

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into 2004–05 budget estimates

Melbourne – 17 June 2004

Members

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Ms M. Gould, President of the Legislative Council;
Mrs J. Maddigan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly;
Mr R. Purdey, Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly;
Mr W. Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council;
Dr S. O’Kane, secretary, department of parliamentary services;
Mr S. Aird, director, corporate services;
Mr H. Barr, manager, finance;
Mr G. Spurr, director, infrastructure services;
Mr G. Inwood, manager, information technology Joint Services Department; and
Ms G. Dunston, Parliamentary Librarian, Department of the Parliamentary Library; and
Ms C. Williams, Editor of Debates, Department of Parliamentary Debates.

The CHAIR — Welcome! I declare open the PAEC hearing on the 2004-05 estimates for the presiding officers. I welcome the Honourable Monica Gould, President of the Legislative Council; the Honourable Judy Maddigan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; Dr Stephen O’Kane, secretary of the 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, Mr Stephen Aird, director of corporate services, Mr Hilton Barr, manager finance; Mr Graeme Spurr, director, infrastructure services from the Joint Services Department; Ms Gail Dunston, parliamentarian librarian; and Ms Carolyn Williams, editor of debates; and departmental officers and members of the public and media.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in the committee proceedings. 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 will not be protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded, and witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript early next week.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Thank you very much, Christine. We are pleased to be here again with you to go through what Parliament achieved last year and what we hope to achieve this year. I should introduce to you Stephen O’Kane, secretary of the department of parliamentary services, who has been with us only a short time.

You have some copies of the slides. Before we start on them I will give you a brief overview. I will also clarify a couple of points that were made recently in some of the appropriation speeches by members in relation to the parliamentary appropriation bill. When we have been through the slide presentation Monica will give a brief overview of Hansard and the library. If you want to interrupt at any stage, if it is all right with the Chair, it is fine with us.

The thing that we have been concentrating on in the last year, and we will concentrate on again in the next year, is the One Parliament process, which has been the process of looking at the organisation of the Parliament. We have taken our lead mainly from the commonwealth Parliament. The Parliamentary Service Commissioner reviewed the commonwealth Parliament a couple of years ago and set up a departmental structure for the commonwealth Parliament with a permanent head and the parliamentary support services reporting to that person. That has already been instituted in the commonwealth and in Western Australia. Our structure comes along that line. Interestingly enough it was when Bill was Chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in 1997 that the PAEC recommended that structure for Parliament. It might have taken us a little while, but we finally got there, Bill. You should be pleased.

Also there is the Auditor-General. I am sure you have read the IT report in which he made some more general comments about the structure of the Parliament which supported that as well. What are you smiling at?

The CHAIR — I would say that the Auditor-General’s report on our IT services is probably the most-read Auditor-General’s report around the precincts.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It was very good. I was going to do it later, but I have to thank the Auditor-General and his staff, and our staff in the IT unit. They worked together very well. The recommendations from the Auditor-General’s report have been very useful for Parliament and are being used as a model for us to continue our changes. We are very grateful for the work done last year.

The One Parliament project means that the two chambers maintain their constitutional independence, as they always should, and that the rest of the parliamentary services report to Stephen O’Kane. Stephen is the first step in that process, and as we go along we will be looking at further changes to the structure of the Parliament that might make it more efficient. As yet I do not know what those will be; we are still working on that. The senior managers, Monica and I, will be having training this afternoon and tomorrow that will look at some of those issues.

What I have said to staff is that there will be no job losses through Parliament. I do not think there will be major changes, but there might be slight changes in terms of realignment of positions in the organisation — for example, one change we have already discussed, although a formal decision has not been made yet, concerns the training officer, who is hanging over there in the middle of nowhere. It would seem more logical that the training officer be part of the human resources function in Parliament, so there might be some aligning of positions around the Parliament that more sensibly fit in with areas of the Parliament that directly link to their work.

One of the things that we discussed here at length last year was the IT situation. As all of you will be aware, the report on Parlynet 2 causes some concern. The IT section has done exceptionally well this year in working within the limits of that system. The product we have is never going to achieve all the things that members may wish it to achieve, or indeed all the things that staff may wish it to achieve, but in terms of making sure that the system we have works as efficiently as possible the IT staff have been extremely good. In fact they have done so well that the help desk is now regarded as a model. If you have not been across the road and had a look at the set-up for the help desk, do go across. Grant or John and the staff would be delighted to show it to you, or Graeme, who is over there as well.

In fact we are now at a stage which, considering where we were last year, is quite astonishing. We have people from private industry and government coming to have a look at the way we do it to get some ideas. John Lovell has been invited to address a conference in America in October explaining the process that has been incorporating in Parliament House. Certainly response times and other things which were of real concern to us last year have been dramatically changed, so I congratulate the IT staff on that.

The other thing that has supported the improvement in IT has been the re-establishment, if you like, of the IT subcommittee of the House Committee. That has been under the chairmanship of Michael Leighton. It has been working extremely well and very closely with the IT subcommittee and is proving very useful to the Parliament, both for the staff of the Parliament and members as well. It has been given much stronger input from parliamentary members. There is still a weakness I see, and which Michael is addressing, but I am not quite sure he is there yet, as far as members go anyway. It is that the people who probably use the IT system most are the electorate officers, so we want to get some permanent representatives from the electorate officers as part of that process as well. Most officers probably know better than members what is good for them in terms of operating the system and what improvements they would like to see. That is an ongoing process and will continue to improve in the future.

Just a few comments I want to comment on briefly — I know you do not want us to take up too much time, to leave plenty of time for questions — in relation to the parliamentary appropriation bill. Robert, perhaps I could address a couple of things which you raised in debate. Some of the things you referred to as suggested performance measures we have some problems with, because they are actually performance measures for MPs and we really do not have a role to do performance measures on MPs. I suppose in the end the electorate does that, but things about how many pages in *Hansard*, et cetera, are really in the members' hands. We only look at performance measures of the things the parliamentary staff can achieve. Parliamentary performance measures are an ongoing thing, and I think there needs to be continual change in those so we can improve them and regularly report in a way which is more meaningful to people so it is more a qualitative process than a quantitative process. As we look at how the Parliament will operate in the future I would expect there to be quite substantial changes in the way we do performance measures.

Robert, you also referred to the wording of government output measures in part of your speech. We have checked back and found that that term has been used for some time, but I agree that it is wrong and we will ask the Department of Treasury and Finance to change that to parliamentary output measures which is a more correct explanation of what it is. You also raised the discrepancy in the figures between the \$118.9 million and the \$121.5 million. That is a carryover from funds that have been included in that second figure that we will be using later this year. So that is mainly that.

Bill, you also referred to the appointment of Stephen O'Kane. You had some criticism about that in your speech. Stephen has in fact been appointed in the appropriate way under the Parliamentary Officers Act. During that process the house committee was informed and it was also informed during that time who Stephen was when he was appointed and in fact members were asked to report back to their party rooms which obviously did not happen in your party room. In addition prior to Stephen's coming the party leaders were all invited to spend some time with him and have an appointment with him in his first week if they wished to, to discuss matters with him. That was only taken up by the National Party leader.

You did say in your speech, which concerned me a bit, Bill, that you thought politicians should be consulted about appointments in Parliament. I have to say I disagree with you strongly. I think it is really important that the Parliament is seen to be quite independent from political parties whether they are government, opposition or otherwise, so I would be concerned about members of Parliament being in any way involved with appointments of people to the parliamentary service.

Bill, you also referred to concerns about the change in the three-line budget which was put before in the budget papers. That was a suggestion from Department of Treasury and Finance and does reflect the new structure. However, the budget is still done in exactly the same way. In the briefing you would have been given more figures, but I see no reason why details cannot be made available in an informal way in the briefings to staff as we go on, once they are determined, so we will do that.

Bill, in relation to your concerns about the independence of the Council and I guess both the library and Hansard, the budget process internally how it is done here is exactly the same as it has always been done and will continue to be that way. Part of the structure and the business plan which we sent to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — I do not know if you have read that — has a very strong stress on the independence of the two houses which is absolutely essential to the Parliament to operate in a fair and open manner.

In relation to the budgets for the library and Hansard and the other parliamentary departments, they tend to be on a standard formula and it tends to be the same the next year. I cannot see any reason why that may change, but I do not know what changes may occur in the future so there is no guarantee that it is always going to be the same. But it is exactly the same process as has always been done, so that same sort of flexibility is no different now than what it always has been. In some ways, while you were concerned about the Speaker having more authority, I think the new structure in fact does depoliticise the process to a certain extent, because having a secretary in charge of parliamentary services reporting to both the Speaker and the President does in fact take them one step back from the day-to-day operations of the Parliament, which I think is a healthy thing. Having the person report to those two people jointly does, I think, give the upper house more of a say in the structure and the departments across Parliament anyway, so I would expect that to be a much fairer way than the old system which was fairly arbitrary and as far as I can see there has been no reason why more than half the department reported to the Speaker and a much smaller part reported to the President. There does not seem to have been any historical logic in that.

Another matter was raised—I do not think by one of you; it might have been Philip Davis — in relation to security at Parliament House. He was concerned that at the weekends when we have functions, when we are hiring the Parliament out as part of our fundraising activities, the security system is not there. And that is true. We are not funded for a 24/7 security system. The main reason for a security system is not only to protect the building but more particularly to protect the members of Parliament so obviously our focus is on ensuring that the security is here when members of Parliament are here, which is why our focus is during the daytime when members are likely to be in the house, and obviously when the two houses are sitting.

