

VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2010–11

Melbourne — 10 May 2010

Members

Mr R. Dalla-Riva

Ms J. Graley

Ms J. Huppert

Mr W. Noonan

Ms S. Pennicuik

Mr G. Rich-Phillips

Mr R. Scott

Mr B. Stensholt

Dr W. Sykes

Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt

Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

Witnesses

Mr R. Smith, President of the Legislative Council,

Ms J. Lindell, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,

Mr R. Purdey, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly,

Mr W. Tunnecliffe, Clerk of the Legislative Council, and

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

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the 2010–11 budget estimates for the portfolio of the parliamentary departments. Of course it also relates to the appropriation bill for the Parliament.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Honourable Robert Smith, MLC, President of the Legislative Council; the Honourable Jennifer Lindell, MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; Ray Purdey, Clerk, Legislative Assembly; Wayne Tunnecliffe, Clerk, Legislative Council; and Peter Lochert, Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services. Departmental officers, members of the public and the media are also welcome.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public they cannot participate in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, if requested by the President or the Speaker or their chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council committee room.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. There is no need for evidence to be sworn. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript to be verified and returned within two working days. In accordance with past practice, transcripts and any PowerPoint presentations or anything which is circulated will then be placed on the committee's website.

Following the presentation by the presiding officers, committee members will ask questions related to the budget estimates. Generally the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly.

I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off. I now call upon the presiding officers to give a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of the parliamentary departments.

Ms LINDELL — Thanks, Bob. I think there has been a problem with the presentation for the screen but everyone should have a hard copy of what is a fairly brief overview of the departments. As all PAEC members would know, we have four appropriation groups: the Council, the Assembly, the Department of Parliamentary Services and then the parliamentary investigatory committees.

If members look over the page, we have the parliamentary appropriations. The budget is \$93.9 million in annual appropriations, but that includes \$6 million carried forward from 2009–10 to 2010–11, a \$2 million asset funding and special appropriations of \$39.7 million for the financial year 2010–11, so total appropriations in the coming financial year of \$133.6 million.

The next page has what Parliament believes are our significant challenges. Obviously one is the maintenance of the service levels that we have in a climate of fairly restricted resources. We have two EBAs which we need to implement from within existing resources: the electorate officers enterprise agreement as well as the parliamentary officers enterprise agreement.

On the development of the video webcasting of parliamentary sessions, as members of the Assembly are familiar with, we webcast for the first time from the Assembly last Tuesday. It is hoped the Council will be on board in August-September of this year, and then the next stage will be to webcast committee hearings as well. There is an ongoing development of the parliamentary precinct master plan and I can provide more information on that later, if members wish. We are also undergoing a significant upgrade of the security infrastructure on the parliamentary precinct, particularly around the Parliament House building, but then also into the car park and access to the car park in a next stage of that security infrastructure upgrade.

We continue with the heritage asset management strategy. The stage we are in at the moment is expected to continue until September 2011. That is all of that work occurring on the library wall, which has impacted, I am aware, on members whose offices are on the third floor in particular, but there is very little that can be done. A whole range of strategies have been put in place to minimise the impact on members, but it is a project that must occur, and must occur in a timely fashion.

Then of course we have the planning around the state election; the planning of offices that change. There is an average of about 70 electorate officers who will become eligible for redundancy packages. There are always issues around location of offices, but also all those IT and security issues that need to be looked at in preparation for and after the state election.

They are the challenges as we see going forward, and we would like to comment a little on what we see as our achievements from the last financial year. Obviously with the new EBAs for the electorate officers and the parliamentary officers, a lot of work and a lot of negotiation from staff that have carriage of those EBAs. We have completed 12 relocations or refurbishments of electorate officers to date, with still a couple to finish in this financial year. The redevelopment of the internet site and the creation now of a single database for all media releases, which I think has been an excellent innovation.

Obviously we continue with the heritage asset management strategy. The stone restoration works has continued into the next stage and we are now on stage 2 of the heritage tile conservation project. And of course we have started the development of the precinct master plan. We continue to look at the sustainability issues around Parliament and have improved our waste management.

