

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2014–15

Melbourne — 12 May 2014

Members

Mr N. Angus

Ms J. Garrett

Mr D. Morris

Mr D. R. J. O'Brien

Mr C. Ondarchie

Mr M. Pakula

Mr R. Scott

Chair: Mr D. Morris

Deputy Chair: Mr M. Pakula

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

Witnesses

Ms C. Fyffe, Speaker, Legislative Assembly,

Mr B. Atkinson, President, Legislative Council,

Mr R. Purdey, Clerk, Legislative Assembly,

Mr M. Tricarico, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Council, and

Mr P. Lochert, Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services.

**Necessary corrections to be notified to
executive officer of committee**

The CHAIR — Good morning, everyone. I declare open estimates hearing 4 for 2014, with the parliamentary departments. I welcome the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Honourable Christine Fyffe; the President of the Legislative Council, the Honourable Bruce Atkinson; the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Ray Purdey; the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council, Mr Matthew Tricarico, representing the Clerk of the Legislative Council; and the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Mr Peter Lochert. I understand from the committee side that Mr Scott is an apology for this session.

This hearing is being webcast, as are all the hearings of this session of estimates. In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public gallery that they cannot participate in any way in the committee's proceedings. Officers may approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the minister, the presiding officers or other witnesses if requested and by leave of myself. Written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the committee secretariat. Members of the media are requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council Committee Room: cameras must remain focused only on the person speaking, with no panning of the public gallery, the committee or witnesses; and any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege, including any comments made on social media from the hearing itself. The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but I remind all that you are required to answer questions in full and with accuracy and truthfulness. Any persons found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty. All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for fact verification within two working days of this hearing. The unverified transcripts and PowerPoint presentations will be placed on the committee's website as soon as they become available. The unverified transcript will be replaced by a verified transcript within five days of receipt.

Following a presentation by the presiding officers, committee members will ask questions relating to this inquiry. Generally, the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. Sessional orders provide a time limit for answers to questions without notice of 4 minutes, while standing orders do not permit supplementary questions. It is my intention to exercise discretion in both those matters, but I ask that you answer questions as succinctly as is reasonable, recognising that the issues we are talking about are not always simple ones; there is some degree of complexity.

I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off or to silent.

The presiding officers now have the opportunity for a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the budget estimates for the Parliament. Welcome, Speaker. Welcome, President.

Overheads shown.

Mr ATKINSON — Thank you, Mr Chairman, and members of PAEC. We are very pleased to be meeting with you again, on this occasion with Speaker, Christine Fyffe. Also I might mention that Matthew Tricarico is here representing Wayne, because Wayne is actually ill today; Matthew has stepped into the breach.

We will fairly quickly run through the overview, which I understand has also been provided to you, so I do not see much value in dwelling on some of that. In fact some of it is material that you are obviously familiar with, including the four streams of the Parliament that are represented on the first page. I would indicate that in terms of budget, there is an increase in total appropriations this year of nearly \$8 million — about \$7.6 million. Most of that relates to special apps and is really a provision because of increased costs associated with salaries, superannuation and so forth for members.

You will notice that in operating revenue we have also had an increase, however, and consistently the government provides us with around a 2.5 per cent increase in our budget each year as a benchmark. We have had discussions about some of the cost pressures, and to some extent that is reflected in this budget on this occasion, but essentially most of it is just due to escalation and also, as you have been advised, to the fact that the Treasurer decided to excuse us on this occasion from the general efficiency dividend for the current financial year that we are in and certainly the next financial year.

There are implications for us down the track, as is explained in these papers, but at this time the Treasurer accepted our arguments that the Parliament was already making significant concessions in terms of meeting higher costs above that 2.5 per cent, which is the general increase that is applied to the Parliament, and the opportunities to actually meet the sort of efficiency dividend given the services that we deliver as a Parliament and also given our position under the separation of powers, if you like, it was welcome that the Treasurer actually accepted our arguments in respect of that general efficiency dividend for the two years in question.

I indicate that in the budget ahead some of our real cost pressures are related now to the election at the end of this year. Elections always cause the Parliament some difficulties. There are some benefits to the Parliament in terms of a lower spend on committees at times, because the committees are not operational through that election period. So there are some swings and roundabouts, but certainly elections have an impost on the Parliament and particularly in a year such as this where we also face a redistribution.

The redistribution in fact gives us some significant issues in terms of the accommodation of members and electorate officers. I think we have got 22 offices that are actually outside areas and will need to be relocated or have some arrangements entered into, and that is providing we are able to accommodate some members within existing offices that we do have in the network. But there are significant pressures there, and if members lose their seats — as well as the number of members who are retiring this year — there are also significant costs to the Parliament in terms of redundancy packages or settlement packages for staff over that period.

One of the cost areas that the Parliament continues to absorb is in rent increases for those electorate offices as well. As I indicated, the government effectively gives us 2.5 per cent as an increment each year to meet additional costs, but at the moment electorate offices are costing us around 6 per cent more as a market trend. I guess in some ways we would regard ourselves as lucky, because the fairly fragile economic circumstances mean that landlords are not actually pushing up rents as much as they would be in a more robust economy. I guess we are a little better off than we might otherwise be in current circumstances, but still that is a 3.5 per cent increase in office rents each year that we are having to absorb. This is real money that is locked into contracts, so we know exactly what our position is in that regard.

We also face higher utilities and precinct rent costs for the Parliament buildings themselves. Utility charges have gone up significantly, again well above that 2.5 per cent over the period. In fact the average cost in precinct utilities is a 6.25 per cent increase, so that has been very significant for us to absorb.

IT leasing and data communications — again, there is an acceleration of expenditure there of around 3.4 per cent between 2011–12 and 2013–14, so over a three-year period. That is a significant expense but certainly not quite as worrying for us and our management as the electorate office rents and parliamentary precinct costs, especially with utilities.

EO salaries and on-costs — there has also been a significant increase there. We had to negotiate a new EBA with electorate officers in this current year. In the prior year we also did an EBA with parliamentary staff. In both cases we had the government tick off the arrangements that we entered into, and we were able to maintain some cost containment in that area with some productivity savings in negotiations with the union and independent negotiators. It was actually quite an interesting process this time, as you are aware, because electorate staff were able to appear themselves and nominate to participate in that EBA discussion. It was ticked off. Certainly it was again above the 2.5 per cent that was allowed, but it has been offset by some productivity savings.