In relation to the security system, just yesterday a further scanner was set up at the back door, so we have now implemented the two main accesses to the Parliament. People who thought they might be able to escape the front door and come around the back door will find that they still have to go through security. It has been quite surprising the number of scissors and knives that we have found in bags, although most of them are things people tend to carry with them rather than having any — —

We have not found anyone who as far as we know was trying to attack anyone. It is just these are the sorts of strange things that people carry in their handbags and bags. They were just some of the points. If I have missed any, please say so.

The CHAIR — Does that pretty well sum up your initial presentation?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, it does. We are just going into the slides now, if you have them there.

The CHAIR — Is there anything in addition to what has been circulated? We normally allow 10 minutes for any comments.

Mrs MADDIGAN — All right. If you do not want us to go through that, that is fine.

The CHAIR — If there is anything in particular that should be added verbally to supplement what has been documented — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, that is fine.

The CHAIR — This is very clear. Whoever has prepared that, thank you very much.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Perhaps Monica could just do the bit on the library and Hansard first before we move on.

Ms GOULD — I will do it in 2 minutes, Christine. I just want to let the committee be aware of the activities that the library and Hansard have been doing in the last 12 months. With Hansard in particular, you will appreciate the need to ensure that our sound system works continuously while Parliament is sitting — and committees — to record the proceedings. Carolyn Williams, the editor of debates, has been carrying out functions to ensure that the system is in place. During the year there has been a lot of priority put on ensuring that everything is in place with the reconfiguration of the sound system. She also ensures that there are sufficient supplies available if things break down. Bill Forwood is aware that if you fiddle with microphones they break, and we always have them in stock to ensure — —

Mr FORWOOD — I would not want people to think that I have broken mine.

Ms GOULD — We have stock to ensure that they are replaced in a timely manner.

As upper house members would appreciate, in the last year or so the number of days the upper house has sat has increased substantially. That has put a greater drain on Hansard and it has employed two more staff. There is the possibility of increasing that, subject to space and availability. An external review has been done of the work practices and that has brought great benefits and improved the quality of service provided to members as a result of that.

In the library, as members would be aware, the portfolio plus program has been put in place. That keeps members up to date by providing a snapshot of current issues. I know a lot of members take advantage of that. They have improved the ParlyWeb searching of the whole of the intranet by putting some programs together so you can search a variety of databases simultaneously. More often than not that saves electorate officers time in searching for things. The library and Hansard have been working together to integrate the searching of *Hansard*. The search engine which existed in the library was different to the program used in Hansard and you could get two different things. A lot of work was done in merging them together so members can search by speeches, names et cetera. They have been working hard on that to integrate it and make it more efficient for members and in turn save a lot of search hours. There are a lot of other things they have been doing but that is just an overview for you — in less than 2 minutes.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The only other page you might look at is page 10, which has our response to the recommendations from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee last year. I do not know if there is anything you want to cover in that.

Mr FORWOOD — Page 10?

Mrs MADDIGAN — You do not have the same pages as me — it is the second-last one. Mine are all on separate pages while yours are on the same page. Can you read that?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not know if you want to talk about the benchmarking problem we have or not.

The CHAIR — Thank you for your attention to reporting on the PAEC recommendations. To go to the first question, could you explain to the committee the responsibilities of the secretary of parliamentary services. In doing that, who does the secretary report to? I understood it was to the two presiding officers; I just want to have that clarified. What are the key responsibilities and reporting structures of the following staff in the department of parliamentary services: my particular interest is the library — as I said last year, I am a great supporter of the library and the library staff; the editor of debates; and the director of corporate services? What impact will the new reporting structure have on the important work done by the library and Hansard?

Mrs MADDIGAN — You have left one of the directors out — the director of infrastructure. The new set-up is so that all those services will support the chambers under the same umbrella — they all report to Stephen O’Kane and he reports to Monica and myself. His job is to coordinate those managers and have a more overall focus on Parliament. Some of the problems we have identified in the Parliament — and this came out interestingly enough through some training we did last year at three different levels throughout the Parliament: the senior

managers, the middle managers and the rest of the staff — are a number of concerns about lines of control, about the departments having a silo mentality and a lack of coordination through the Parliament which many staff identified as being fairly inefficient. Wayne and Ray went and had a look at the Western Australian and commonwealth situations to see how they work in terms of managing those departments and managing the Parliament better and we came to the conclusion that this was the best structure to have. Stephen's role is fairly clear, I think, in that he is there to manage the services which provide support to the two chambers.

In terms of how the library and Hansard operate, it is no different in some ways to the way they operated before except that they report to Stephen rather than directly to the President and the Speaker. One of the reasons we thought that was necessary is we found that the Speaker and the President — and this had happened in the past as well — were actually getting involved in the day-to-day running of the Parliament and we thought that was inappropriate, that in our view the presiding officers are there to oversight the policy directions for the Parliament and provide a link between the members and the parliamentary administration and they should not be involved in a day-to-day way in the running of the parliamentary debates — that should be for the parliamentary officers. Without Stephen being there or without there being a person in that position there was a lack in the organisational structure. We think this will work really well.

The CHAIR — Just to cut through, their authority is the same?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

The CHAIR — No variation?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No.

The CHAIR — Do you have an organisational chart?

Mr FORWOOD — Here.

The CHAIR — Infrastructure services, the person who heads that is — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Graeme Spurr. The positions are all the same as they were before.

The CHAIR — Do we have somebody here from what I would call the hands-on team — the building team — around the Parliament? Are they in attendance here today?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No. They are not departmental heads so it would not be normal for them to attend.

The CHAIR — Not everybody here in the public gallery is a departmental head. Thank you very much

Mr FORWOOD — Speaker, you and I obviously disagree about many aspects of the process that has taken place. I do not have in front of me what I said in my speech — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do.

Mr FORWOOD — I think I said words to the effect of I believe members of Parliament should be informed, if not consulted. What I was talking about at the time was, my memory tells me, the process from the very beginning. You will remember that last year I was highly critical of the fact that the One Parliament structure had been mentioned briefly at the end of one House Committee meeting and no-one had any opportunity to discuss it at that stage. I think the appointment of Stephen O'Kane was symptomatic of the process the whole way through. You and I are obviously not going to agree about this, but it has happened and I am looking now to two things: in particular how it is going to operate in the future. I take some comfort but not a lot from what you have said today; but also I am looking to how the Parliament can best operate under the new structure.

The issue I want to start with though is if you look at attachment 2 of the One Parliament document it talks about reviewing legislation required to establish the new structure. My understanding is the new structure is in place, it has been budgeted in that way and yet we are about to have, or need to have, legislative change to implement it. I put it to you that we have the cart before the horse. If you look at the Parliamentary Officers Act, and I have a copy here, it is quite clear about who should or should not be operating under this act. My question is: is it true that we actually do need to amend the legislation to put in place a structure that you have already administratively done?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I will answer that, but I should just factually correct you initially if I can in relation to the One Parliament plan. That was circulated to the House Committee almost a year ago. It gives a very clear outline of the process by which we will be proceeding. The House Committee was advised on more than one occasion and certainly had ample opportunity to discuss changes to the Parliament. In fact we have finished our last three House Committee meetings before the allocated time was up because members did not have anything else to discuss. I wanted to clarify that. There has been no secrecy.

Mr FORWOOD — I am not a member of the House Committee. If that is the case, then your understanding of what happens at House Committee meetings and my understanding of what happens at House Committee meetings is very different.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is. I have discussed this with the House Committee. I do not know if parliamentary parties do not allow it or if members of the Parliament are not interested, but House Committee members have been asked on more than one occasion to report back to their party rooms about things which have happened at the House Committee. Certainly from your speech it has become apparent that that is not occurring. At the last House Committee, which was the last week of Parliament, we decided to put the House Committee minutes on the Internet so that all members can directly access them, which should make that process more transparent and open to members of Parliament, because that is not true.

The CHAIR — By way of clarification, on the Internet or emailed to MPs?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, on the Intranet, but I hope I do not then read them on the front page of the *Age*. There certainly have been some problems with leaks of information that we have given to members of Parliament before — silly things, like the OHS minutes that were leaked to the *Age*.

In relation to the parliamentary services act, in actual fact the act has not been changed since Christine Haydon was appointed. It refers to a structure that was put in place when she was here and it has never been changed. There is a position there that Stephen has gone into, although the structure is slightly different now. So it is actually updating it for that, but for a number of other reasons as well for the changes that have occurred since the Parliamentary Officers Act was last updated. The answer to a certain extent is yes and no, it does refer to the department of parliamentary services, although it has been known as the Joint Services Department during the period of the last two presiding officers. That is one of the changes. But there are a number of changes, and Ray has been doing some work on them. If you want him to give you some information on the other changes we are looking at — —

Mr FORWOOD — You do not think it is inappropriate that you should make changes to the structure before you change the act?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The structure we had before is not according to the parliamentary services act, so I am having some difficulty seeing why if it was not a problem in the last Parliament — —

Mr FORWOOD — If there is any organisation that should do things according to legislation it is the Parliament, and it seems to me that the problem with the appointments are ultra vires in any case. I am not a lawyer — Mr Clark is — but I would think you have put in place a structure that has no legal validity.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The structure beforehand — on the same basis — what I am saying is — —

Mr FORWOOD — So am I. You do not compound the error time on time.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, but what I am saying is I do not believe it is a problem, because Parliament has operated that way for some years. I fail to see why it is a problem, frankly.

