is now the Liberals room.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The opposition rooms.

Mr CLARK — Thank you, Speaker. Yes, it will change after November; you are quite right.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It would totally inappropriate for Monica or me to comment on that.

Mr CLARK — So in the spirit of bipartisanship and consideration for those who will be occupying it post-November, do you have plans to extend or at least make sure the key areas of the Parliament do have wireless LAN?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, we are. We have just completed the third floor because there was a severe problem with cabling there for people who were having trouble with wireless LAN. It is our intention to continue that through the whole of the Parliament, as our budget allows us to do so.

Mr CLARK — Do have time lines on that?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not know if we have a final date. Most of it will be done by next year, I would think.

Dr O'KANE — We are also investigating 55 St Andrews Place, so that, where possible, we will try to tap into the resources.

Mr CLARK — The fourth floor at 157 Spring Street would be another useful location.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have not had any complaints about the fourth floor. Are they having problems with their reception there?

Mr CLARK — As far as I know, it is not available.

Ms GREEN — On the third floor?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, Robert is over the road.

Mr MERLINO — I have a couple of questions in regard to the library. Generally we had a discussion earlier about the structural changes in Parliament. Could you talk about how the changes or if those changes have assisted the library? Specifically has there been any recent developments on work taking place through the Australasian Parliamentary Libraries Association on the establishment of benchmarking protocols that will allow comparisons of library services between different jurisdictions?

Ms GOULD — With the establishment of the Department of Parliamentary Services and the section under it that covers the library, communication and information technology, under the director Charles Gentner, it has assisted the library quite significantly because the library started off doing all the IT stuff. When IT first came into Parliament, it was the library that did it. They had a lot of things in place. Then the IT came onboard. There had been differences between the two of them as to who ought to do what.

Now they work very well together. As I said, we have the new parliamentary librarian, Adrian, who started in November last year. The relationship between the library and IT has improved out of sight. As a result of that, the

library has been able to produce a lot more documents for members of Parliament, such as research papers et cetera. They have also been able to spend time developing databases and improving the parliamentary intranet site. They have been able to redesign that so it is more user-friendly. I had trouble, and I know the Speaker had trouble, trying to get information out of that.

As a result of working collaboratively with our IT group of people and the library staff — that also includes Hansard, so if you are searching for something on *Hansard*, you go to your computer and find it on *Hansard* — but the library keeps monitoring that as well and so does IT. So they have been able to work very well together, which has improved the services they provide. A cleaner who had worked in the parliamentary library for many years retired last year. The librarian's position has been re-scoped into that of assistant reference librarian, which again has assisted the library staff and the members.

One of the other things is the peak times in the library — that is, when there is demand. The library is known as the opposition rooms' library — or it was when I was in opposition; I assume it has not changed a great deal since then. The library has been able to put on a couple of temporary staff during to assist during those peak times. We put on a legal research officer, who again has been able to assist members, giving them detailed briefs. Unfortunately, she has taken ill and has had to resign, but we are interviewing and hope to have somebody to replace her in the not-too-distant future.

As you said, there is also the Australasian Parliamentary Libraries Association. We met last week. One of the matters to deal with is getting benchmark standards for parliamentary librarians. They met and have come to an agreement on an interim set of standards. Victoria seems to be doing quite well with the member database that I referred to. Queensland wants to get one the same but is not up to scratch and cannot deliver on that for its MPs; but here in Victoria we are doing quite well.

Adrian and Patrick, our assistant librarian, have assisted in the development of the benchmarks. Compared to the parliamentary library, the library you go to in your local area has completely different standards and different sources of information, so they are trying to get this benchmark across Australia. Victoria is very much involved in participating and setting the standards across Australia.

The CHAIR — So it is very early days?

Ms GOULD — Yes, it has been a long time getting all the different libraries together to agree on a set of standards. Compared to the federal Parliament, our library is much smaller.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Tasmania!

Ms GOULD — Yes, but the quality of the material that we put out is very high.

Mr FORWOOD — Speaker, last week I understand that at your request the Serjeant-at-Arms approached Andrew McIntosh to seek the return of a document. I wonder if you could outline to the committee the rationale behind what happened.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It was strange in a way, because it has been my experience in this Parliament that when people have things in their possession that do not belong to them they automatically return them to that person or give them in to the Speaker's office or the President's office, or to the staff. That is a fairly common occurrence. I must say that many members, including myself — and I have to include myself here — are fairly careless about their possessions around the Parliament.