The next slide I will not go into detail about, but that actually does show some of the trend in terms of our budget position. The DPS budget is looking at a deficit in this forthcoming year, which essentially is explained, again, by the higher costs associated with the election, which is this year going to be particular disruptive to our budget because of the redistribution and the imposts that that provides, with staff dislocation, with office issues and so forth, as well as some other aspects of training and so forth for new people coming in — including new members, for that matter — the induction process and so forth. Going forward the deficits in the further two years in the outlook primarily reflect the fact that the general efficiency dividend has not been excused in those future years. We will need to look at some further negotiations with government in that respect.

We have outlined quite a number of achievements there, and rather than go through the whole list, I would categorise those as saying that we have achieved quite a bit in the capital expenditure area. We have completed

the front steps, we have continued the brickworks and we have also done quite a bit of work in terms of rewiring and some of the utilities in the building that are aged, rat eaten and fraying at the edges. But there has been significant work done in repairs to wiring and pipes and so forth, and we are really quite pleased about what has been accomplished in a capital sense. I might say that has been facilitated to some extent also by the government's agreement to provide the depreciation funding on the current valuation of the building, which lifted the money that we had available for some of those maintenance works quite significantly.

The other key achievement, I think, in this area has been in terms of some of the service reviews and the implementation of some of the recommendations out of those service reviews which have covered catering — which was actually in the previous financial year, but clearly we have been monitoring what has been achieved there and ensuring that the implementation was effective — and we have also then gone on to do IT and the library. The focus of those reviews has certainly been about trying to ensure that all the services that the Parliament provides our responsive to the needs of members and support members in doing their work for their constituents. It has not been about wholesale slashing of costs or cosmetic changes, if you like; it has been very much focused on trying to support members in their work.

In closing, the only thing I would indicate is that going forward, particularly in our capital works program, we are focused very much on some of the issues in our master plan related to: OHS and security matters; ensuring that the building's integrity is not compromised by water damage and so forth, which is explained in terms of the continuing brickwork. We are also now starting to look very much at members accommodation. We have had a number of issues flagged in the accommodation area, particularly with the chook house, so we are now very much focused also on what we can do in terms of improving members accommodation going forward.

The CHAIR — Thank you, President. We have until approximately 12 o'clock for questions. I will go straight to the Deputy Chair.

Mr PAKULA — Thank you for that report, President. You would be aware that around pages 300 to 305 of budget paper 3 there is a whole range of performance measures for the Parliament, and maintaining and securing the parliamentary precinct is amongst those performance measures. I understood it to be one of the measures about securing the parliamentary precinct late last year when there was the ongoing dance between the former Speaker and the member for Frankston — they went through periods of placating and outright hostility and the like — that there was a decision announced by the former Speaker that the media were no longer allowed to knock on MPs' doors. I am just wondering if that dictate remains in place or whether or not it is now acceptable for members of the media —

Member interjecting.

Mr PAKULA — Because it is about the question of securing the parliamentary precinct. I am wondering whether or not the media are now allowed to knock on MPs' doors or whether that ban remains in place.

Mr ATKINSON — I guess what we would prefer is, frankly, that people who plan to visit members' offices make some contact by phone first or by other mechanism so that they do not arrive by surprise. One of the problems we have is that members are very keen to have the media visit their offices when it is good news and not so keen to have the media visit their offices when it is bad news. You cannot have it both ways. We are certainly concerned about a number of aspects of security with people wandering around the building. Frankly the media is not the worst of our problems. We have people who are brought in by members and then abandoned by those members to wander around and find their way around the building. We have passes that are issued to people, and we are going through a process of reviewing those passes and who has them and tightening some of those pass registrations to make sure that people do not have them for months after they have left our employ or the employ of members of Parliament and so forth.

So the short answer to your question is that we do not dictate that members of the press should not be allowed to contact members in their offices, but we would really prefer that they made contact by phone first so that there was some understanding that they were keen to meet with that member. Apart from anything else, the member may not even be at their office at that time, so I think there is a courtesy factor involved.

Mrs FYFFE — If I could add to that, Chair, it was not just the member for Frankston who had issues. We had people also having issues with members of the media sitting on the steps in that part of level 3 just waiting, which meant that members felt their telephone calls were not private. We have an issue that there is very little

privacy for members in this beautiful old building; we all know that. If you are using the telephone and you have your door open for fresh air or you may have a voice that carries, there was that concern that there is no privacy for conversations with members of the press sitting on the steps. That was the main complaint I got as Deputy Speaker, and I was a strong advocate that that should not happen. If you are going to knock on the door, knock on the door and go away if no-one answers you. Do not hover outside a member's office because the stress that puts on members — and their freedom to do their work. As we all know, there are conversations that have to be very confidential.

Mr PAKULA — Is that why those signs went up? Those wooden signs saying 'Members only', appeared at the bottom of those stairs on level 3 around about that time?

Mrs FYFFE — I was not Speaker then. Did they appear at the same time?

Mr O'BRIEN — I do not know how this relates to the budget estimates.

The CHAIR — It has been related to security, so I will allow it.

Mrs FYFFE — Yes.

The CHAIR — President, if I might just make the observation, as I am sure you are aware, Parliament House in Canberra has a two-tier structure in terms of day passes for accompanied visitors and unaccompanied visitors, which are much harder to get. I am sure you are considering that, but if you are not, it may be worth considering.

Mr ATKINSON — Thank you.

Mr ANGUS — I would just like to follow up on a matter that you, President, raised in your presentation in relation to a matter that we raised last year in these hearings and that has also been identified in the reports of the departments — that is, the fatigue management policy. I am wondering if you can give us a further update in relation to that in terms of the progress, the costs involved, any financial impact of that strategy so far and whether there has been an actual reduction in the issues surrounding that.

The CHAIR — That is many questions when one is allowed.

Mr ANGUS — It is all interrelated, Chair.

Mr PAKULA — Note I made no objection.

Mr ATKINSON — As presiding officers we are obviously responsible for the staff here at Parliament, and we also are mindful of our responsibilities with members of Parliament. We certainly are concerned about the prospect of members driving home late at night and perhaps running into a tram stop or suchlike because of fatigue. With staff it is not so bad in terms of them driving because we are able to make other arrangements for them under the EBA and under responsible employer management processes, but there are obviously costs associated with fatigue management.

Essentially the fatigue management mostly arises out of late sittings, and essentially it is the Legislative Council that seems to be the major culprit in terms of late-night sittings. I did take the opportunity in coming to you today of extracting some costs on that. I indicate that for the current year, 2013–14, the additional cost of late-night sittings — that is, beyond 11 o'clock at night, when we would be expected to conclude the adjournment debate, or thereabouts — has been \$47 527, and that has encompassed all of the fatigue management issues, which include some rostering changes and trying to ensure that people get adequate rest before the time they are expected to come back and report.