Mr FORWOOD — What process will we go through now for members of Parliament or parties to be involved in the changes to the Parliamentary Officers Act, or is that also not appropriate?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, that will be debated in the same way as any piece of legislation that goes through the Parliament.

Mr FORWOOD — So the first we will see of the changes is when they are brought to us when the second-reading speech is made, or will we be consulted before that stage?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have not got that far down the path yet. I am not sure what we will do about that.

The CHAIR — Perhaps that can be raised for member representatives on the House Committee. That might be a way to go about it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It certainly will be discussed.

Mr MERLINO — You mentioned earlier the security measures — the changes to security. Can you inform the committee of the changes and how they have impacted on the parliamentary services budget? Also on the process of evaluation, will there be a risk review in 2004–05? How will you evaluate its effectiveness?

Mrs MADDIGAN — In relation to the funding, it is part of a security process that the government has done for all departments, and that also includes the departments of the Parliament. We have been given specific funding for them for the security processes that have been put in place. It has not affected our budget for the other services at all.

I might have to check this, but we have done some risk management strategy and we have also just recently had an approach from DPC which is working on further risk managements to the building — for example, what would happen if the parliamentary chamber was blown up tomorrow, where would we take Parliament, et cetera, so we are doing some work on that now.

In relation to evaluation, I am not quite sure that we have put any formal processes in place apart from reports on how the security system is going. As the second part of it has been put in place only yesterday we probably have not had a long enough time for it in place to do some formal structure. I will just check with Steven Aird to perhaps add to that.

Mr AIRD — There are a couple of stages in the security review, and when we get to the final stage that is when we will look back and see how things are going. As you are aware, the security point currently established in the south lobby is only a temporary measure and we are looking at other measures closer to the vestibule. We have funding to have contract staff to manage all of that, which was given to us on top of our normal budget, so it has not affected anything else.

Mr MERLINO — What about time lines in terms of doing those steps?

Mr AIRD — One of the things we are looking at is some moves that have to take place and when these can happen. These moves have been a bit slower than we had planned and affected how we can implement things, which is why I prefer not to give a time line. We would like to have it all up and running and a lot more work done within the next 12 months.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Perhaps I can explain those room moves to you, which might make a bit more sense. It has been held up, and we had only got agreement from all the political parties as recently as last Friday. The proposal that we are implementing now is for the opposition rooms to be moved to the fourth floor in Spring Street, so the opposition staff and the Leader of the Opposition will have the fourth floor over the road. An office will be made available also for the Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament. The parties have agreed that the two party rooms, which are now the Labor room and the Liberal Party room — will become government and opposition party rooms. So depending on whether you are in government or in opposition will determine which room you have, and I think that has been to all your caucus meetings. That will mean that Steve Bracks and his staff will move around into the old opposition rooms, and our security unit, which is now in the south lobby, will go into the room that used to be Steve Bracks's room.

Some of the things that were identified initially in the security room will be put in place when those changes happen, because that actually will have all our leaders in an area of the Parliament together — the leaders of the National Party, the Liberal Party and the government — in a more enclosed area. That will provide the best security that we can provide for them. It will also move the Premier away from a window going on to Bourke Street, which was raised as a security concern when our security plan was done. It has taken a while to get agreement and the arrangements right for those moves, and that is why some of the security stuff has been held up. It has also slowed down our smoke compartmentation program as well, because we have to get that all fixed first and the airconditioning too. That is still working, but it has been slower than intended at first.

Mr CLARK — Can I come back to the issue of performance measures as a benchmarking?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

Mr CLARK — You touched on remarks made on the appropriation bill. I do not want to re-debate remarks I made then, but it seems to me fair to say that the performance measures that appear for the Parliament are extraordinarily limited right across all departments of the Parliament. I would have thought that there is a lot of basic information that the public would want to have about what we do by which they can hold us all accountable in the same way as the government is held accountable to its performance measures. Could you explain a bit more as to why you have rejected our recommendation relating to benchmarking, and more generally what you think about the adequacy and opportunities to improve the current range of performance measures?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I agree with you in terms of members' performance being available to the public. I think it should be and it does appear in the annual reports of the departments of the Parliament, so you can get a whole lot of the information that you raised in your speech in those documents.

In relation to the benchmarking, the problem we have here is that the Victorian Parliament is seen as a Parliament against which other parliaments benchmark their activities. We have had quite an extensive look at what other parliaments do, and there is actually very little work done there. About the only benchmarking item we have been able to find very real basis for is the one in relation to the structure of One Parliament, which we got from the commonwealth. We do not have any problems with benchmarking ourselves against other parliaments if we can find any other parliaments that have benchmarking levels that are as advanced as ours, but so far we have not been able to do that — in Australia any way. Trying to compare yourself with parliaments overseas is problematic because obviously they are so different in the way they are set up.

As you know, it is hard to get meaningful performance measures. Often just a clear count is not useful. Even percentages — getting 95 per cent of what you are doing right — are measures not easily understood or something that you can really look at.

In terms of assessing how well we are doing for the public, and particularly for our members of Parliament is the client survey, and for our staff as well because staff do a client survey for others, and we find that very useful in giving us a good idea of how well the departments are going and how we can improve there.

I had hoped to have the results of the client survey for you today, but they only closed last Friday and they are not quite ready. Obviously we will get that to you.

I do not think you can ever be happy with performance measures, because as your organisation changes you need to change them all the time, and in some ways that makes it difficult to compare. Obviously if you are changing your performance measures every year, it is very hard to then look back to see if you have moved on in the year ahead. But we are more than happy to listen to any suggestions you may have of performance measures that you may think are more meaningful, and if we can measure them, we are more than happy to do so. It is just a very hard area to get anything useful in.

Mr PURDEY — If I could just add to that. A couple of years ago we did quite a bit of work on our output measures. We worked with a consultant to try to come up with things that parliamentary departments could be measured against. As our output measures we used to have things like the number of pages of *Hansard*, the number of questions on notice processed and the number of petitions presented. In a lot of ways they have nothing to do with the parliamentary staff. We do whatever number of questions members wish to put before us, but it is no direct measure of our performance. If members decide for whatever reason that they are not going to ask as many questions or there are not as many petitions tabled in one particular year, it is no measure of the service of parliamentary staff.

So we have tried to go to measures that will measure the operation of parliamentary staff, because they are supposed to be output measures for the funds that parliamentary staff are given to run their departments, which is different to the special appropriations that are provided for the payment of members and their services. So we are really measuring the output measures of departments, and that is what the output measures are there for at the moment. That is why there is nothing there that deals with the things that you raised in relation to the things that members do.

Mr CLARK — Part of the problem you highlight very effectively. It is a conceptual issue. Are the performance measures of what staff do or are they measures of what the Parliament as a whole does? I would argue that some of the factors you mentioned do measure what the staff do, albeit the volume of business is dictated from outside. It seems to me to be still an indication of what you do as to how many of these items you process — how many questions on notice; how many pages of *Hansard*. I would argue that even on that basis it should be incorporated. More broadly the public wants to know: ‘What on earth are you guys in Parliament doing?’.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is why it is in the annual report. If you are looking at performance measures as to how you are performing, and you use those to try to improve your performance, they are things over which we have no control. Our staff have absolutely no control over how many pages of *Hansard* there are or how many questions, so we cannot alter those. We see performance measures for Parliament as things that we can use to measure the performance of the staff and how we can improve that. We have no control over those things, so we do not see it as something that we can measure. However, as I said, it is available in the annual report. That information is there, but they are not things that we have any control over or our staff have any control over.

Mr PURDEY — If I could just add to that. For instance, if we had a measure that said we were going to process 5000 questions for the year, one year we might do that, but if in the next year questions were down through no fault of the parliamentary staff — it might have been only 4000 questions — Treasury is then going to say to us, ‘We will not provide you with your full funding because you have reduced your output’, when in fact we have not.

Mr CLARK — I do not think that Treasury is quite as blinkered as you might think.

Mr PURDEY — That is the way we have to report, and that is the way it looks.

Mr CLARK — I accept that that is a factor over which you have no control; the target is not meaningful, it is more of an estimate, and I think that has some wider ramifications for the whole system of performance measurement across government. No doubt that is an issue that the committee will deliberate on.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is in the annual report, and if there are other measures that you want to see in the annual report, we do not have any problem with providing them.

Mr DONNELLAN — I will get topical in the light of what has been in the *Herald Sun* recently. What are the guidelines on overseas travel for members of Parliament, how are the guidelines administered, and how do you ensure that the guidelines are complied with?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — And why was the member for Narre Warren North not told 12 months ago?

The CHAIR — Probably he has not been overseas.

Mr DONNELLAN — I have not needed to do it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I shall leave that as an internal matter for the members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee to discuss among themselves.

The CHAIR — Let us just assist Hansard!

Mrs MADDIGAN — The parliamentary travel guidelines are incorporated in the member’s handbook —

Mr FORWOOD — Good answer.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I will move on.

The CHAIR — And how are they complied with?

Mrs MADDIGAN — They are quite clear. It explains exactly what you are required to do. The request is processed through my office, and we ensure that people do what they are supposed to do.

The CHAIR — You ensure that?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I cannot say we have a problem. Most members are quite rigorous in ensuring that they follow the guidelines that are put down in the member's handbook.

Mr FORWOOD — Fear is a good motivator!