We had an open day in March where we had 4000 visitors. It was a terrific day. We had the navy band playing on the front steps at the beginning of the day and the police band out in a marquee in the gardens in the afternoon. It was a terrific day and in my view it is one of the best things we actually do for the people of Victoria, rather than passing legislation and delivering democracy. It is a day that people who come really, thoroughly enjoy. I think it is well worth the expense and the dedication of the staff, who absolutely deliver for us on a day.

Parliament's IT we continue to upgrade. Lotus Notes got moved to the 8.5 upgrade. The electorate office multifunction device of course, as everyone would know, has been replaced. We have replaced the PCs in the precinct. The opposition rooms has had new desktops, notebooks, servers and printers. We have implemented a new data backup system and we have scoped and scheduled a data storage upgrade. One of the biggest issues going forward is actually how we do manage to backup all our data that each of us as members of Parliament wish to keep on file and the difficulties that causes the organisation in terms of the size of what we, perhaps, allow or what we have to cater for at the moment. The virtual server platform has been upgraded.

We have released another community education DVD — the fifth one — *From Westminster to Spring Street — Governing Victoria*. The Parliament has conducted five regional visits. This is where our attendants go out and conduct parliamentary role plays and parliamentary information talks. We have been to Benalla, Echuca, Sale, Warragul and Colac and delivered that program to over 1000 students, and of course we have broadcast the parliamentary proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that, and thank you for your questionnaire. I think the parliamentary services department was the first one we received in its completeness. I congratulate you on that. The budget obviously allocates funds for next year and subsequent years through the appropriation bill for the Parliament. I just wondered if you could explain in a little bit more detail your medium and long-term strategies in terms of the Parliament, and what you are basing your future plans on in terms of the money that you have or are seeking to get in the appropriation bills. You have mentioned a couple of them already. Perhaps you could just tell us a little bit more about the longer-term and medium-term strategies that you have.

Ms LINDELL — As far as the long-term projects go, they will be decided upon and staged in response to the precinct master plan when it comes forward. I will talk a little bit about the master plan and some of the issues that we are looking at within the master plan, because there is a whole range of investigations and reports that will actually feed into the delivery of the master plan.

We are obviously looking at access. We know we have security problems with the number of access points that we have. The two in particular that cause the greatest problem are probably the two from the balcony into both the members dining room and the hallway into Strangers Corridor. They are particularly difficult on sitting days as to what we do moving forward with those. I think members would be aware that a few years ago we restricted access to the bottom doors. There is also the issue of vehicle access onto the precinct whereby you actually cannot move people out. Once they are at the boom gate, even though you are saying, 'No, we don't

want you on the precinct', there really is nowhere for them to go other than around the loop and out again, and the loop brings them right up to the back door. There are fairly wide considerations about access.

Of course there are all those issues around power, water and all those mechanical and electrical issues in a building that is 150 years old, and we are certainly looking at all of those: the fire services, the lifts, landscaping, occupational health and safety, the structural integrity of the building, the front steps, the continuing of the stonework on the outside; it just goes on and on as far as what we need to consider in any move forward.

I think I have stated a number of times that I would like to get to a position whereby all members have an office in the Parliament House building and those offices would, in the longer term, allow room for a staff member and they would have at least shared printing and photocopying facilities. Obviously we also need more bathrooms. It is a very detailed process. I think the longer term will be absolutely in response to the precinct master plan, and I would think it will be a long-term project of 20 to 30 years.

In the short term we continue on those things that we can and that stand a little bit outside the master plan itself, which would be the heritage asset management strategy. That work is being done. The stonework will simply continue into stages 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 as we go around the building. At some stage work will have to be done on the front steps. That project is obviously one that will continue for a long time, but there will certainly be a rolling process of stonework.

In terms of the heritage tiles, if anyone would like to just walk into the vestibule, you can see where the tiling there is very worn in parts. We are having a very detailed look at how we can actually repair that. Obviously that is done hand-in-hand with Heritage Victoria, and we are taking its advice at every step. We have done an audit of the tiling — I think it is on the Council side on the second floor — so that we can start in perhaps not such a prominent position as the vestibule and make sure that the way we go about it is absolutely right before we move into something as public and high profile as the vestibule.