That does not cover everybody, because the clerks are there at stumps, and they are there at the beginning. What we try to do with Hansard, for instance, is roster people, because they are there for much longer than the house is sitting, editing and preparing *Hansard* for the next day's meeting. So there are significant costs associated with it, and we are very mindful of our responsibilities as an employer, and indeed also as chairs of the house, to make sure that we do have regard to people's health in this respect. I guess I am particularly concerned about members with late-night sittings as well as with the staff, and not just with the costs associated with it.

Mrs FYFFE — That is a concern we share — with the late-night sittings — and it is often not just the actual day that people are working so late and having just those few hours of sleep; it is the following days. As we know, there is the exhaustion on Thursday nights, and you are going to functions and going to meetings on Fridays. It is often the Saturday that the exhaustion really hits, and it is a concern that we have of members being overtired. I think we are just very fortunate that we have not had any incidents.

Mr ATKINSON — We have undertaken a training program too for staff under the fatigue management plan that we have.

Ms GARRETT — I refer to budget paper 3, page 300, and the output summaries for the Parliament. I refer to the Parliament House gift shop, which opened last year. I guess there is some concern that it may not have captured the public's imagination as may have been hoped. I ask whether you can advise the committee what the total costs for the shop are, including staffing, revenue and final profits, since it opened last year.

Mrs FYFFE — I can answer that one. The gift shop has been slow — the sales have been slow. I think some of that might have been the anticipation of what the market wanted and what the actual market really wanted to buy. There have been a lot of changes made in the purchasing in that we now have a majority of Victorian-made products in the shop — of higher quality. We are also changing in that tours are being led back through to the gift shop. I am not talking about the school groups, because that is a different tour market, but the more mature markets are being led back through the gift shop. We have seen an increase in sales, but it is still being subsidised.

The staffing has changed in that there is other work the staff can do while they are in the gift shop. But it is a concern; I quite understand your question with that. I think it just needs an extra six or eight months of evaluation to see whether it should be continued. It is something we have to continue to look at. It has been a good experiment, and it has been something that is showing results. The increases have come. We have anticipated sales for the current financial year of 48 000. We need to bring that up to double. We just have to work harder at that.

Ms GARRETT — A supplementary, if I may: could you give the committee the actual figures about profit and loss?

Mr ATKINSON — The current subsidy is \$22 000.

Mr O'BRIEN — President and Speaker, I have a question about depreciation, which you touched on in your presentation. We note that the depreciation item has increased from a sum of \$6.5 million in the 2011–12 actuals and the 2012–13 budget to a sum of 15.2 in the 2012–13 actual, and then ranging between 14.9 and 14.7 in the out years. Could you please explain the drivers of this level of depreciation expenses and also particularly why that increase has occurred?

Mr ATKINSON — The only driver of the depreciation money itself is a revaluation of the building. The building is valued on a replacement cost, and it was revalued some 18 months ago. Essentially that revaluation yielded an increase in the depreciation of the level that you have discussed.

Mr O'BRIEN — Reflective, maybe, of the wear and tear to the building; was it to do with that?

Mr ATKINSON — No. That is certainly where, largely, depreciation is expended, in maintenance and dealing with the wear and tear of what is an iconic and indeed Victoria's first building — the most important building is the context in which I use the word 'first'. But no, we are using accounting standards, and under current accounting standards it is simply that that amount of money reflects the valuation of the building and the sum of money that applies to that.

Mr O'BRIEN — Once the value had been increased?

Mr ATKINSON — Yes.

Mr PAKULA — I want to ask a couple of things about the Legislative Council. It is my last hurrah. I am going back to my LC days. These late-night sittings — I think you said \$45 000. I have noticed that when you get to that 11.30 period and you have the supper break, there seems to be a queue going almost all the way back

to the doors of the library on some nights. How many people are you catering for when you have these late-night sittings past 11.30, apart from the 40 members?

Mr ATKINSON — I am not sure we know — —

Mr LOCHERT — We will have to take that on notice — —

Mr ATKINSON — It is possible we are catering for some participants in the nightclubs of the city, because I agree there is quite a parade that attends. Clearly when the Parliament sits beyond those hours we are not just, as you rightly point out, talking about members of Parliament, and we are not just talking about the clerks and the attendants in the house itself; we are talking about people who are required to be there in the library, in the dining room, in Hansard, in security, in IT, broadcasting and so forth. So there are a significant number of people. The Clerk actually informs me that on our last account, for the last occasion, we looked at 80 people involved in — so in other words, double the number of members for that late-night sitting.

Mr PAKULA — It is slightly off topic, but it goes to the operation of the Legislative Council again. You gave evidence about the deficit that the Parliament is going to run, and you talked about the operation of the committees. These Legislative Council committees that operate on Wednesday nights — have you had any example when you have had more than one committee meeting at any one time — and I am sure members of the government will take a slightly different view about this than I would, but when you have got such a sparse budget for committee work and it is so strained, it strikes me that these committees are sometimes being called on to meet for no other purpose than to ensure that debate does not run into the evening, because if one committee meets, the Parliament effectively adjourns at 6.30. Some of the inquiries have unusual terms of reference, and some of the terms of reference that have been proposed by the opposition have been knocked back. Are these upper house committees, given the very limited resources that the committee system has, providing the Parliament with the best value for money in the way they are being run at the moment?

Mr ONDARCHIE — On a point of order, Chair, is it the role of the Presiding Officers to make judgement on the value that the committees are delivering to the Parliament?

Mr PAKULA — I am sure the President is pretty experienced; he can handle it.

Mr O'BRIEN — I think he can handle it, but on the point of order, it is not the role of these committees to provide — —

The CHAIR — I have sufficient to rule. I think everyone understands the point the deputy chair is seeking to make. Perhaps a little more precision in language would assist, but I think the point that is being made is reasonable, and I will allow the President to answer.

Mr ATKINSON — There have been some occasions where more than one committee has met on a night, but I would say not very often. It is not really within my purview to determine whether or not the actual work of the committees on any particular meeting is an effective use of time and resources. Certainly the committees have provided some very worthwhile reports to the house. The process by which they arrive at those reports I am not really in a position to comment on, because I am not sitting in on their meetings.

I would say that I do not know that we have utilised the committees in the upper house in the way that perhaps was expected when they were set up. I think there was a view by all parties that perhaps we could explore some really valuable territory in terms of legislation and particularly legislation review — to use those committees to perhaps take some of the pressure off the committee-of-the-whole process within the Parliament and to draw some witnesses in, go through legislation and perhaps give full consideration to some proposed amendments from all sides of the house.