I had a complaint that a notebook belonging to a staff member of the government was in the hands of the shadow Attorney-General and that he had not returned it, and I was asked to investigate this. I had the choice of either asking him to return it or having a police investigation. I thought the former was the better action.

Mr FORWOOD — Do you not believe that for you to act on a request from the executive is to put the interests of the executive ahead of the interests of members of Parliament, in particular Mr McIntosh?

The CHAIR — Just a minute!

Mr FORWOOD — Hang on. Mr McIntosh had this particular document. If the person whose document it was wanted it, he could have gone and seen Mr McIntosh himself. What was the necessity for the Speaker to send the Serjeant-at-Arms? Surely that is acting inappropriately.

The CHAIR — There are a number of suppositions in that question.

Mr FORWOOD — Like what?

The CHAIR — There are a number of suppositions in it.

Mr FORWOOD — No, it is a fact.

The CHAIR — And the Speaker may wish to answer what she presumes is factual.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The Speaker is responsible for security in this Parliament. I am surprised that we were asked to assist, because I would have thought that if any member who knowingly had information or booklets belonging to other people, their sense of moral and ethical standards would ensure that that was returned as a matter of course. I find it quite extraordinary that any member of Parliament — and I will speak generally here, I am not interested in going to the specific issue — I would have thought that members of Parliament would return any documents they had that did not belong to them, as I would expect of members of the public.

If the Liberal Party felt that the Labor Party had some documents that they were thinking belonged to the Liberal Party, I would be more than happy to take the same action again if necessary.

Mr FORWOOD — You do not believe it is inappropriate?

The CHAIR — Just a minute, Mr Forwood.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think it is appropriate for any members of Parliament to keep documents that do not belong to them.

Mr FORWOOD — Do you think it is appropriate for the Speaker to act on a request of the executive?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have already answered that.

The CHAIR — Thank you, and we now go to Ms Green.

Ms GREEN — I am interested whether anything has been done to improve the sight lines in the Assembly chamber.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That was raised by the Chair last year, I think, in relation to the sight lines particularly in the Assembly. At that stage we were thinking of raising the height of the floor where the members' gallery is, which would be exceptionally expensive. We have now had the opportunity to do it a different way, which would be much cheaper, but we would need about six weeks of parliamentary time, so we will not be able to do it until the end of October.

We are getting a quote at the moment — we have to get it finally approved by heritage — to lower the back of the seats in your row of the Parliament, the back bench, which covers that area of Parliament. That will be less expensive and will have the same results, so by the time we start with the 56th Parliament, no matter who is sitting on the government and the opposition sides, that should be resolved.

The CHAIR — The issue I raised last year was that unless the people who were able to avail themselves of the hoist and wheelchair access were extremely tall were unable to see. I remember passing up a note earlier in the year when I saw someone requiring a periscope to see over.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is what we are talking about, the sight lines between people in the public gallery and the Parliament.

The CHAIR — Yes, so that people who are sitting in those seats can see.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That will be resolved as well, as long as Heritage Victoria approves. If they do not, we are back to square one. We have a verbal agreement from them but I do not think we have it in writing yet.

The CHAIR — Could I suggest that if we do not have it in writing, we put a person in a wheelchair to let them see how impossible it is to participate?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We did tests, as I told you last year, with someone in a wheelchair before the work was done.

Mr BAXTER — You referred earlier to upgrades for computers et cetera for Hansard people and others around, and appropriately so. It seems to me those staff who are really at the coal face are our electorate officers. Some of our equipment, as I have often noted, is not up to speed. I do not want to personalise this, but just as an example I spoke to my electorate officer at 1.30 p.m. today. She was just shutting down the system for the fourth time today, to restart it. She was expecting someone today, and we made arrangements not to have any appointments today. When she telephoned to find out why this gentlemen had not arrived, she was informed he was in Mildura today. I am looking for an assurance to make sure that our EOs are getting properly dealt with.

Just as a minor point, have you any idea when the large boxes that housed the excess printers are going to be picked up?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We seem to be having terrible trouble getting rid of those excess printers, and I do not know. They are in everyone's way; but we are working on it. We got a date from Charles Gentner at the last House Committee meeting. I cannot recall what it was, but I think it was the end of this month.

In relation to the electorate officers, particularly the country ones, we will be having training for them on site from the installers of the new equipment. Certainly if they want further training, we are more than happy to do it for them.