Some of the other medium-term projects are access to the car park, the visitors centre management, and how we try to keep public and private access points to Parliament.

Mr SMITH — I would just like to add to what the Speaker has outlined, which is absolutely correct — that we will be governed by the master plan going forward for a number of years now — but I also want to remind people that that master plan is structured in such a way that it has incorporated input from a whole range of people, including members and staff — everyone involved with the Parliament has had input. I see that as ongoing. Priorities, et cetera could change but that will be the result of input — maybe not so much agreement — from a whole range of people.

I have to put on the record that a ceramicologist, a particular woman, has provided us with an extraordinary product in replacement tiles, which are quite outstanding and have a very aged — I wanted to say ancient — look about them; they are quite expensive but they fit in perfectly. I just wanted to get that name on the record because I had not seen before.

Dr SYKES — Could you just say it one more time?

Mr SMITH — Ceramicologist.

The CHAIR — Was it the ceramicologist or was it the expensive bit?

Mr SMITH — There is already some concern, not necessarily angst, about what may end up being the car park policy, because there will be some changes to what currently exists, but that has to be done in accordance with both the safety and security requirements of the building and the fact that we have such a long ongoing maintenance building program that we will have a restricted area of parking.

Mr WELLS — Speaker, you mentioned the heritage asset management strategy, which will be completed in September 2011. What was the original cost of this project, what do you see as the final cost, and what is the discrepancy or variation between the two?

Ms LINDELL — Stages 3 and 4 will be completed in September 2011. They are the stages that we are working on at the moment. We have plans for stages 5 and 6 and thoughts of what stage 7 might be. It is definitely an ongoing project. My understanding was that Parliament received \$9 million.

Mr LOCHERT — The original funding approved was \$9 million over three years. The rate that the works progressed in the first year, where the destructive audits found that the condition of the building was much worse than we expected, meant that the works were delayed. We only spent about \$6.8 million over four years, roughly. Some of that funding was carried forward into the fourth year, and some of the works were completed. But the total against the discrepancy, if you will — against that original approval — was \$9 million approved, \$6.85 million scheduled. The estimated cost or the budget for the next two years — that is, 2010–11 and 2011–12 — is about \$4.5 million for the first year and \$1.65 million for the second year.

Mr WELLS — So are we saying \$6.8 million, plus \$4.5 million, plus \$1.6 million against \$9 million?

Mr LOCHERT — It is 6.8, plus 4.5, plus 1.65. There have been two sets of approvals, I guess. The initial approval was \$9 million.

Mr WELLS — That is for stages — —

Mr LOCHERT — They were stages 1 and 2.

Mr WELLS — So stages 1 and 2 was \$9 million. Stages 3 and 4?

Mr LOCHERT — They are \$4.5 million and \$1.65 million. I am working off memory here, so I am happy to confirm each one of those figures.

Mr SMITH — The 9 was not spent.

Mr WELLS — No, that has been explained. So are you saying that between the original cost and what is actually happening — in actual spent — what will the variation be?

Mr LOCHERT — Per stage, it depends on how you look at it. Because it is up to a 15 to 20-year project, it really is only being costed in three or two-year tranches, depending on what we find on the condition of the building. Each one of those tranches is actually submitted for approval with a new estimate and a new budget.

I cannot give you a 20-year cost. I can give you a three-year initial estimate, which was for \$9 million approved; \$6.8 million spent. The second tranche, which is stages 3 and 4, the estimate was \$4.5 million in the first year, \$1.65 million in the second year. That has been approved. Depending on where we go with the destructive audits and as we take some of the old sandstone off, we find what the scope of the works is, and we submit again a new scope of works for approval.

It has become a rolling process where in part also the risk management requires that we cart it in small amounts rather than have one big overall estimate that may be out. The first 2 or 3 years you can cost; but going out 4, 5 or 10 years, you cannot.