Certainly in the previous Parliament the government actually accepted some amendments from the opposition in a committee process. That was certainly the way I think the committees were envisaged to work. There has not been a lot of evaluation of legislation through those committees, and as I said, I think many of us expected more of that would occur. The references have certainly proceeded, and as I said, whilst I am not in a position to actually judge the worth of the process or the value of the process, I can certainly indicate to the deputy chairman that the reports that have come to the Parliament have been useful reports.

Mr ONDARCHIE — At last year's budget estimates the committee heard that security was going to be one of the priorities for 13–14, and one of the performance measures relating to security reads as follows, 'Maintain and secure the parliamentary precinct and have it available for legislative program'. Last budget the expected outcome for this measure was 95, and the actual result was 100. I know we have seen an incident recently where a pack of clowns decided to inhabit the Legislative Council, and despite your request for them to move, they would not. What would it take for the performance measure outcome to be less than 100?

Mr ATKINSON — I am not sure that we achieved 100 in that previous year either. I think this is one of those areas where it is difficult to actually really describe effectively some of the outputs and where we are sort of straitjacketed into performance measures that I am not sure necessarily reflect the nature of the organisation we are dealing with here in the Parliament. When you mentioned the word 'clown', I assume you meant the one associated with the Tecoma protest, or were you referring to another incident a little later on?

Mr ONDARCHIE — There was a couple, President. There was the clown that turned up relating to the Tecoma incident, and there was a group that decided to settle into the gallery late at night and would not move as well.

Mr ATKINSON — Yes. One of the interesting things that we need to bear in mind is that this is a place where people ought have access to their members of Parliament and to the debates that proceed on a range of topics. In many cases some of the legislation that comes before the house is contentious, so you can understand that on occasion people become involved to an extent that we would perhaps seek to reduce.

The clown situation was neither here nor there. Yes, he was associated with the protest; yes, it was the sort of costume, if you like, that would not normally be tolerated in the house, but from my point of view, sitting in the chair that day — —

Mr PAKULA — Have you seen the member for Benalla's ties?

Mr ATKINSON — No. Drawing attention to it would have made the matter worse. In respect of groups that come into the Parliament, we are looking a little bit more closely at some of them. In fact we are about to circulate a guidance note. The Speaker has approved a guidance note for the Legislative Assembly, and we are just checking that in respect of whether or not we will put it out in full or with some modification for the upper house. The guidance note is about behaviour in the Parliament and briefing people coming into the galleries before they get there.

I am keen, as I think is the Speaker, on a soft touch for some of this security. We have invested quite a lot in security changes. There has been a change in the contractor; there is now a better contractor involved in the private security people who are supporting the Parliament. There is certainly more training and so forth for those people.

We have a lot of security incidents that go unnoticed. A lot of knives and weapons and all sorts of things are confiscated that people are not aware of, but they are significant. Dare I say that in almost every case none of them is intended to be malicious; they are inadvertent. It is a bit like people taking a nail file onto an aeroplane or something; I do not think there is anything malicious in those, but nonetheless we need to be vigilant, and we are.

Regarding other aspects of security, we have tightened access to the premises at each of the gates so that people now need their swipe cards to get through them. Again that is in response to some of the incidents and the way this property and members in particular need to be protected; members, visitors and staff all need to be protected. In the gallery sense we have implemented a number of protocols so that unsavoury incidents ought not occur in the future.

Mrs FYFFE — If I could also make some comments on this just to give you some perspective, we have over 80 000 visitors who come into this Parliament, and there are over 1800 pass-holders moving around freely. As we all know, many members have groups coming in and are hosting them. When the bells go you leave them to their own devices because you have to get into the chamber. It is about managing that in a pleasant way so that security is maintained.

The building was not purpose-built — it is a beautiful old building, but it certainly was not purpose-built like the new Parliament House in Canberra where everything is segregated — and there are difficulties in managing that. We have got media moving from the gardens to the front steps and back for press conferences, and often the time frame is tight. If you have a cameraman who has not got an accredited pass, as happens — the journalists have one, but you often have a TV guy lugging heavy equipment who does not, and we have to make sure they have free access and can move quickly, but we also recognise that we have to bring in measures to protect everybody who is working in this environment.

It is continually being reviewed. Whether we will get 100 per cent, I do not know, because incidents happen, some of them unintentionally and some of them intentionally. As the President said, we would rather do it in a warmer, softer way. Members complain to us about security. Members just want to be able to come in and to bring people in. When we have official guests and we have to get permission for them to come into the Parliament without going through security there is a process that we must follow. So we are trying to keep members and staff safe without prohibiting the free access of the people of Victoria to what is their building.

Ms GARRETT — That is a good segue to the next question, again regarding budget paper 3, page 299, the Department of Parliamentary Services mission statement. I want to ask in more detail about the north and south pedestrian entries to Parliament House. At last year's hearing I understand the President stated that the north and south gates were a security blind spot and that works would be undertaken to resolve that matter. Since that time we have seen automatic security gates installed at each side entrance to Parliament, a resurfacing of the 10-metre path and a brick gutter built alongside the Bali memorial at the south entrance as well. I would like you to inform the committee what the total cost of this project is and whether it will solve the security issues you have previously spoken about.

Mr ATKINSON — I will have to take the cost question on notice. Hilton Barr can provide me with a figure today, but I need to take that on notice at this point. It was not astronomical. There is perhaps, I might indicate, some more work that has to be done to make sure that we are also taking the disability access point of view into account as well as security. In other words, those gates have got an opening period and a closing period, and we have got to make sure that people who are mobility impaired are able to get through in that time frame. There is a little bit more work that we are doing on those gates, but essentially the project is complete, yes, and addresses the blind spots we had.

Ms GARRETT — To follow on from that comment — and I was going to ask — there has been considerable commentary about the slowness of the gate. Should there be an incident that raises security issues, certainly a range of people could get through that gate in that time. Is it your advice to the committee that that is about mobility issues, and are you trying to strike a balance there?

Mr ATKINSON — Correct.

Ms GARRETT — Are you comfortable with the time the gate is taking to — —

Mr ATKINSON — Not at the moment. Yes, it is about that balance.

Mrs FYFFE — They are being looked at to see how we can make it quicker and easier — allowing someone who has a disability through but not allowing half a dozen people to come rushing through in that time. We have to fit in with the requirements. It is a very important one to resolve.

The CHAIR — Rather unusually, there is a quick follow-up.