Mr BAXTER — That is right.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Speaker, can I ask you about the extra allocation for operational costs? The description is funding for the extra sitting of the Legislative Council, a conference for presiding officers and clerks, and some other operational costs. Can you provide the committee with a breakdown, and can you also explain to the committee whether that allocation includes funding for the additional electorate officers' increments that this year had to be funded out of electorate office budgets?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, the extra money is for specific projects that we have been given by Treasury. It is the money for the presiding officers conference, which is the Australia New Zealand South Pacific Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference, which is being held here this year; the previous presiding officers volunteered Melbourne for that. There is extra money towards the 150th celebration of the Victorian Parliament, which is to set up some activities relating to that. I can tell you more about that if you want me to. Do you want me to go into more detail?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I am more interested in the operational costs.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is in your questionnaire, but Steven Aird will go through it for you.

Mr AIRD — Of the \$700 000, \$300 000 is for increased costs for members' electorate offices, \$300 000 is for the increased operating costs of the Parliament and \$50 000 is for the presiding officers and clerks conference, and that rounds up to the \$700 000. It is actually \$650 000, but rounded up to \$700 000.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — And that \$300 000 for increased operating costs relates to extra Legislative Council sittings?

Mr AIRD — Extra Legislative Council sittings and the extra work that we have had to help Hansard with the problems they had with IT, overtime and extra utility costs. We have not had an increase in the operating costs of the Parliament for quite a few years, and the sitting times of the Council have changed. If you go back to the first couple of sittings two or three parliaments ago, you find they have increased by about 25 per cent. I do not have the actual figures, but I am happy to provide them to you.

Mr BAXTER — That is because we have time limits, so we now talk for longer.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Part of that comes from the upper house sitting on a Thursday, because we need extra sessional Hansard reporters, and the dining room is also often kept open on a Thursday night now, so there are extra costs associated with that.

Ms GOULD — Gordon, you would appreciate that when you first came in — and we will not go to Bill Baxter; I was not here when he first came in, but I was here when you came, Gordon — in the first couple of weeks the upper house used to finish at dinner time on Wednesday. We now sit Wednesday night, Thursday, Thursday night and some Fridays. We have even been known to sit on a Tuesday when the other house was not sitting. So that requires more security staff when the house is sitting, it requires more Hansard reporters and overtime for attendants on Wednesday and Thursday nights that was not there before. As Steven indicated, the budget for running the Parliament has not been looked at for some time, and obviously it is something that needed to be addressed.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — As the last point of the question, included in that figure was there any funding for the electorate officer award increase that has been awarded this year?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — That will be funded?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Internally, next year. It will be funded in the long run, but the same provisions apply — part of it is funded up to the government's level of 3 per cent, but any difference has to be met by the Parliament in the same way.

Mr FORWOOD — So we will not be paying a contribution out of our pay again this year?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Not this year, next year.

Ms GREEN — It has already been done this year.

Mr FORWOOD — The same amount?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Not next year you will not, but possibly — —

The CHAIR — In 2004–05 we will not?

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is right. Sorry, every year.

Mr FORWOOD — Every year?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I beg your pardon. There will not be any extra taken out of your electorate office's budget this year.

Mr FORWOOD — It will be the same amount as was taken out last year?

Mr DONNELLAN — It is just out of your salary.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Let us keep this straightforward, so Hansard has some hope of recording it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — However, due to some changes in funding you have still got more in your electorate office budgets than you had before.

Mr FORWOOD — If your electricity bill is less than \$700.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, it is indexed as well.

Ms GREEN — You talked before about the security at Parliament House. My question relates to security procedures and standards for electorate properties and their members of staff. I am wondering, in the light of what has been done in Parliament House with the obvious challenges, have the procedures and standards for electorate properties been reviewed? How are they monitored?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, we have standards for electorate offices. The Parliament in the past has been flexible in view of what members have requested. Members in some cases have refused to have some of the security measures that the Parliament has recommended in their electorate offices. I have taken a different view. My view is that the electorate office staff are in fact Parliament House staff, so if members want to make themselves available to be thumped on the head, that is fine by me, but I expect proper procedures to be put in to protect staff.

We are going through a process now of offices which do not have security screens et cetera to have them. It is my intention that by the end of this year or early next year all offices will have security screens for their parliamentary staff. They also of course have the emergency button. We went through a process when we found that a number of members had not informed our security services that there have been changes of members or office, so we have ensured that has been updated. That is going to be updated on a regular basis to ensure that we know what members are in what offices so police do not go bolting off to an office that someone used to have three years ago, which I believe happened a couple of years ago. That process will continue.

Ms GREEN — On your point about security screens, if there were any electorate staff who currently do not have security screens, will they be provided as a matter of course if they are requested?

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is right. They need to talk to Sam Matthews. She will be delighted to assist you.

Ms GREEN — So that would even be in temporary offices/

Mrs MADDIGAN — You made some agreements about your office, but I think the staff need to be secure, so I have got no problem with that.

Ms GREEN — Not in relation to security.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is all right. What I was saying, if you would let me finish the sentence, was that I have no problems putting in security screens for temporary staff. As I said, I am protecting the staff, not the members.

The CHAIR — Temporary offices, not temporary staff.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Sorry, temporary offices, but I am quite happy to protect temporary staff as well. I have no problem with that.

Ms GOULD — The Speaker and I committed to this last year. We actually toured around to a number of electorate offices down to Gippsland to have a look at them and talk to the electorate officers about — —

Mr FORWOOD — Call in any time.

Ms GOULD — I am happy to call in, Bill. We went to a number of MPs' offices across parties and spoke to the electorate officers about their concerns and the concerns we had with the physical structures of the electorate offices. As a result that process has moved along a lot quicker than it may have if we had not.

Mr MERLINO — Just a quick supplementary question on this issue of security of electorate offices: my greatest concern are those offices that do not have rear access. I am in an example of them, and many, many other MPs would be in that same position. I find that a real concern on a security level. I know it is not an issue that can be solved in the short term, but is it an issue that has been addressed?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, it is. We have standards now for electorate offices that we use. You will find that new offices always have rear doors. There are a number of offices where we have been able to negotiate some access as another way out when there has been a linking door to an office next door. We have had an agreement if there is a tenant next door. It is my view that all offices should have a back door.

Mr MERLINO — What is your position in terms of office relocations? Once a lease runs out with an office that does not have rear access, what is your view on that?

Mrs MADDIGAN — My view is that you would be entitled to be relocated, within the funds that are provided available for the government. But I think we have been able to meet the demands of all the members this year. We have had particular problems. Except as I said, and I will just say this again, we actually have a real problem finding electorate offices that are suitable in some electorates. We were talking just before we started, and particularly in the outer eastern area we have had real problems finding electorate offices that are suitable and meet our guidelines. In some cases members are desperate to go in a spot.

It is a sort of balance. We want you to follow what we think are the parliamentary guidelines, but in the end I believe members of the Parliament have got the right to have the office where it suits them best. We try to accommodate that as well. Sometimes that is really difficult. But there are some things that we really are insisting on, and they are things like back-door access. I was just giving the example of Forest Hill earlier. We have been trying to relocate the office there. We have even looked at renting houses et cetera trying to find some accommodation that is suitable for that seat. Even though we have agents out there looking, in some areas where they have not got well-developed shopping areas or business areas, there is just a real scarcity of offices that are suitable for members. It really is very difficult. Danielle is one who has had a lot of trouble. Bill we have been trying to fix up for about a year, but we are getting Bill organised. It is very difficult to achieve all the standards we would want to have in offices.

Ms GREEN — Just to follow up on the health and safety for staff — and I am really glad that you have put that focus on it and that you and the President have been out and visited — I see the Occupational Health and Safety Committee minutes that come through the email and I never have time to read them. Is there a process to

involve electorate staff in that committee or is there another committee? Often it seems to me there is very much a focus here, and I think it is important to involve the staff that are remote.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is why the minutes are actually sent out to electorate officers, because the Occupational Health and Safety Committee here does see the electorate officers as being part of the Parliament. Anyone can go and sit in on those meetings if they want to, but I do not know that electorate officers would want to. A lot of the stuff they deal with deals with issues relating to staff in here. I do not have a strong view. If staff are keen to come in and participate, I do not think the occupational health and safety unit would have any problems with that. A lot of the issues that electorate officers have, though, would be very individual issues relating to their electorate offices, which I would think would be more appropriately dealt with through discussions with the property officer.

The CHAIR — By way of security, can I congratulate those who have been involved in tracking down appropriate security measures such as at least having recorded the correct address. An example in my own electorate office was where we were being billed for security. We were unaware that people were supposedly dropping in, but they in fact were not. We alerted you to that, and then we were not billed for it.

Ms GREEN — I found it good with property staff making contact at holiday periods. Before Christmas they actually proactively said, 'Look, are these the people who are going to be there for purposes of monitoring and so on?'.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Good, we will pass that on to the property staff. I am sure they will be pleased to hear it.

Mr BAXTER — Speaker, in your opening remarks you spoke about your view that the presiding officers should step back from running the place. Could I therefore ask, aside from the payroll function, does Joint Services consider members of Parliament to be its employees?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, you know that, Bill. I think the customer service levels or client service levels or member service levels — but it is really client service, because the clients of the Parliament are not all members, there are other departments as well — are extremely high. One of the things that really impresses me about the staff here is the extremely high level of customer service. They put up with sometimes some extremely rude, ill-informed and strange comments. I think they deal generally exceptionally well with members of Parliament and other staff. I frequently get very positive comments from members of Parliament about the excellent assistance they get from the staff of the Parliament. I think they need to be congratulated.