Mr WELLS — So is the cost structure based on cost plus margin? Is that the way that contract is with the builders — cost plus margin?

Mr LOCHERT — Yes, pretty much. What we have done is to contain the risk and also to contain the cost. We have taken, for example, purchase of the stone is one estimate; works is another estimate; infrastructure is another estimate. Between stages 1 and 2 and stages 3 and 4 a significant amount of work was to remove scaffolding and lifts and things like that. We negotiated with the contractor that instead of dismantling and removing, it would be built in such a way that you could just, if required, swing one end of scaffolding across. That saved around \$245 000. That \$245 000 is not a cost that accrues to the contractor. It comes back to us, and we can then apply it to another section of work.

Mr WELLS — And where is the stone coming from?

Mr LOCHERT — It is a variety of sources. I would have to have a look at which section, but basically, depending on when you start from this end of the building through the middle, straight to the end, you find that there are at least three, possibly four, types of stone — I need to confirm that. Depending on the density and depending on the colour and so on the stone is being matched to, it is from a variety of sources.

Mr WELLS — But local or overseas?

Mr LOCHERT — Some are local, mostly, and some are overseas. There was an audit done of every sandstone quarry, I suppose, or effectively every stone quarry in Australia, when we started the project — which samples. There were tests done on each bit of stone for durability, porosity and all of those sorts of things and then trying to get the best match and also long-term solution and the ability to supply. One of the issues is that the original stone source is now within a national park and therefore not accessible. so we had to find an alternative source.

Ms LINDELL — The quarry that supplied the sandstone for the library wall is no longer in existence.

Mr SMITH — We have made every attempt to source either locally or Australia-wide that we could. That is where the majority has come from.

The CHAIR — So you have got \$2 million in assets funding for this year.

Mr LOCHERT — For this year, yes.

The CHAIR — And there is some carryover obviously. Are you anticipating a carryover?

Mr LOCHERT — There is a small carryover from the (inaudible) fund for the amount of the (inaudible) It accounts for the five-year depreciation of the entire program.

The CHAIR — You can give some information on that on notice.

Mr LOCHERT — Sure.

The CHAIR — Robin, did you want to ask a question?

Mr SCOTT — Yes.

The CHAIR — You are on the house committee, aren't you?

Mr SCOTT — I am indeed but while it is a related matter I will ask directly about what is being proposed for the forward estimates. In your presentation there was reference to the video webcasting of parliamentary sessions but in the comments you made you referred to that being expanded to committees. I would be interested to know — and I am sure the committee would be — what is envisaged for expansion of the webcasting service beyond the parliamentary sittings.

Ms LINDELL — Obviously the next challenge for us is to look at the webcasting in the Council — and maybe Bob is the person who is best to speak on this. I believe there will have to be some lighting upgrades.

Mr SMITH — Yes. We have started the process of getting quotes for the installation of the preferred lighting. My personal view is that there is no point in working the cameras until such time as the lighting is of the appropriate standard. I just remind people that the current lighting in the Council is below the Australian workplace standards, so that becomes a priority. We could put the cameras in prior to the lighting but they will not be functional or operational until such time as we are ready to roll, and we are quite hopeful that that will be completed this year.

Ms LINDELL — And my understanding is that the committee rooms at 55 St Andrews Place will be able to have webcasting of committees that take place there.

Mr SCOTT — With the Chair's indulgence, would that be audio webcasting or audio and video?

Ms LINDELL — I think we are looking at audio and video.

Mr SCOTT — And that presumably would be of public hearings, that sort of process?

Ms LINDELL — Yes. That was envisaged in the first ERC. It was the three: the committees and the two chambers.

The CHAIR — But not this room?

Ms LINDELL — I do not believe so but I could — I do not know that we have had discussions. I do not know how you would put it in here.

Mr SMITH — I think it would be very difficult to have portability, not to mention costly.

The CHAIR — I understand that. It is just that in terms of the estimates hearings, where we tend to get a bit of a crowd, the current committee hearing rooms at 55 St Andrews Place are not big enough.