Mr PAKULA — Just to follow up on that, if the concern is people with mobility issues, how are you going to resolve the issue of the enormously heavy gate at the front? If that is closed, I would imagine that someone with a mobility issue would not be able to get through that. That is as big an issue as the gate further up the path.

Mr LOCHERT — If I may take that one. If you go to the heritage gate and you open it today, you will notice that it has been redone. It has been completely changed. You just push it and it opens up by itself.

Mr PAKULA — It has been lubricated.

Mrs FYFFE — So do not push too hard or you might fall over.

Mr LOCHERT — Do not push too hard or it will go through to Metro. With the security gate further up, I think it is important to note that we have to comply with disability access standards. That dictates the speed of the gate and the reaction. We are working on that, but it is also important to note that there are cameras on those gates and that the PSOs, attendants and contractors monitor access to those gates. So if anybody has any difficulty or if something happens, it is subject to the normal monitoring that is happening around the perimeter.

Mr ANGUS — My question is in relation to the secure document management system and the policy and the project surrounding that, just in relation to the original valued cost and actual cost, and the original timing and expected timing on it.

Mr ATKINSON — Basically the project started in October 2013 with an anticipated budget cost of \$200 000 and we would expect that in fact that budget cost will be met. In other words, the project will not go over that. The expected completion date at this stage is May of this year — so effectively this month — with full implementation within the next six weeks. So by the end of this financial year effectively there will be full implementation of that project. I think that covers your question.

Mr PAKULA — I want to ask about the library. There has been a degree of contention about the project that has seen to be putting an efficiency requirement on the library and the way it has been operating. I note that the collection of local papers has recently been removed. The library has also, I understand, stopped taking archived copies of the daily papers, and that is an historical archive that goes back to the 1840s. Have those archival works been ceased because of budget cuts to the library?

Mr ATKINSON — No. Essentially the archival changes have been because there are simply other people who are collecting that information who are, one, better at it, and two, have more comprehensive facilities. Effectively the value of us duplicating the work that is being done by specialist organisations, particularly with digitisation of materials these days, is not necessary.

You refer to the local papers. Essentially we have very few members who are actually using that facility. It costs quite a considerable amount of money to have subscriptions to all of those local papers. Nearly all of them are online — if not all of them — and most members are accessing the information online. It is also quicker for them to look at those local papers online than it is for us to receive, process and put them out. By the time the members actually get to see them, they could be two or three weeks old. From that point of view it really is about better servicing the needs of members and recognising the changes in technology and so forth, rather than simply trying to cut costs in that area.

Our focus in the library is actually to try get more work into research and information for members and to highlight, as I guess I call them, ‘alerts’ to provide information to members on where they can go to get more information on things and what databases and so forth are available to them. It is really a case of having a more, if you like, interactive library service and one that is really responsive to members’ needs because invariably when members come to the library they want something pretty snappily.

Mr PAKULA — I am encouraged if you are saying that there is no impact on research activity on behalf of members. I suppose I am disappointed though if an archive that has been in operation for 160 or 170 years in the library of the Parliament of Victoria is being downgraded. I understand that there are other organisations that do it, but the Parliament’s archive is an important, I think, historical attribute of the Parliament of Victoria. It seems to me that where, say, the local media library was is now being filled with what you could call pejoratively describe as museum pieces instead. Is that the way we are heading in terms of the operation of the library? Is it becoming a sort of living museum rather than an archive of written material?

Mr ATKINSON — I guess we would look at a situation of saying what is our responsibility in this area, and our responsibility is certainly to archive documents of the Parliament. We think that first and foremost is our responsibility, because we are obviously the best keeper of that sort of documentation. Can we do as well with documents that other people are producing, including newspapers? Probably not. It represents a duplication and we cannot do it as efficiently. Whilst historically it might have been a significant record — mind you, much of those archives are probably off-site anyway, deposited in storage — it is not, I think, the best use of our staff resources and our budget and indeed it is not something that we do as well.

We are looking at a library that is simply more responsive to members’ needs. I take what you say about the display aspects of the library. I guess one of the things I have tried to do in my period as President is to increase

the engagement we have with the public, to celebrate the history of this building and some of its great events, and to ensure that we get a better connection with the community as to the importance of this place, its history and exactly what it does. It is interesting to look at a place like Scotland, for instance, which is a relatively new Parliament. They have got a Parliament without any books and they have got a Parliament without newspapers, effectively, because they are basically all digitised. It is all using modern technology. In this day and age you sort of say, 'Well, who is using these resources, and is this the best use of space?'. I guess they are the sorts of decisions that we as presiding officers and management are grappling with to make sure that we get the best space.

One of the things I might indicate is that the northern annexe of the library, which has been sort of locked up and effectively home to a photocopier, is now going to be used more, possibly for committee meetings, but more importantly for receiving delegations and so forth. As you know, the facilities in this place are absolutely horrid when it comes to receiving international visitors or people of importance, and they are not so good for the members of the general public either. What we are looking at with that room is it will continue to function as a room of the library and be dynamic in terms of its activities as part of the library, but it will also now be available to perhaps receive some international delegations or suchlike, so that it gets more use and we trade on the ambience of that wonderful space.

Mr PAKULA — A bit like what they have got in South Australia, is that the kind of idea you have got, where there is a space for members to take guests — that kind of notion?

Mr ATKINSON — It would be possible, yes.

Mr O'BRIEN — I might follow up on that in one respect. I have raised this matter informally with the Deputy Speaker, Mr Weller. In relation to the newspapers, I wonder if this could be considered as an alternative for regional newspapers, particularly for country members who are not able to get back to their electorates during a sitting week. A number of regional newspapers do not have much of an online presence, so they are minimalist online. I do believe those newspapers have served a purpose, particularly for those members. Although it is possible sometimes to get your electorate office to find particular articles, in terms of seeing what is in the news, rather than searching for what is in the news, they have been a service. Has any consideration been given to maintaining a collection available of regional newspapers?

Mr ATKINSON — I am actually one of the people who has wandered around up there looking at the newspapers, both regional and suburban, that were around the balustrade there, and I have got to say whenever I am there I am pretty lonely. I am there by myself.

Mr O'BRIEN — I have been up there by myself too.

Mr ATKINSON — Exactly.

Mr PAKULA — Maybe you could hang out together.

Mr ATKINSON — We could coordinate our times. There are very few members who have used that facility, and with the cost of maintaining it and the space it is not a good use of the resource. The interesting thing is that when I looked at those regional papers, for instance, they were often two or three weeks out of date. If a country member is trying to find what is in the paper today or yesterday so that they can raise, for instance, an adjournment item, they are not going to be satisfied by the service we have got at the moment anyway. The local newspaper has to wrap it up and post it to us. Very seldom is that done on the day of publication; it is usually towards the end of that week. It does not get to us until the next week at the very earliest, and then we have got to process it as well. The digital solution is a much better solution, and our experience is that actually most of the regional newspapers do have a digital presence in this day and age. Nonetheless, if there are members who have particular issues with newspapers, then we can make arrangements for those members.