It is a hard job working here in lots of ways, because you have sometimes 132 people telling you what to do — frequently quite different things — and it is not an easy place to work. Our staff do an excellent job.

Mr BAXTER — I will take that on board.

Ms ROMANES — Speaker and President, I have a question about the internal audit committee, which I notice met only once in 2003–04. The financial management compliance framework requires audit committees to meet on a regular basis, so my questions are: did the internal audit committee in 2003–04 undertake a risk assessment of issues associated with the Parlynet project, and secondly, will the internal audit committee endeavour to meet more often in 2004–05?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I will do the second part of the question first. Yes, we recognise that the internal audit procedures have not been in accordance with the Financial Management Act, and Stephen O'Kane has been doing work on that since he got here and the Auditor-General is coming to talk to us next week about how he thinks we can do the internal audit process better, so we are looking forward to that.

In relation to a risk assessment for Parlynet, if we had done it, it would have been done in 2001–02, I would have thought, and I have no idea whether that was done or not. It would have had to have been done before you started the project, I would have thought. In my view it should have been done before.

Mr FORWOOD — I am on VicHealth's audit committee as a board member, and I do not hold us up as best practice, but we have a structured process of looking at the risks, and one of the risks is an IT risk, and here it

is a greater risk than in many places, and whether it should have been done before or not, it should be a matter that — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, I am not denying that, and I was referring specifically to risk management in relation to Parlynet II, which I would have thought one would have done before one started the project. But Stephen O’Kane can fill you in as to what has been done in relation to risk management, if you like.

Mr FORWOOD — No, that is all right, but it is a responsibility of the audit committee, as Dr O’Kane knows. My supplementary question goes to the response on page 17, question 7.2, and that is as to the members of the internal audit committee. You will note that it mentions the internal members of the parliament’s audit committee. Are Bill Russell and Frank King the only external members on the audit committee, and if that is the case, do you not seriously think you need to look at the membership of the committee?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Stephen can answer that, but it is standard under financial management guidelines to have two outside members on the committee.

Mr FORWOOD — It is a minimum of two. I think you would know that a good internal audit committee would have a majority of external members, that the external members and the chair of the board — I presume in this case, you — would meet without departmental officers present for at least part of the meeting and that there is a structured work program for the internal audit. I think there are significant concerns about the information provided in relation to the internal audit function of the Parliament, and I am looking for some comfort that in future it will be done better.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Luckily Stephen O’Kane is here and can give you some comfort, Bill, so Stephen will tell you of the work he has been doing in the short time that he has been here in relation to that issue.

Dr O’KANE — I have had some discussions with both the Auditor-General and his director of audit responsible for the Parliament about best practice across the public sector, and whilst at one level I agree with you about the majority of membership being external, it really depends on an assessment of the risk environment that is there and whether there are any other compensating controls.

Some risk assessment has been done around the Parliament, from what I can gather, over time, that has not necessarily been pulled together as one activity, and we are discussing ways of doing a more strategic risk assessment for the Parliament out of which an internal audit process will be formed.

You cannot look at physical risks, IT risks and so on in isolation. There are a whole range of risks — occupational health and safety was mentioned also. That needs to be seen as more of a strategic issue. Out of that, then, comes what the internal audit process needs to look at, and it needs some sort of priority process in order to do that.

The CHAIR — Has any consideration been given to putting a member of Parliament on that?

Ms GOULD — Yes, and there are two — the Speaker and the President.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No. It would be totally inappropriate to have a member of Parliament on that.

Mr FORWOOD — I refer to page 305 of budget paper 3, which is the new output initiatives and in particular the 150th anniversary of democratic government in Victoria. If you look at the chart, you see it shows \$200 000 for 2004–05 and no ongoing funds for the future.

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is a worry, isn’t it?

Mr FORWOOD — It is, and I would be interested to know why there have not been any funds allocated for future years. I make two points: one is that it is my understanding that in New South Wales the budget is around \$2 million, and they have a structured program. The second point is that I have been reliably informed that the current intention is that we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of democratic government in Victoria by holding a rock concert, and if that is the case, I am looking for some comfort, also, that we are not going to celebrate it with a rock concert.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We will have a rock concert as one of many events during the year. I will explain it to you. First of all, New South Wales is doing it quite differently to us, and a politician — I have forgotten his

name — came down to tell us what they were doing. They are doing it in a way that is quite elitist, and they accept it as such. They are spending a great deal of money on doing a number of publications such as what the electorates were and how they have changed over the last 150 years and a whole lot of other histories of the Parliament, which we already have in Victoria, but it has been our view the whole way through that we want to use our theme for the Parliament, which is an open and accountable Parliament, and to have a celebration across Victoria.

We are looking at a year of events, and one of the things we will be doing is having a travelling exhibition which we intend to take to country towns to give rural Victoria an opportunity to be part of the celebrations, as well as having a number of events throughout the year such as some particular tours of the parliamentary gardens, putting our activities in the show, especially the 150th — —

Mr FORWOOD — Is there a program that I can look at?

Mrs MADDIGAN — There is. It is only a draft at this stage, but we are happy to give it to you, to make it available. I do not have it here, but it is on the basis that it is a draft program and the dates and things may change.

Mr FORWOOD — What is the process by which you are deciding these things?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have a 150th committee set up, which has on it the presiding officers; the two clerks; a representative from the Victorian Electoral Commission; a representative from Premier and Cabinet, because there are a whole lot of other 150ths happening that day; Sharon Morris, our officer who is employed by Parliament — —

Mr FORWOOD — Any members of Parliament, or is this another thing for which it would not be appropriate?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, there are not members of Parliament on it, but you would have received emails about this, and Sharon has gone through a process of contacting all members of Parliament. You would have received an email some time ago, and some members of your party have already responded and made suggestions to her. She has also had meetings with the former members of Parliament and meetings with the staff, so it is a process by which we are trying to include as many people in the Parliament as possible.

Mr FORWOOD — What budget is she working to?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The budget is what is in there. She is on a one-year contract. We do not know how much money we want for the future yet. We are still working on the full budget for the future years, and we will be discussing that with the Department of Treasury and Finance as we go along.

Mr FORWOOD — So you will ask for a million or so?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We have not worked it out, but we will be asking for some more money, yes. The reason for the rock concert is that we are trying to make as many people come through Parliament House as possible during the year.

Mr FORWOOD — On the front steps — a rock concert?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, and have Parliament House open so that people can — —

Ms GOULD — You're an old fuddy-duddy, Bill!

Mr FORWOOD — I thought it might be a symphony concert, or an opera perhaps.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is a good idea — we could have *Aida*! There are young people who we would like to get into the Parliament, and we think that is one way of doing it. We are looking for various organisations that fund various activities for various ages through the year to see if they would like to provide funding for some of those activities as well, so we are still going through with that. Sharon is doing some terrific work.

Mr FORWOOD — You have signed off on the rock concert, Speaker, haven't you?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, we have not, but I am in favour of it. It might have been my idea, yes.

Mr FORWOOD — If it were, I would not own up to it!

Ms GOULD — That is your view, but I want to make some comment here.

The CHAIR — Just a moment until we have some silence, so people can have their wonderful contributions recorded clearly.

Ms GOULD — With respect to the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the Parliament, the Speaker and I agreed that it was important that we opened up Parliament to the people of Victoria. As a two-pronged approach there is the travelling around country Victoria and also there is the metropolitan part, obviously here at Parliament House or at the show, which is to connect up with the open day that we have every year, which I hope all of you will attend at Parliament next Sunday, which happens to be our next open day.

It is important that the young people of Victoria understand what happens in Parliament House. We want young people to understand that we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of democracy in this state, and that is why we are proposing to have, as part of the Youth Week program, a concert here at Parliament House.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. We will move on.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I just want to say something humorous about the 150th which we only discovered afterwards, and that is that the actual date when Parliament first sat is the date of the next state election, so that is possibly the best way of celebrating the 150th anniversary of Parliament anyway. But having a celebration on that day has caused us some concerns!

The CHAIR — Moving right along, I notice that in the current financial year a number of departments have their specific budget allocations assigned to them — for example, the library and Hansard. In the forthcoming financial year we are merging departments, and my concern is to ensure that the budget allocation for the department as currently appropriated and spent will be maintained to ensure that each of them has the same level of provision of services and that their funding will at least be consistent with previous years to allow them to provide the higher level of services. For example, if you take Hansard, given the number of days we sit together with the committee hearings that we have, they necessarily have to have budget allocations to allow them to report. That is understood, but my concern would be that if one other area needed extra the library could well suffer. Given that you are a librarian, Speaker, I am sure that would not be your intention, but I need some comfort to hear that.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have already addressed that, Christine, but as you obviously were not listening, I will say it again.

The CHAIR — I listened, but I want to specifically hear it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The three-line effort in the budget is a recommendation from Treasury and Finance and it also affects the one-parliament process. As I said, each year the budgetary process will be done exactly the same as it has been before, and the requirements of Hansard, the library and all the other departments will be addressed in the same way as they have before.

The CHAIR — That is even more comfort. Thank you very much.

Mr CLARK — I want to clarify three points about performance measures and statistics. First of all, is it possible to ensure that parliamentary department annual reports are systematically published on the Parliament's web site?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

Mr CLARK — I have not been able to find the Legislative Council's report. I have not been able to find any other — possibly Hansard's, but I have not been able to find them consistently and those I have found have been with a deal of effort. Can you take that on board?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I am happy to do that.