Ms LINDELL — Yes, but I do point out that all of these things have taken place for 154 years without video webcasting and I am sure that, even if the video webcasting was to break down one day, Parliament would still continue, as PAEC would.

Mr SMITH — I struggle to imagine a regional telecast.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Thank you, Chair. I am very pleased that you are always trying to source local as I turn the crockery over and notice that is made in UAE. It is great to see that Parliament — —

Ms LINDELL — I would like to put on record how this has eventuated. It appears that this is a company — the Australian China Company, I think it was called, or Australian Porcelain Company — that has supplied the Parliament for a long time, and it took its their manufacturing overseas. The real dilemma is that there is no Australian-produced 14-inch dinner plate available; there is no company in Australia that manufactures a 14-inch dinner plate, which is what we need because of the specifications of the kitchen renovation and the dishwashers in that kitchen renovation which need the full-size catering, 14-inch dinner plates which no company in Australia produces. Can I say that again — no company in Australia produces the required dinner plate.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I have heard of a manufacturer said they could supply them and they are based in Victoria — —

Ms LINDELL — Could you please pass those details on?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I have. I have put it on the record and it is in the *Hansard*.

Ms LINDELL — Have you got the name of the company?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — That was not my question. My point is very clear: there is a Victorian-based company that does it but we will disagree on that point.

Ms LINDELL — The Parliament was assured that there was no such company.

Mr NOONAN — Have you got shares in it, Richard?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I have no shares in it.

Mr NOONAN — That is in Hansard too, now.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — It is a private company. The other point I want to make because I will only get one question in is about chips. They are still being provided, Chair.

Mr SMITH — But they are not compulsory; you do not have to eat them.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Whether you want them or not, you get them!

We have gone through the issue of the redevelopment, and I appreciate the comments. I am concerned that, given the extent of the major renovations that are necessary — and you have outlined in your presentation the crumbling stone and all those issues, the ongoing maintenance that is happening, the security, the car parking issues, the whole lot — why do we have a situation where we have to create the Brumby World gift shop at the front of the Parliament?

Why is it necessary for the Parliament to create a big gift shop that takes away a room that could be used for members — I am not saying for us but for anyone? What is the rationale in the forward estimates for allocating

money, and how much will be allocated, for the construction of that gift shop? You are saying there are cost overruns for legitimate reasons — and I am not having a go at those — so why do we need to have a purpose-built gift shop?

Have you done some costings to establish that you are going to deliver a positive cash flow out of that? I am just trying to rationalise, given your initial statements about the importance of everything else, why it is so important to have a gift shop at this time.

Ms LINDELL — I do not know where your information has come from about the gift shop, but let me say quite clearly that the project at the front of the house is about visitor management and how we ensure that not only do people have an enjoyable experience during their visit to and tour of the Parliament but they also have a safe environment in which to visit. It is also about ensuring that our staff and the members have a safe environment in which to work.

The gift shop, as you call it, is no more than a service desk, which will provide public access to the papers office, as well as selling the usual range of parliamentary souvenirs that have been available, as I think you are aware, at 157 Spring Street for a long time and are now available in Sessions Cafe on the second floor. It is reasonable to have — and I would suggest that I have not visited Parliament anywhere in Australia or overseas that does not actually have — a facility whereby visitors can buy the silver spoons, the cufflinks, the tie with the Parliamentary logo and such things.

To say that this visitor management and upgraded security project at the front of house is all because we wanted a gift shop is absolutely wrong. It is to allow for a better visitor experience and, as far as staff is concerned and the security is concerned, a way for visitors to enter the building close to the vestibule and then be directed into the vestibule, without going past the corridors where we have staff working or that lead directly to the chamber.

We will actually contain where visitors are coming and going. If we have not realised by now that we live in a world of heightened security, then I will suggest to you that we are. We do need to take some measures that let us know where visitors are in the precinct when they are here. It is not about a gift shop; it was always about visitor management and security.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — But the plans, with due respect, have security on one side of the vestibule and the gift shop is going to be a separate stand-alone place on the right-hand side of the vestibule?