Ms GARRETT — I refer again to budget paper 3, page 299, regarding the department's role in protecting the heritage of the Parliament building. I note that the Parliament has spent \$5.6 million to rebuild the front steps of Parliament House. This was a major project that resulted in the steps being partially closed for 12 months. It now appears that the grout in the steps is breaking down and leaching white residue across the steps. Have you had any assessment done of this problem, or are you planning any such assessment?

Mr ATKINSON — No. That was an expected outcome totally within our planning. In fact the contract that was issued for the steps allows for a further 12 months of support by the contractor. The leaching is a natural process that is associated with the materials used and it is expected to leach for a little while, perhaps another six months or so. Essentially it is not a fault; it is not a problem as such. It is an expected outcome.

Mrs FYFFE — It has to be washed down regularly until it is gone. When the stone has been cut then that is a natural process for that to happen.

Mr ATKINSON — Apart from anything else, a lot of water goes into the stone as part of the process, so there is that natural leaching as the stone starts to adjust and, if you like, dry out to some extent.

Ms GARRETT — So are there further costs associated above and beyond?

Mr ATKINSON — No. As I said, the contractor has an obligation for 12 months beyond the works associated with that leaching process.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Speaker, in the Parliament's *Strategic Directions 2010–2014* document, a priority that is listed is 'Leverage greater value from our information technology systems and processes', and you talk about the age of this building and how it does not necessarily lend itself to modern technology. Could you let us know where we are up to with that project, and whether there is any thought of getting wireless availability through this precinct as well?

Mrs FYFFE — I am rather a Luddite with IT services, so I may have to call for some help with this. But a lot of work is being done with the IT services and is continually being done. In the House Committee there is a subcommittee that works closely with the IT department, looking at what we are doing. There are issues with it, with the cabling and the down time and the programs that we have, with Lotus Notes, and there are plans to change that over a period of time. But with all that, of course, comes great cost. Also we have the electorate offices. Everything has to work in together in the electorate offices and coming back in to our Parliament House offices and also with all our mobile devices. We often fume at the fact that we can be down, out of action, for half an hour or an hour with Lotus Notes, and it is something that is being worked on closely.

Mr PAKULA — I will do the best I can to talk about this in the abstract rather than the specific. We have talked about the security of the building and the security cameras, in particular, in regard to the back gate. There was a well-publicised incident in regard to the front steps, with the taxi protests and the member for Frankston. There was some initial footage released, and then some time later there was some different footage released, and that different footage — maybe all of the footage, but certainly the second lot of footage — came from, it appears, the Parliament's internal security camera network. What is in place to secure that video footage? I do not know whether anybody wants to make comment on how that footage found its way into the public domain, but the question of the Parliament's internal video footage being in the public domain ought to be a matter that exercises the minds of presiding officers and Parliamentary Services. I assume it is not its intention. Say what you can about that particular set of circumstances but also, in the more general sense, about what measures are in place to ensure that the Parliament's internal video footage remains just that.

Mr O'BRIEN — On a point of order, Chair, I know it is an interesting question, but I do not believe it has anything to do with the budget estimates. I know there have been discussions about security and budget implications. This is a question about how footage became available, interesting as it is.

Mr PAKULA — No, it is not. If you actually listened to the question about the footage, the question is about what measures are in place to ensure that video footage taken by the Parliament's internal cameras remains internal.

The CHAIR — That was on the point of order, I assume? I do not uphold the point of order. I believe there is a link to security, and it is a reasonable question.

Mr ATKINSON — Essentially the integrity of that footage is of real importance to the Parliament, and I agree that it would be unfortunate if that sort of footage was released on some occasions and not on others; you either have to have it all the time or not at all. In terms of the nature of that material, I think that it is better that it not be released as part of a media exercise. We have the footage available to assist us in the security of the building and the security of members, visitors and staff. Therefore in most instances the material is only made

available to the police on request where they are investigating a matter related to the security of the building, and the presiding officers are required to agree to the release of that footage to meet a police request. In other words, the police have to establish that there is a need for them to refer to that material. The Speaker and I, from time to time, do look at video incidents so that we are aware of issues, of vulnerabilities, if you like, but those occasions are for our development of better policy and better practice and not for release. In the incident that you talk about, the previous Speaker determined that it was in his view in the interests of the Parliament for the security footage to be released.

Mr PAKULA — Both sets?

Mr ATKINSON — Both sets.

Mr ANGUS — My question relates to a matter that was raised at the estimates hearings last year in relation to the hosting of functions within the Parliament in the dining room and other facilities. My question is: what was the upshot of all that? Was there an increase in the revenue during the most recent year? Has that been profitable? What is the expectation going forward in relation to the hosting of events and so on?

Mr ATKINSON — There has been a 29 per cent increase in revenue from the hosting of functions. We have a dedicated person who is chasing further functions for the Parliament. Clearly there are constraints on when functions can be held because they must not interfere with the fundamental responsibility of the building, which is to house legislators and the staff who support those legislators. But where it is possible we are keen to encourage more use of the building and, again, the engagement with the public, if you like, and with organisations. A lot of the functions that we hold are associated with government departments, government agencies, charity organisations and so forth, and we have been successful, through the officers that we have, as I said, in boosting revenue by around 29 per cent and therefore reducing the cost of running the dining room functions.

Mr ANGUS — I just want to ask a brief supplementary. Presumably, President, that has been run profitably? Despite the revenue going up, that still made a contribution to profit?

Ms FYFFE — For each of the functions, yes; each of the functions that are run by the Parliament operate at a profit. Where the Parliamentary Services dining room comes into a deficit is servicing all the other needs. So each individual function runs at a profit, yes.

Ms GARRETT — I refer again to budget paper 3, page 300, and the output summaries for the Parliament. I would like you to inform the committee how much has been spent on gifts for visiting delegations by the current and former Speakers, and could you advise us who those delegations were and what gifts were received?

Mr ATKINSON — We would have to take that on notice, because it is fairly extensive if you want each person. Can I indicate that our expenditure on gifts to international visitors is not extensive or excessive. Essentially the unit cost of most gifts that we would give to, for instance, an ambassador or an international visitor of some standing who visited the Parliament might be about \$50. It is not a massive cost associated with that, but to get a sum total and indicate the number of people involved I would have to take that on notice.