Mr CLARK — Secondly, in relation to performance measures, could I get you to comment on recommendation 17 of our outcomes report, which was about — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — What page was that on?

Mr CLARK — Page 144. It was about ensuring the key targets identified in the business and corporate plans are able to be measured so as to provide meaningful information on performance. We referred to the open-ended measurement item of information technology efficiency and effectiveness. Finally, I would like to get a couple of quick comments on the two specific measures on page 255 of budget paper 3: one of them I mentioned in my contribution on the bill, about a 95 per cent target for accuracy of payroll entry processing, which seemed to me to be pretty tough if you were the 1 in 20 whose payroll was wrongly processed; and secondly, just above that, the 70 per cent satisfaction target level for members, staff and officers for support services, which seemed a bit on the low side even given that a number of us around here tend to be fairly critical. What is your assessment of that measure, and is it fair to aim for a higher satisfaction level?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is always good to try to get the highest level of satisfaction you can. I am not sure how those figures were arrived at, so perhaps I can ask Steven to answer that, if that is okay, Robert.

Mr AIRD — The percentages of member and staff satisfaction will come out of the survey that we do annually. In regard to the electorate officers I am reminded that probably two or three years ago we were not doing well at all, and we started from a pretty low base. We always have a problem when doing this because some people say that we cannot react in time, and we also have the budget constraints. We have been very lucky in the last year because we had a lot of money given to us because we had to move electorate offices and were able to help out with refurbishing in other years. When we go back to a very strict budget regime, then obviously a lot of people will not necessarily be happy about not being able to get what they want, and it will then be a matter of how we can explain to them why we are not able to provide. We are currently performing at about the 70 per cent to 75 per cent rate. I do not have this year's figure, but I think last year's was 70 per cent to 75 per cent. As we go on we are also looking at trying to increase that in future years. We are working out the structure and staffing. I am just talking on that one little area.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The other one was the payroll entries. Robert asked about it.

Mr AIRD — We have such a wide variety of people — over 600 people are on the payroll — and only three people on the payroll staff, and we do aim for a higher result than that. But our point is that we can only afford to have two people and the manager doing the payroll. To improve that even further we would have to try to cut down on some of the inputs they have to do, because they are fairly repetitive. We believe that, yes, we do try to fix errors before the payroll is issued. With a lot of things, when the payroll comes out and people ring us we try to fix things immediately for the next payroll. It is one of the areas where we are setting ourselves an internal target to improve that level. But again we could get close to 100 per cent if we had a lot more money and employed a lot more people — or even 99 per cent — because then we could put in all the checks and balances to make sure everything was fully checked, but we just have not got the staff or the funding to do it, so we are setting it at that level and they are currently achieving it.

Mr CLARK — Taken literally it means that 1 entry in 20 is wrong. It does seem a high failure rate.

Mr AIRD — Yes. I often think it is one of the areas we have to have another look at. Again, say we are looking at achieving 95 per cent there are a whole lot of different issues that come in. It is not necessarily that we have stored some data incorrectly. A lot of people come back to us with overtime or different claims. We have got to go back and check up documentation or put things in. Sometimes people say, 'You did not put the right figures in'. There is actually quite a bit involved in it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — They are not standard pays because there are so many shift hours here. It is so variable. The number of hours you work can vary depending on how long the house is sitting. Not that I am making excuses, but I guess that is probably one of the reasons why the error rate is perhaps higher than you might expect if everyone always got paid the same amount every week.

Mr CLARK — More generally on recommendation 17, are there any comments you would like to make?

Mr AIRD — On benchmarking again, we see ourselves as being at a stage — this is on performance measures — where, yes, we should have them, which is why we have the external survey come in and do it for us, to provide that information. It is all confidential. We do not know what individual people have said. We then get

the comments that people write, the comments go to all the managers who then develop their business plans to improve their performances in these areas.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think that is what he means though, do you? You are referring more specifically to ensuring that key targets identified in business and corporate plans are able to be measured so as to provide meaningful information on performance. I think you are referring to specific targets rather than the general client survey.

Mr CLARK — I was being more general about how the measures were couched rather than performance on particular ones.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We are more than happy to look at that.

Mr FORWOOD — Under the new One Parliament structure will Hansard and the Library still continue to produce their own annual reports, or is that going to be subsumed into — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — We would expect each department to keep producing its own annual report, but we have been looking at putting it in one volume so that you get all the departmental reports in one volume rather than six bits of paper you have got to hang on to. They will still be doing their own departmental reports.

Ms GOULD — It might be easier for Robert to find them, and we can whack them on the intranet.

Mr FORWOOD — Will it be their report, or will they have to clear it through the chief executive officer?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is their report, in that they will have to clear it with the executive and the presiding officers as they have done in the past. There will be no difference to the procedure that has been followed before.

Ms GOULD — The Council report is prepared by the clerks and then — —

Mr FORWOOD — Are you editing it?

Ms GOULD — I did not say that. Do not put words into my mouth, Bill. I said the Clerk prepares it and then shows it to me before it goes off to printing. It is facts and figures. There are no changes to it. It is how many days we have sat and how many pieces of legislation et cetera.

Mr FORWOOD — And specific output groups and measurements against the output groups.

Mr TUNNECLIFFE — Ray Purdey, Stephen O’Kane and I have already had preliminary discussions about standardising the presentation of information in each of the three reports to make it easier to compare and, above all, be consistent.

Ms GOULD — So it is easier to follow.

Mr FORWOOD — Are you dumbing down or are you enhancing?

Dr O’KANE — We are currently looking for some best practice business templates that we might be able to use.

The CHAIR — It sounds like they are looking forward to your suggestions, Mr Forwood.

Mr MERLINO — Michael Leighton and the IT subcommittee have been trialling the Blackberry. It is an excellent tool from my point of view, particularly for members in rural seats or large metro seats who are not in their offices. Could you provide the committee with an update of the trial and how soon members can expect to have the opportunity to take these up?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We did a trial over Christmas for a month. Members of staff and members of the House Committee, including members of the IT subcommittee, had them. The responses from those who used them were generally very good. We then gave them all back, because I asked Michael to go and see if there were other types available. There was a concern raised by the member for Burwood about some problems. I cannot quite

remember the details, but if you had a hearing problem there was some interaction between a hearing aid and the unit.

Mr MERLINO — Right.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Is that right, Robert?

Mr CLARK — It was the transmission mechanism and which one could be adapted for people with hearing difficulties.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes. So that was raised, and that went back to the IT committee and the staff in IT. They have had another look since, but they have not found anything that works as well as the Blackberry — I always want to call it a Blueberry. We are just going through some processes now, but it has come back to the House Committee, and the House Committee has recommended that it be made available as a software item that the Parliament will support for members who want to purchase it out of their electorate office budget.

Perhaps I should just explain that a bit more for you — and I think I touched on this last year — we are not going to do any more big bang, Parlynet III-type things after Parlynet II. I do not think we have that capacity. However good our staff are, we just do not have the sort of IT numbers to support that. So what we are going to do is make incremental advances. As new technologies and new things come along we will have a look at them, work out which ones the IT staff and the IT subcommittee recommend and will then support, which means members can buy them and know that they will get support from the IT unit. If you want to buy something else, you can do that, but it means that if you want support from the IT unit you will have to pay for it.

So it is trying to ensure that there is a standard range of products that meet the members' requirements that can be properly supported. What was happening before when there was no real planning is that you might have 25 members who each have bought 25 bits of equipment, all of which needed 25 bits of software support, and we just do not have the resources to do that. It was really a level of service that I think was unrealistic. So that is proceeding. I think I hear some — Grant is behind me somewhere. Is there anything you want to add to that, Grant?

Mr INWOOD — We have gone out for quote to Optus and Telstra, which are the only providers that fit under the state government's tender process at the moment. It is not part of the state government's tender process, but we felt it was best practice to use those two.

Mrs MADDIGAN — What we are trying to do is see if we can get them cheaper by buying a number for the Parliament then charging the members that cost, rather than members having to pay the original retail cost.

Mr MERLINO — Right.

Ms GOULD — Discounts.

Mrs MADDIGAN — So we have tried to find out what sort of product we can get at what sort of price, so that hopefully if we do that — —

The CHAIR — The time?

Ms GOULD — It is going on now, isn't it?

The CHAIR — Time?

Mr FORWOOD — When will I get my Blackberry? Two weeks?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Two to three.

Mr MERLINO — And members will be informed?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, you will be told. And the cost, you will be told that.

Mr MERLINO — Wonderful. That's terrific.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Happy?

Mr MERLINO — Very happy.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Good.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I would like to raise the issue of what is broadly known as the dining room, given that it caters for a lot more — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — You mean the refreshment rooms, as we call them?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I point out that I was asked by colleagues to raise this, as there are still ongoing concerns about the service and the quality. The issue I would like to raise with you is the level of subsidy for the current year and next year, the success or otherwise of the marketing campaign to open Strangers Corridor to the public and the outcome of the review that was done late last year, I believe, when consultants were brought in and views were solicited as to how the refreshment rooms were run. What has been the outcome of that review?

Mrs MADDIGAN — All right. What was the first one again?

The CHAIR — The level of subsidy.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The level of subsidy was at \$200 000 last year and it is \$150 000 this year.