Ms LINDELL — Which people exit through, so that is visitors' formal exit from the Parliament. It is actually quite streamlined, and, as I said, it provides a public interface for papers offices, so that people do not actually have to go into the private area of the Parliament to access the papers shop; they can do so across the counter.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — And they are not selling chips or anything on the way through?

The CHAIR — It might be useful with the questionnaire if we asked some questions about revenue. Perhaps just to put it on notice — even though you are not a service delivery department — could you provide the information to the committee in terms of what revenue you anticipate and how that relates to current estimates for this year?

Ms GRALEY — As you are probably all aware, I am very keen about having students from my electorate visit Parliament House; I think we had 1000 here last year. I know that places some pressure on the Parliamentary Services staff. I can see in your presentation you have plans for outreach services as well, or you have done some. Are there any further plans that you may have for extending the services available for schools and other visitors, especially extra materials that may be planned for the future as well?

Mr SMITH — The point I would like to make is that the DVDs, for instance — particularly the first couple that were made principally with the students themselves — were distributed to every school, public and private, in the state. I have to say that I am extremely disappointed that the response I overwhelmingly get from teachers from schools that visit here is, 'I think we have got it, but no, we have not actually shown it'. I think this leads to a lot of scope for local members to actually promote that as well, because it is a fantastic tool, if you like, for civics teaching.

Given that we have just produced the fifth one, it is fair to say we are doing a lot to promote the Parliament and the civics. I am sure the view of both the Speaker and myself is consistent on this in that we want to continually improve both the material and the actual scope of our outreach programs, and we will look at a continuous improvement model.

Ms LINDELL — I will get Ray to add some comments from the Assembly.

Mr PURDEY — In relation to the tours and the education programs, we are trying to expand those at the moment. Of course we are limited in what we can do because of the times that we can get people in. You can only get two lots of school groups per day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We are trying to bring the afternoon timeslot forward slightly, because it used to be at 2 o'clock and by the time they had the tour and got back to their schools to get home, it was making it very difficult for people. We are trying to adjust those slightly to make it more convenient for the school students.

We are rather hamstrung on the number of bookings we can take, but we are also trying to expand the outreach programs. We provide those services to country areas. We will go to a country area, which is planned six to eight months in advance, and schools in the area are invited to come in. We service a whole range in the community in those areas when we do that. We are also doing it for schools in the metropolitan area; we are now actually going out to schools to do that.

We are also increasing the number of role-plays that we make available within the parliamentary building. On a Wednesday we do one or two role-plays. We are offering more and more bookings for those as well. We are trying to expand our rosters to allow more community groups to come through during the day. But I think, to answer your question succinctly, the way we are going to be able to best improve our services to schools, for instance, is to allow in our program more of our tour guides to go out and present at their locations rather than being able to expand more in here at Parliament House.

The CHAIR — Very good. Do you promote the play that was done a few years ago, which was very popular?

Ms LINDELL — Yes.

Dr SYKES — *The Hollowmen*?

The CHAIR — No, not *The Hollowmen*. A teacher wrote a play about Parliament. I think it was someone from Moonee Ponds. The kids all wanted to be the Speaker because they thought the Speaker part was the most important.

Ms LINDELL — It is.

Mr PURDEY — We do not actually promote that. But with role plays, we arrange for some people to be the Speaker and the Premier and various members as well as the Sergeant-at-Arms. They take props out with them. They will take out the mace, and they will have the bells and all those sorts of things. They have scripts so that the children can actually debate bills. That is all part of the process to teach them how the Parliament works.

The CHAIR — It was a good play.

Dr SYKES — Who chooses the scenarios for those role plays?

Mr PURDEY — Our tour guides are doing that continually. They will run it past the senior staff to make sure that what they are doing is appropriate. They normally come out of the debates that have gone on in the house. They might use some of the words that members have actually said in the house in some of those things. They will try to pick topical things that the children can engage with.

Dr SYKES — I noticed in the role plays done at Benalla the government members were always the good guys and we were always the bad guys.

The CHAIR — I am sure they are non-specific in terms of who is the government and who is the opposition or the crossbenchers.