Ms GARRETT — If you could, that would be much appreciated. Can you advise the committee what the protocol is around the status of those who attract a gift? You mentioned ambassadors. Is there a clear hierarchy, or guidelines if you will, upon which the Victorian public can judge where the money or the gifts have gone?

Mr ATKINSON — I am not sure if there are formal guidelines, but, yes, essentially we work on the basis that it is for ambassadors or consuls general. Gifts are not given on every occasion when we have visits. There are some countries that have a custom of providing gifts, and therefore some reciprocation is important. There are other countries that do not have that sort of custom, and the meetings or visits might occur without any gifts. Usually there is a gift to the head of a delegation if we have a delegation visiting from another Parliament overseas, and we have had a number of delegations from places like Malta, the Philippines and so forth. Then the head of delegation would receive a gift, and other members of the delegation often get one of those little parliamentary books that have the photos of Parliament. Their unit cost is probably about \$10 a piece.

Mrs FYFFE — They retail at \$10.

Mr ATKINSON — They retail at \$10, so they are probably a lower unit cost for purchase. But essentially it is only to heads of delegations, ambassadors and consuls general. There may be some unusual exceptions such as an important visitor who comes to the Parliament, but by and large that is the protocol.

Mr O'BRIEN — In referring to committees, on page 304 of budget paper 3, service delivery, there is reference to parliamentary investigatory committees. I suppose I should put on record that I am a chair of one of these committees now. I want to confirm that the Council committees are included in the Council budget and not in the joint investigatory committee budgets.

Mr ATKINSON — That is correct.

Mr O'BRIEN — Secondly, you will see a quality measure of 98 for 'Committee members satisfied that advice about procedure, research and administration is responsive, clear, objective and prompt'. That is up from an actual in 2011–12 of 96. In general, what is your view about the cost effectiveness and role of joint parliamentary investigatory committees?

Mr ATKINSON — A very good measure this year would be the Family and Community Development Committee report and that inquiry, which entailed some additional resourcing that was provided by the government; so that was extra resourcing compared with what the Parliament had put in. But as a report I think it probably demonstrated the very best of this Parliament and outstanding work by the members of that committee. As I said, when you look at the history of our committees and reports that have been made, over the years many of them have been groundbreaking; and that one into a very sensitive area with an exceptional outcome demonstrates the value of the joint investigatory committees.

Interestingly enough and as I think you would be aware, Mr O'Brien, when you ask most members of Parliament about what they find is the best part of being a member of Parliament, or the most satisfying area of their service as a member of Parliament, they usually nominate the committee work, where they are able to work with members of other parties.

Mr O'BRIEN — That may exclude members of PAEC.

Mr ATKINSON — It may, but by and large the fact that those committees are all-party committees and the nature of the work they do reflects very well on the Parliament.

Mr PAKULA — President, I think you will recall that each year you have been before this committee we have talked about the question of travel and reporting of travel. As you know, MPs submit reports on travel. In fact I have just submitted one to the Speaker. There has been some to-ing and fro-ing about presiding officers reporting over the last few years. My understanding with regard to the current website is it shows for the former Speaker a trip in September and October 2011, but it has not been updated since May 2012, and it is now May 2014. Can you provide the committee with an update with regard to the reporting of travel by presiding officers on the website, whether it is up to date and what gaps need to be filled in? I think in the same way that ministers report via the website, members report via the library. There have been commitments and undertakings made by presiding officers previously, and it would be useful to know how they are being adhered to.

Mr ATKINSON — The website, I am not familiar with. It is not something that I visit very often; I am a bit of a Luddite, I suppose. Certainly travel is reported in annual reports each year, but I agree with you, Deputy Chair, that the website was seen as a way of being accountable as well as having that information more broadly available. If it is not up to date, then as an out-take from this we will check that.

I can indicate that we have documentation on the travel for this past year. My own travel and accommodation is \$17 460. For the former Speaker it was \$29 500, and there are obviously other travel expenses that are related to committees, but you have specifically focused on presiding officers. That is what it has been. As I said, we have always reported in the annual report, but I do accept the point you make about the website and I apologise for any oversight on that.

Mr PAKULA — I appreciate your candour, President. Are those figures you just related for the current financial year?

Mr ATKINSON — Correct.

Mr PAKULA — And the annual report goes to the question of the where, in terms of where the travel has been to?

Mr ATKINSON — Yes, it does. I cannot speak for the previous Speaker; I am not sure of his arrangements. But in my case it was for a trip to Greece and also for a conference associated with the presiding officers and clerks.

Mr PAKULA — Can the Speaker add anything with regard to the Assembly? Does the Legislative Assembly annual report go to the question of where the travel has been to?

Mrs FYFFE — The annual report is about a paragraph long, and I have been trying to remember what it actually says about the travel. First of all, I assure you that I have not done any travel in my short tenure.

Mr PAKULA — I would not have expected you to, Speaker.

Mrs FYFFE — One example is for Speaker Smith; it has the countries and the dates, and a brief report on the actual reason for the travel. This was to Canada and the United States from 5 to 17 August.

Mr PAKULA — I look forward to the website being updated.

Mr ONDARCHIE — President and Speaker, as you were going through the slide presentation at the start of this hearing I reflected on the parliamentary achievements 2013–14, and in particular there is an item that talks about staging two seminars for public servants on parliamentary process. Could you tell the committee what that is all about and what benefit the public servants got from them?

Mr ATKINSON — This is a little bit of plagiarism by me. Essentially at one of the conferences I attended with the presiding officers and clerks it was indicated to us that New South Wales and New Zealand had both implemented programs where they conduct seminars on the function of Parliament — how the Parliament works — for people from government departments. Indeed in New South Wales they have now embarked upon one for the private sector. The basis of it was that many of the people who deal with the Parliament have only an abstract view of what the Parliament is really all about. Most of their involvement might be to prepare PPQs for a minister or perhaps a brief for a speech or to do some work on legislation that is going towards the Parliament. But they do not have an understanding of what the processes of the Parliament are in dealing with any of those items and, particularly in my case with the Legislative Council, what the committee process does and how that works.

As we have discussed at this committee before, there is a bit of a blurring of whether people see the government as the Parliament or the Parliament as the government. What we were very keen to do in picking up the New South Wales idea in particular was to establish these seminars and bring in people from government departments — and we are planning to bring in people from the private sector next year — to have them go through a day process where they are exposed to information on how the Parliament actually works: what the functions of the two chambers are and the differences between the two chambers; what the role of a minister is within the Parliament as distinct from what they see in a government department; how the committee systems work, both the joint standing committees and the committee process within the Legislative Council as part of the proceedings of the Council; and so forth. I indicate that from both of the events — we have had two of the seminars so far — the feedback has been extraordinary. There has been a real appreciation of that initiative. People have gone back to their departments with a much greater understanding, which they are sharing with other people within those departments.