The CHAIR — This year being the forthcoming financial year?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, the current year. The year we are in now. We have cut it down by \$50 000, and I hope to be able to cut it down by a further \$50 000 the following year. In relation to the second point — sorry?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — The marketing campaign.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, the marketing campaign has been very successful. We have slightly changed it. Initially the focus a couple of years ago was on lunches et cetera, and opening it up to the public. We have found that in the end that was not as financially successful as we would have liked because we had to employ extra staff, and then if we did not have a lot of people coming in we were making a loss. But the project we started this year, which was high teas, has proved very successful. We make an extremely good profit from them. I think that in the first three months we served over 1000 high teas, so that has worked well.

Some of the problems with encouraging the public to dine here is that it is closed, of course, when Parliament is not sitting. When it was advertised a lot of the queries we had related to people wanting to come here for dinner at night when Parliament was closed. Because that means we have to open up the whole place and provide more attendants et cetera, the prices would be so astronomical that no-one would ever come. The provision of things like high teas and special morning teas we can do much more cheaply because we do not have to put extra staff on, so that is proving successful and we are pleased with that.

In relation to the survey that was done with the members, quite a lot of information came in about menus. People were looking for more vegetarian foods, healthier meals and lighter meals and also the return of the buffet. A lot of that work has been incorporated, but there is probably still work to do on improving the menus, and that will be an ongoing process as well.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Just to follow up, you said the high teas were profitable. Does that include the marketing expenses?

Mrs MADDIGAN — There seems to be very little marketing expense for the high teas. Most of the publicity we have had has been free, but those costs are included in the cost of the meals.

Mr BAXTER — On the consultancy that was done last year, did it reflect upon the financial viability of having a separate menu in the corridor? It seems to me the number of meals served there cannot possibly be generating the economies of scale necessary to make it financially viable. Why do we not have the same menu right throughout the building?

Mrs MADDIGAN — In some periods when Parliament is not sitting we do have the same menu, but in fact through that survey, from what I can remember of it, there really was quite a strong view from members of

Parliament that they wanted different food in the Strangers Corridor because a lot of people use that — I presume, anyway, from the things that have been said to us — for special occasions, like bringing people in for their birthday or something. I personally would have no trouble at all with having the same menu in both areas, but I do not think that is the view of the majority of people who responded to that survey.

Mr BAXTER — Do we have any handle on what it is costing to provide this separate menu? It is my strongly held view that it is in fact impinging detrimentally on the running costs of the dining room.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Do we have running costs on the members' dining room? I am not quite sure if we do or not. I do not think so. Do you want to add something, Stephen?

Mr AIRD — I do not believe that is the case.

Mr BAXTER — I would be interested in getting some clear evidence of that.

The CHAIR — Perhaps that could be taken on notice. I think that would be of interest.

Mr FORWOOD — Under the new One Parliament structure, I take it the dining room would come under parliamentary services?

Mr AIRD — It always has been.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes, it always has. There has been no change in where people are at the moment, but there may be changes in the future.

Mr FORWOOD — Okay. Is it true that the person who runs the dining room has been offered a seven-month contract that expires at the end of the year?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Why would that be?

Mrs MADDIGAN — We had a report last year that looked at the number of people in the catering functions and the structure we had here, and I wanted Stephen O'Kane when he came here to have a look at that and make recommendations as to whether we need a new structure or the same structure as we had before. So Luke was offered a seven-month contract to fill that time until we have a look at the structures before we decide what the positions are that we are going to advertise. We have had some work done on that, but we have not finished it yet. That is why that was done.

Ms GREEN — You might think this is a flippant question, but the media often say that we have a very luxurious sort of existence here in the Parliament and I find it quite difficult to keep active and reasonably healthy while I am here. I wondered whether you could outline the gym facilities at the moment and how much they cost to operate?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think they cost anything to operate, except that occasionally we buy new equipment. Certainly I do not think the gym facilities are adequate for members. We are going through our first change of looking at rooms for the security processes, and we will be looking at those and some other room changes in the future.

Ms GREEN — So there is actually no allocation for running the gym with the four pieces of equipment — or three — that I understand are in there in a converted — —

The CHAIR — In a converted bathroom and toilet.

Mrs MADDIGAN — There is a small amount, but we were looking at buying some equipment for women. I am not sure if that has been purchased yet, but certainly if we wanted to buy new equipment there is capacity in our budget to do that.

The CHAIR — By way of comment, there has been some discussion that given we are castigated for having a gym it would be useful on, say, Open Day to show the toilet in which the gym resides with no additional

fresheners put into the room for the benefit of the public. If we are going to be castigated for having a gym, people should know that it is basically a toilet with a few pieces of equipment in it.

Mrs MADDIGAN — We are not planning to take the public upstairs, but if you have some trouble with the air fresheners I suggest you speak to the staff.

Mr BAXTER — Back on the refreshment rooms subsidy, we have heard a lot said about the fact that the Legislative Council is sitting longer and that is impinging on the costs of having the dining room open on Thursday night and so on. Bearing in mind that it seems the extra sitting of the Legislative Council is largely due to the sessional orders introduced by the government, it seems a little unfair to me that somehow or other the refreshment rooms bear a cost as a 'subsidy' completely beyond the refreshment rooms' ability to do anything about it. I think some of the \$700 000 that has been made available, which includes money to compensate for, allow for, cater for the extra Legislative Council costs should be attributed to this so-called subsidy if everything is going to be on a level playing field.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not think the catering staff would agree with you that they cannot operate in a more efficient and cost-effective way. I have been very pleased with some of the work that has been done in the catering area.

Mr BAXTER — I was not alleging they were not efficient; I am simply saying that the subsidy is being skewed by the government introducing new sessional orders which have had a flow-on effect of changing the pattern of sitting times.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I take your point. I am not quite sure what response you want me to make. I do not think it will change. Certainly I am confident that the staff in the refreshment rooms will be able to provide the same level of service regardless of whether you sit Wednesday or Thursday nights or not.

Mr BAXTER — With respect, that is not my point. I am not complaining about that. I am simply saying that if it is alleged next year that the subsidies had to be increased for this reason, that ought to be attributed to a government action, not to the Parliament.

Mrs MADDIGAN — That is all right. If that happens, we will say it is the government's fault, but it has not happened yet.

Ms ROMANES — The study project on the Parliament was conducted by the parliamentary studies unit at Monash University in 2003–04. What action is planned to address the issues identified in that study project?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I have had lengthy discussions with the people who prepared that. I was personally quite disappointed with it. I think a lot of the information in it is quite out of date. Some of the recommendations in it are — how shall I put this? — well meaning but perhaps not all that practical.

Mr FORWOOD — I would be pleased to send them a copy of the transcript.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Which particular ones they have recommended are you interested in and would like me to address? I will tell you how I intend to address them.

Mr FORWOOD — Come on, just do it.

Ms ROMANES — Are there particular issues which have struck you that could be followed up?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I think there are some general issues in there in relation to education of all people who use Parliament which are very worthy and worth while.

Mr FORWOOD — I will paraphrase it: you are saying we spent a lot of money on a dud project.

Mrs MADDIGAN — No, I did not say that at all. What I said was that I was disappointed in the end result and I think it could have been more useful in the recommendations it made. There are some recommendations in relation to what the Parliament could do. Most of them involve putting on extra staff or going through fairly costly processes for which I do not have the budget at the moment. They are fine in theory. Some of the suggestions they make are good ones, but I am not sure to what extent they can be incorporated because of

those financial constraints. However, some of the stuff like further education for members is good. To a certain extent, as I explained, we have started doing some of those things — the training for new members has been more extensive in this Parliament than it has been before, and we hope to continue with that. I think that is a worthwhile recommendation.

Mr FORWOOD — How much did we pay Dr Coghill to do this?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I do not know. It was mainly before my time. I do not have the figures offhand, but I will get them for you.

Mr FORWOOD — Will you take it on notice and let us know?

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes. Once again, that contract was entered into before Monica and I became the presiding officers.

Mr FORWOOD — I am not holding you responsible, — I just want to know.

In the response in 2003–04 you said, and I quote:

The essential difficulty with parliamentary departmental budgets is the lack of nexus between strategic issues and funding for outputs. Departments are allocated new moneys purely on an ‘historical’ basis, which bears no relationship to the services performed or the expectations of clients in the contemporary environment.

I wonder whether the budget for 2004–05 was prepared on a historical basis and what action has been taken to improve the budget process. In particular, if the Library, for example, has a new initiative which it wants to put forward for the benefit of members of Parliament, what process would the Library now go through to ensure that those funds were made available?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It would go through exactly the same process as it did before.

Mr FORWOOD — Except that there is an extra step in it because we have the boss over there.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Yes. I mean that in terms of preparing their bids for the budget et cetera they will go through exactly the same process.

Mr FORWOOD — In the past the bids went from the Librarian to the President?

Mrs MADDIGAN — No. Steven Aird has always put our budget submission to Treasury and Finance and discussed it with them. The bids have always gone from the departmental heads to them, and he puts them in a form — —

Mr FORWOOD — And then back?

Mrs MADDIGAN — And then they are considered by the presiding officers and the clerks and at the senior officers’ meetings to decide which ones we should support and which ones we should not. That process will continue.

Mr FORWOOD — Was it produced on the historical basis again this year?

Mrs MADDIGAN — The historical basis relates to the general amount of money given to the Library, Hansard and the other departments as pretty much what was given before with the increase for special projects et cetera. The process has always been that you get pretty much what you have always had unless you put up special projects, and they are the ones identified in the budget. That will be continued as before. We put up our bids.