Mr BAXTER — It is not so much training; it is the gear. My EO is the best one in The Nationals; the most competent and best-trained one at operating the equipment. She just has an unsatisfactory computer that becomes disconnected from the server so many times a day that she has to shut down and start again. She is on her own — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is interesting. We discussed this at the House Committee because most of the problems seem to involve upper house members. We could not quite work out why that is, because we certainly get a lot more problems. I do not think there is any doubt that the Lotus Notes software, which may have been appropriate when it was first introduced, does not fulfil all the functions that Parliament, electorate officers and members need now. If you think about it, people probably use their computers considerably more now than they did four years ago, and in lots of different ways.

A whole-of-government assessment of what is the appropriate software is being undertaken by the government at the moment, and we are waiting to find out what the results of that are, to see if in fact we should investigate changing our software. In talking to our IT staff they are firmly of the view that a lot of the problems are caused by the incapacity of Lotus Notes to do all of the functions members want, and also the bandwidth that is available for members as well. So those are two projects the Parliament will be looking at in the next financial year. I do not know why upper house members seem to have more trouble than lower house members. I suppose a lot of them are a further distance from Melbourne.

Mr CLARK — My office has been through similar problems at times.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Has it?

Ms GREEN — Mine, too.

Mr MERLINO — While we are on the subject of equipment, could I put in a plea regarding laptops. The issue with electorate offices is software, but I think it is a hardware problem with laptops in that — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have good news for you, James — —

Mr MERLINO — Could you please tell me — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have done an assessment of new laptops, and in fact I hope some of you tried them when they were in Queen's Hall.

Mr MERLINO — Yes, that was great.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Having learnt from experience with Parlynet 2 about trying to do too many things at once, the staff are ensuring that the new colour printers are all in the electorate offices and operational. As soon as that occurs we will be organising with members to get their new notebooks, and that will probably be in August. So that should make your life a bit easier. Like Lotus Notes, the notebooks were fine four years ago, but things have changed in the last four years.

The CHAIR — I am not sure which one of you is responsible for security, but in your answer to the questionnaire that was sent to the parliamentary department, costing was provided to us for security, and I will not divulge the content of your answer. What I will say is that it is obvious it has increased significantly for obvious reasons. The question I raised last year, and I raise it again this year is: why do we need PSOs, red coats and external security at the back entrance in a non-sitting week?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is odd that you should mention that because we are in the middle of doing a redesign of the back door at the moment because it is our view that we have too many staff down there. They have quite different functions in terms of what they do there, but of course it is only fairly recently that we have had the permanent security positions — since we became part of the whole of the government's security upgrade. It is actually in the wrong order at the moment, so what you should do — —

The CHAIR — Sorry, I think you might be giving me an answer to what you think I am asking. I just simply want to know why taxpayers are paying for external security scanning in the non-sitting period when it is rare that it is utilised and people are known to the parliamentary staff and the PSOs?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No. A lot of bus tours comes in the back door, because they may contain disabled people who find it easier to come in there. We obviously have a lot of schoolchildren who still come through there. A lot of opposition members — probably more than government members — have a lot of public meetings when Parliament is not sitting, so it would be — —

Mr FORWOOD — They are very dangerous people, too!

Mrs MADDIGAN — The opposition?

The CHAIR — Ignore interjections, Speaker — and you tell us that often enough!

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have not found them a problem, but you may have problems with them, Bill. So it is quite serious, and obviously if we did not have them there, there would be nothing to stop someone coming in when Parliament is not sitting and leaving something around for when Parliament is sitting. So I would have thought it would be dangerous to remove them when Parliament is not sitting. The staff are here; I would not like anything to happen to them. They are working in the building the whole time even when Parliament is not sitting. I would have thought it would be dangerous.

Ms GOULD — There are three distinct groups. There are the PSOs and their job is to secure the precinct. Then there are the AMIL people who deal with the scanner, and then there are the red coats who take messages. They are the ones who know who members are, and who members' partners and children are, so they do not get caught up going through the system.

The CHAIR — That was my point exactly. In terms of security, a security review was undertaken when there was the break-in to the chook house and various items were to be actioned. My understanding was last year that most of those were being actioned. Is everything that was on that to-do list still operational, all complete and all secure in terms of security?

Mrs MADDIGAN — All the measures we introduced are continuing. I think that covered all the things we decided to implement. I can check that for you but certainly all the things we introduced, particularly in relation to the chook house, are still operational.

The CHAIR — So the lighting that was supposed to be actioned?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, that is there.

The CHAIR — I would appreciate — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — We can give you some more information about that.

Mr FORWOOD — There is a plaque next to the new gym which says it was opened by you, Speaker, not by the President.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That's right.