Ms GARRETT — Again I refer to budget paper 3, page 304, and the output reports tabled per annum, and I note your previous answers regarding other work of the investigative committees, how rewarding that work can be and how important it is in terms of scrutiny and contribution to the democratic process in Victoria. The 2014–15 budget anticipates that parliamentary committees will table just 22 reports in this financial year, which is down from 43 reports in 2009–10. My question is: how can Parliament be expected to apply an appropriate level of oversight and scrutinise the actions of this government when investigatory committees are so underresourced and underutilised and are producing half the reports that they were just a few years ago under the previous government?

Mr ATKINSON — It does to some extent reflect that it is an election year this year, albeit that the main impact of the election year is obviously in 2014–15. Nonetheless, because inquiries can take 12 months or more, some of the committees have needed to work to a time frame that will allow them to complete their inquiries and report to Parliament in August or September, or October at the latest. So there is a bit of a wind down, even in the year prior to the election year. Nonetheless, the point that you make is valid, that there are less reports than there have been in previous years. Some of that reflects the work that PAEC has done with some special purpose reports as well, but the resourcing of committees is a matter of some concern to me as to whether or not we have sufficient budget to enable members and committees to undertake the scrutiny that needs to be done.

At the same time, it would also be true to say that the capacity of members to actually participate in some of those inquiries has been a little bit more difficult in this Parliament than in previous parliaments, because of the very fine balance between the parties and the fact that people have all sorts of other jobs to do on both sides. The priority of some of that work that they are doing means that in some committees attendance rates have not been as great as we would have liked to have seen, and the ability of members to participate fully and to support the number of inquiries that perhaps have been held in the past has also been diminished in this Parliament, I think. I am not sure that I understand the full extent of the reasons why that is, and I do not veer away from the fact that resourcing is a factor, but I do indicate that there are some other factors at play as well.

Ms GARRETT — Again, I appreciate your response. Could you give the committee some sort of figure of the shortfall that you are concerned about? Would you put a dollar figure on that — what you think the resourcing needs to be to properly ensure the scrutiny that you refer to?

Mr ATKINSON — Not really, because there are a number of issues that come into that. The first one is: as I have indicated at previous PAECs, I have always had concern that we have too many committees, which is one of the reasons why I think members have difficulty in supporting some of the committee inquiries — they are spread too thin. I think that perhaps the next government — whoever is in government — might look at curtailing the number of committees and trimming them back.

There has been, obviously, a bit of a change in the last few months with committees, with the amalgamation of a couple of committees. I am not sure that went far enough, but that is for a government to decide. If a government decides on a certain number of committees, then the resourcing is crucial to that. One of the things that I would put my hand up for and say was a consequence of having so many committees and of having some constraints in terms of budget was that we, in discussions with committee chairs, asked them to try to complete one inquiry at a time, rather than to have two or three inquiries running. The implication of that is that if you have more than one inquiry running at a time, you tend to need extra staffing for research purposes in particular. So what we were trying to do was to trim the cloth, if you like, to meet the budget that we had.

Can I put a figure on the amount of extra resources that would be needed? No, because it depends, one, on the number of committees, and two, on the number of inquiries that those committees would want to undertake. I think that is a matter that the next government will need to consider fairly carefully.

Mr ANGUS — My question is in relation to the impact of electoral boundary changes that were identified in your presentation and in particular your comment that there are going to need to be 22 offices requiring relocation. My question is: in relation to the inclusion in the budget papers, are those re-allocation and redistribution impacts going to be handled out of existing resources or will other resources have to be brought in, and are they already in the budget that has been prepared?

Mr ATKINSON — A lot of the cost will actually be borne by the Parliament, but we have in our BERC submissions made reference to the government about the implications of the redistribution. Our BERC submission has been, we understand, accepted by the government, so we are expecting that there will be additional resourcing from the government to support us in terms of providing for members with the implications of the redistribution. Nevertheless, there is also a considerable cost to our own budget.

Mr PAKULA — One last one: in budget paper 3, and also in your presentation, President, you made some reference to the efficiency and expenditure reduction measures. Can you or Mr Lochert take us through the budget cuts or the efficiency measures that the Parliament has had to embrace, for want of a better term. What has that meant in terms of loss of staffing positions, and can you break that down by divisions, and I am

particularly interested in the library. How many jobs have gone out of the department and where have they been?

Mr ATKINSON — The library one, I might allow Mr Lochert to take up. The library review, and in fact all of the reviews, have not been about staff cuts per se; they have been about trying to tailor services more effectively to members. Where there are general efficiency dividends applied to the Parliament, we then sit down and proportionately apply those efficiency dividends across each of the four departments; those being DPS, the Legislative Council, the Legislative Assembly and the committees. So that becomes a cost to committees, and one of the issues for us there going back to that previous question.

In terms of the application of that reduced funding, it is really applied by each of the departments according to where they can trim the budget. In some cases it has resulted in some staffing issues. In the Legislative Council, for instance, partly because of the lower volume of work that the Legislative Council committees are doing and partly because of budget constraints, we actually have a number of establishment positions that are represented in the papers that are calculated for the budget but those establishment positions have not always been filled, so there are several vacancies, if you like, where we are not filling positions at this time. That also applies to some of the other departments as well.

In terms of the library, I think the net loss of positions was a net reduction of 4.5 effective full-time jobs with two technical positions transferring to the IT department and one to an administrative position, so 4.5.

Other cost cuts are implemented as well. We look to do keener deals, if you like, with suppliers, whether it is energy suppliers or IT services or Telstra or suchlike. You actually go back and, like any business would, you negotiate pretty fiercely with your suppliers and look for cost savings in those areas as well. The cost savings can be across all aspects of the operation.

Mr PAKULA — Perhaps if the particular jobs in the particular divisions could be maybe taken on notice?

Mr LOCHERT — Certainly, we will take them on notice.

The CHAIR — That concludes the hearings for the parliamentary departments. I think with that last addition there are three matters to follow up on notice: the cost of the north and south gates, the gifts issue and the number of EFTs. We will of course write to you with those details, but we ask that when we do that a response is received by the committee within 21 days. I thank the Speaker, the President, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council and Mr Lochert. Thank you all for your attendance. The hearing is now closed.

Witnesses withdrew.