You will recall last year we did not get as much as we bid for, so all the departments were required to put in amended figures, including the Library and Hansard. They were the ones we discussed here last year. If that happens again, we will go through the same processes. The processes will not be different. Steven had some extensive discussions with Treasury and Finance this year, as he always does, about what we want to put in the budget and how best to try to convince them of those arguments. He does that on his own behalf but also in discussion with the departmental heads about special projects they are doing. Nothing will change in relation to that.

Mr FORWOOD — I hope something changes in the budget process.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I think budget processes can always be improved. I meant in terms of what I thought your specific point was in relation to the Library, Hansard or indeed the other departments of corporate services and infrastructure services. I do not see there will be any radical changes there, except Stephen O'Kane will be involved.

Mr FORWOOD — In the past there was a requirement under the Financial Management Act if money was moved from one output group to another output group. I take it that now we have a different structure money can be taken from the Library and put somewhere else, for example, without the requirement to notify Treasury because of the fact the output groups have been shrunk. What protection is there now which will ensure that the funds which are allocated, for example, to the Library will stay with the Library? What transparency — that is a better way of putting it — will there be for members that there is no internal reallocation of funds inside an output group, given that we have now shrunk them all into the same department?

Mrs MADDIGAN — There is the protection which has always been there in relation to that — that these decisions are made by the presiding officers in association with the senior members of staff, who are the clerks and the other departmental managers. The budgets will be developed in the same way. The amount of funding will be given to departments in the same way. If they are changed, they will have to go through the same strenuous internal processes of Parliament. The presiding officers will still have interests in the areas that have been traditionally theirs, and I cannot imagine that they will sit there quietly and have any of their areas removed from them. The same sort of internal pressures and balances will be there as have been there before.

Mr FORWOOD — Next year, of the \$50 million that goes to your department, I hope the committee will be looking for an analysis that says 'Library', 'Debates', 'Corporate', 'share of overheads', but in a way that the committee is able to track from year to year. If new funds then become available for additional projects that the Library wishes to put forward, then I think we need a note to the accounts to show that.

Mrs MADDIGAN — They would be identified in the same way as they are now in the budget papers — any projects we put up for special and new funding are normally identified there — but they certainly are identified in the budget papers that we prepare and the information that we send down to the PAEC.

Ms GOULD — The processes the Parliament has in place for putting its submissions to government to get funding have not changed by having one more person employed in the Parliament.

The CHAIR — That was not our point. The questions are about making sure that the departments all get what they require.

Ms GOULD — No, but the process for the Library or Hansard or Joint Services or anybody else is that they put in their bids and then we put in these submissions to the government. If the Library needs to employ x number of staff, if it wants to run particular projects, if it wants to improve the search engines that are there, it puts up the projects just like anybody else.

Mrs MADDIGAN — The department heads are pretty good at defending their departments, I can tell you!

The CHAIR — We have just flagged two questions from me and one from Mr Forwood that are of particular interest to us.

By way of supplementary, given you have talked about each department having clarity in its income and Ms Gould has referred to the number of staff they employ, do I take it that the head of Hansard or the Library has the ability to organise staff numbers and configurations the way they wish, or do they need to go through the presiding officers?

Mrs MADDIGAN — They always have.

The CHAIR — They do?

Ms GOULD — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Via the new kid on the block.

Mrs MADDIGAN — But it still ends up with the presiding officers.

The CHAIR — That is all I needed to know.

Ms GOULD — The Speaker and the President are still required to sign off the warrant to employ anybody in the Parliament.

Mr FORWOOD — It is a good thing that he has broad shoulders.

The CHAIR — My next question relates to how the Parliament ensures it complies with the commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act and how the Parliament in the next 12 months will ensure that all people in Victoria — be they people with a hearing impairment, a mobility issue, a sight issue — are part of the celebrations and the events that occur here. I have a couple of specific examples, but from you, first, I would like some comfort to know that this Parliament knows that the Disability Discrimination Act exists both nationally and on a state basis and that the state disability plan exists.

Mrs MADDIGAN — I can assure you that the staff are quite competent. They are aware of all the state legislation. In relation to our celebration of Parliament, as I was explaining previously, it is about trying to involve the whole state. One of the reasons for having a travelling exhibition in country towns — and when I say country towns I do not mean Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo; I mean country towns further north, further east and further west — is to ensure that people who have mobility problems have access to it.

In relation to the Parliament, disabled access has been improved for members of Parliament. I think I mentioned this last year. It is unacceptable that people who have mobility problems have to use disabled toilets in the downstairs area when everyone else can use toilets near where the chambers are. Those toilets are being changed during the winter break to given them both disabled access. Perhaps this is as good an occasion as ever to tell you all that the men's toilets near the Library and the women's toilets near the Queen's Hall will be swapped over. This is a warning to you; I would hate anyone to come to grief over it.

This building is difficult. Because of a number of heritage aspects we do not have the capacity to make changes as much as we want. If people who have specific disabilities let us know beforehand, we try to make special provision to enable them to access areas that are difficult because of the stairs. In some areas it is just impossible to do it because of the heritage problems, but the Parliament is keen to have people, whomever they are, whatever disabilities or personal problems they have, to have access to Parliament as much as everybody else and access to their MPs.

The CHAIR — By way of specifics, the Assembly was changed. If you are in a wheelchair it is terrific: you are able to have the lift, now, to get you into the Assembly and you are physically part of the Assembly. The problem is the height is so low that you cannot see anything.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Tall people can.

The CHAIR — You have talked about the heritage aspects. My plea is: when there are changes made, given the costs involved, we make sure that everyone is able to use them. Secondly — —

Mrs MADDIGAN — Can I answer the first one?

The CHAIR — No. Can I keep going, if you do not mind? In relation to the 150th celebrations, will there be hearing loops put in? Will there be occasions, as a matter of course as opposed to people having to ask, on certain days we advertise that there will be Auslan signers, for example? Will some of our publications be in braille? When might we expect that those wonderful pamphlets that are distributed far and wide will in the not-too-distant future also be published in braille?

Mrs MADDIGAN — In relation to the wheelchair, if you are tall you can see out of it, but I have already asked the builders whether they can raise the lift on that floor. Once again, we have to get heritage approval, but we are going ahead to fix that so it will be resolved.

In relation to publications in braille or in relation to hearing, there is some access now for people who are hearing impaired. We are happy to provide access, as long as the government wishes to fund us for it. It is the government's act, so if it would like to provide extra funding for us, we are more than happy to do it.

In relation to your request on signing, my answer is the same as it was last year.

Ms ROMANES — As a supplementary, what about the level of compliance in electorate offices?

Mrs MADDIGAN — That has been raised with us, and I mentioned earlier that as part of our guidelines for electorate offices we are seeking to have electorate offices that have disabled access. Unfortunately it is exceptionally hard to find them in certain circumstances, and some of our members in offices now do not wish to move. Certainly in relation to our forward planning and in the standards that we have laid down for electorate offices, we will be endeavouring to make sure that everyone has disabled access.

The other point is that members of the public have access to their members of Parliament in the Parliament building, because it does have disabled access. For many people, if they have a problem in gaining access to the electorate office they can have access through the Parliament.

In some cases members of Parliament have an agreement that they will see people in another office in the area where there is disabled access. That is not ideal, because obviously if you are disabled you should not have to have special provisions made for you, but we endeavour to ensure that as many people in Victoria as possible get access to their elected members, which is as it should be.

Ms ROMANES — Can you make it a requirement if we move in the future?

Mrs MADDIGAN — It is in our standards for new electorate offices.

The CHAIR — By way of suggestion, the Department of Human Services has a brilliant team that helped formulate the state disability plan implementation plan. They would be terrific to brief if one of your in-service days wanted to cover that as a topic.

Mrs MADDIGAN — Thank you.

The CHAIR — One final question from Mr Clark.

Mr CLARK — Back to the question of IT. You referred earlier, in answer to Mr Merlino's question, to the availability of the Blackberry, which might be of some assistance. I gather the monthly service charges on that are going to be quite high.

Mrs MADDIGAN — About \$70 I think.

Mr CLARK — One of the biggest disappointments for me from the revamped Parlynet is the near impossibility of using the feature of remote access to electorate office-based data from Parliament and elsewhere. You mentioned that you were looking at incremental opportunities for improvement to the system.

Is remote access to electorate office-based data one of those aspects that you are looking at, and if so can you tell us where you are at?

Mrs MADDIGAN — I might get Grant to answer that one for us.

Mr INWOOD — The current system for remote access into Parliament, which is from a member's laptop, is currently going through a trial with a number of members who were allocated through the IT subcommittee to enable the same service to be delivered through a member's home ADSL or cable broadband connection. That is our first step. Are you referring to performance at electorate offices themselves?

Mr CLARK — No, I was referring to access in a timely and functional way to electorate-based files on the server at the electorate office from home or from another place.

Mr INWOOD — Any Internet connection anywhere in the world will be able to access it. There is an additional security token, and that cost will be passed back to members — I think it is around \$100 — to enable access from any Internet connection in the world back to those files in Parliament and back to the office.

Mr CLARK — That is exciting news. What is the timing?

Mr INWOOD — It is currently going through a final trial right now with members. That will be concluded within the next four weeks and then it can go live.

The CHAIR — Thank you to the presiding officers and to their assembled team. We appreciate the fact that you have all given us your morning's attention. I also thank those who helped prepare those copious files. A copy of the transcript will be circulated to you for any corrections, and we will be providing you with some follow-up questions.

Witnesses withdrew.