Mr FORWOOD — I wonder if you could explain to the committee why there is only one name on the plaque. Why is there a plaque on a bench out near the bowling green? Will there be plaques on the renovated kitchens? What is the policy on when a plaque should go up, and how many plaques have you put up in the last three years?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Not many, I'm afraid. The policy of the Parliament is that a plaque goes up in the name of whoever is responsible for that work, in the same way that there is a plaque put up by Bruce Chamberlain, a former President, in the extension to the Legislative Council rooms because he was responsible for that. The upgrade of the gym was a project that I was responsible for and my name is on that.

We have not decided whose name might go on the plaque in the kitchen. I cannot think of any other plaques. The plaque on the bench is to the only serving member of this Parliament who died while on active service. I presume that is the one you are referring to?

Mr FORWOOD — I am not talking plaques for them, I am talking about plaques for you.

Mrs MADDIGAN — There is not a plaque on a seat for me. I am glad to say I have not died on active service so far! I cannot remember how many years ago that plaque was put on. I am not quite sure if I was even the Speaker then. Interestingly enough, we have only ever had one serving member who died on active service. In fact, again Bruce Chamberlain had a memorial service for that person about 10 years ago. We thought that was a worthwhile thing. We were approached by the family who asked if we would be prepared to do it. That is what that plaque is. But if I can think of a good excuse to put a plaque on a chair, I will be more than happy to do it, but offhand I cannot think of any reason why I would put plaque on a chair.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr SOMYUREK — I am just looking at the budget papers as I speak for the expected costs of relocating offices — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Do you mean to 55 St Andrews Place?

Mr SOMYUREK — No, I should clarify that. As a result of the election.

Mrs MADDIGAN — After the election.

Mr SOMYUREK — I presume there will be more costs than — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — We do not really know. It depends on who gets elected as to what the level of costs would be.

Mr SOMYUREK — Right. That is why I was going to ask you — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — It was fairly difficult to estimate because we wanted to ensure that we had some funding there for the change of electorate offices that we wanted to. At the last election we had a significant change because there was a huge changeover in members so I think that cost us about \$2 million. But we thought this year, with the uncertainty in the upper house elections and how they might work out, we have put in \$3 million for it but I guess to be certain, it is pretty much a notional thing for us at the moment, and we really will not know to what extent that funding will be required until we get the results of the upper house elections.

We have explained all that in terms of putting forward our application for funding. It may be that it may be more expensive; if it is we will have to either find our own money or seek more money from the government, but we really do not know the answer to that at the moment.

Mr SOMYUREK — I guess the \$3 million is based on various scenarios?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is based on how much we spent last time on relocating electorate offices, of which there were about 40, I think, which was pretty much the amount of our new members.

We have been having a process of changing the leases on electorate offices so that our leases expire within six months after the date of the election. I guess one of the big benefits for the Parliament in terms of a fixed term election is that we can actually determine those things much better because it then gives new members the opportunity to stay where they are, or in fact to move somewhere else, where in previous years sometimes they have had to sit somewhere they do not want to for two years until the lease runs out.

We will continue on, I do not think we are quite finished on that — it depends on when the leases were signed when we found out when the date of the election was. It does mean there will be more capacity for members in the future to be able to move if they need to. As I said, we really do not know what will happen. It depends on how — which is outside our hands — and to a certain extent I do not know if parties are going to ask members to sit in different places according to how those election results work out, but with 11 seats in the upper house, I presume upper house members will want to have an office somewhere within cooee of where they live, so we are really not quite sure what sort of cost we will be involved in until we find out who wins.

Mr SOMYUREK — Speaker, just to follow up on that, previously Joint Services did not encourage members to share offices but now with the reworking of the upper house, there will be plenty of scope there to share offices. Would that change?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The Parliament does not mind members sharing offices if it is done in a way that you can close half of it and keep the other one open. The Parliament does not have anything against members sharing offices per se. The only thing that we had had and with these leases it should make it easier, in some cases we do not want to do a whole lot of changes to offices to allow two members to share and then if one gets defeated in four years time, we are stuck with this office that does not really suit us.

In the cases where we have allowed members to share offices, we have done it in a way whereby you can very easily close off half that office so that if one member is successful and the other is unsuccessful, you can still operate and you are not stuck with an office that no-one wants. I would have thought there is no reason why that cannot continue with upper house members. It is just that we have to be able to configure the electorate office in a way whereby we can close off half of it and give it back to the landlord if necessary.

Mr SOMYUREK — Just very quickly, I apologise for this. If you have got the figures on hand, roughly how much does it cost to fit out an office?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have figures of standards that we will not spend any more on and it varies a great deal to what the member wants and where the office is. Obviously in some areas it is much cheaper to get offices changed than in others. I am not quite sure that we make particular — —

Dr O’KANE — As the Speaker says, it does vary very significantly between areas because of the supply of building and the type of rents available in that area, the topography of the area and so on, and so there is no hard and fast rule. We have some guidelines relating to that.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We normally do not make that public because we normally fit it out to what the member wants but we do not want everyone to think, ‘Well, this is the level and therefore we need to spend every cent up to that level’. If we can encourage you to take something that costs us less and you are happy with it, we try to do that.

Mr CLARK — I want to refer generally to the issue of works projects that the Parliament has had undertaken and the difficulties that have been experienced. Parliament seems to have a long history of those, I think back to the lighting system in the cellars on the lowest level where the slow warming lights seem to take forever to glow, which I think was done back in the 1970s.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It was before my time, I think!

Mr CLARK — We have had problems with the airconditioning system under your predecessor though, which I certainly find unworkable and I think a lot of others do too. We have had the mention of the sound system today. I do not know if it is bad luck or something worse as to why we end up with these problems around Parliament.

I suppose my question is: what systems do we have in place to try to make sure we do get value for money out of the tenders and contractors we engage; and secondly, are there any projects in respect of which you are currently pursuing redress for defective workmanship or other breach of contract problems, for example with the sound system and the difficulties that were mentioned earlier?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I cannot really comment on the projects, some of them were before my time, I am afraid. But certainly we have a number of strategies in place to try to ensure that projects are managed in an efficient and satisfactory way. We mentioned here the introduction of the risk management strategy which is now in place and which we apply to projects.

We have also changed the way that projects are undertaken so that business cases do have to be fully explained and that people are specifically responsible for parts of that project. I think some of that management in the past was not as tight as perhaps we would expect it to be. The other thing is I think the Parliament has undertaken projects for which it does not — we are a very small staff, we do not have huge expertise in building works and that is why we invited Major Projects to come and manage the kitchen for us because we were not confident that we would be able to manage it ourselves because that is not our core job.

I would expect that if we have major projects in the future that we will be getting project managers to do that for us. So we have introduced a number of measures. If you want more information, Stephen can go through for you some of the processes that we have put in place now and the way that it has been operating.

Mr CLARK — Just on that second aspect, is there any redress that you are pursuing presently in respect of defective or substandard work or other breaches by contractors?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No. The only things, I guess, we have completed are the opposition rooms over the road, and we have not had any problems with that; the opposition leader leaving his room, we have not had any trouble with that; the gym is fine; and the kitchen, when we get the certificate, we do not have any problems with that.

Mr CLARK — The sound system problems that the President mentioned?

Ms GOULD — No. The sound system was put in seven years ago and so we need to improve the technology. We are going to do that and we will do it in a proper measured manner and ensure the proper procedures are put in place and accessibility to the actual computers as well. We discovered it was shoved under the back bench — under Mr Forwood's seat, actually.

Mr FORWOOD — Good spot for it.

Ms GOULD — As part of the computers there, so no, there is nothing to pursue.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I thought that was part of your ejector seat mechanism.

Ms GOULD — It gets used regularly!

Mr FORWOOD — I am getting thrown out a lot these days.

Ms GOULD — You certainly do.

The CHAIR — Now we will move to Mr Baxter's question, in the interests of time, Mr Baxter?

Mr BAXTER — This will be a yes or no answer. Was the Parliament consulted before the tram stop in Spring Street outside the building was abolished?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No. We asked them to fix the tram lines so they would not make that awful noise, but no, I am not aware that we were.

Mr BAXTER — Mary Martin and I are very distressed about it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I would be annoyed, too, if I were you. I was just wondering if inadvertently we did encourage them to do that by complaining loudly and at length about the noise of the tram coming around the corner, but if we did, it certainly was an inadvertent one. No, we were not consulted about it.

Mr BAXTER — Not like the old days — they would not have done it without consulting Parliament 20 years ago.

Mrs MADDIGAN — These are privatised companies, Bill, they are not public servants anymore.

The CHAIR — That concludes consideration of the budget estimates for parliamentary departments, thank you to the presiding officers and departmental officers for their attendance. There are a couple of items that we will be forwarding to you after today's hearing. The transcript will be emailed to you once Hansard has completed it and you have got two working days to make any corrections required. Thank you very much, and good afternoon.

Ms GOULD — And I have enjoyed my last PAEC!

Committee adjourned.