Ms LINDELL — I am sure no government member will ever quote that.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I would like to ask a question, probably of the Speaker, arising from the Speaker's comments about bedding down the electorate officers EBA and the parliamentary staff EBA. It is a matter that arises from the Ombudsman's report last year in relation to Brimbank, an incidental matter. An issue was raised about a particular staffer working in the Labor Party head office doing some IT work. In his report the Ombudsman quotes Stephen Newnham, who was then the state secretary of the ALP, saying:

It should be noted that Mr Sel Sanli is not an employee of the Australian Labor Party. He in fact works for the Parliament of Victoria in servicing the database requirements of state ALP MPs and is funded by them.

My question is: what is the basis on which a staffer employed by the Parliament of Victoria is working in the head office of the ALP, and is that an ongoing arrangement?

Ms LINDELL — There is a pool arrangement in place whereby most members of the Labor caucus contribute to a central funding arrangement from their staffing entitlement, which then employs one person. I suppose for ease of administration it is done as a pool. For the sake of the member for Werribee not having the resources with two EFT for the desktop publishing skills that that person may need, that member puts into a pool and sufficient members put into a pool, and it allows the employment of a desktop publishing person to work for all those members.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — When you say, 'Put into a pool', is that part of the two EFT?

Ms LINDELL — Yes. It is entirely within the EFT that is allowed for members of Parliament, the two EFT staffing entitlement that we have.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — And it is consistent with the EBA? I assume this person would be employed as an electorate officer?

Ms LINDELL — Yes.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Pursuant to that agreement?

Ms LINDELL — Yes.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Is it consistent with the EBA for a person to be working in a party headquarters under that agreement?

Ms LINDELL — I believe so. The EBA does not — —

Mr SMITH — Half of one of my two goes into a central pool. They work not so much at the behest of the ALP but in a way that provides resources to all the members in my region, for instance, where there may be people who need assistance. All our upper house members — the three of us — allocate half of one to that pool, as you could if you wanted to. I do not think any of the — —

Ms LINDELL — To answer your question, there is nothing in the EBA to preclude that.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — An issue was raised suggesting that person had broken electoral laws. Was that subject to investigation by Parliament, the fact that the Ombudsman had reported — this was about the release of electoral — —

Mr SMITH — I thought the Ombudsman had given him clean sheet.

The CHAIR — I am not sure this is about the estimates.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — It is about the release of the electoral roll and so forth. Is that something the Parliament investigated, given this person was an employee of the Parliament?

Mr SMITH — There were no complaints.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — But it was raised by the Ombudsman in his report to Parliament.

Mr SMITH — I do not think he had a problem, did he?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — The issue was the electoral roll had been used incorrectly, or at least incorrectly by this person.

Mr SMITH — I do not think anything came out of that.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — So it was not something the Parliament investigated?

Mr SMITH — He made a number of comments on people that were not actually correct, in my opinion.

The CHAIR — I am not sure this is about the estimates. Maybe there is another place to pursue this.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Just in terms of the fact it is an ongoing employment arrangement.

Ms LINDELL — I take on notice whether it is and I am happy to seek some legal advice on it, Gordon, as to whether it is the Parliament's role to look at misuse of the electoral roll, because I would have thought that is more the VEC than the Parliament.

The CHAIR — Or the Electoral Matters Committee, probably.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I only ask the question to the extent that this person was employed by the Parliament.

The CHAIR — The Speaker will take it on notice.

Ms LINDELL — I have seen no report, so I need to take advice as to whether there was any investigation at all, but not as far as I am aware.

The CHAIR — I just remind members that we are talking about the estimates here rather than other issues.

Mr NOONAN — My recollection is that one of the challenges, I think from last year, was the finalisation of the enterprise bargaining agreements. Of course, this year now within the budget papers the challenge is the implementation of the agreements now they have been struck, which are covered on page 260 of budget paper 3. I wonder whether you can explain to the committee what those challenges are in relation to the implementation of the electorate officers enterprise agreement within existing resources?

Ms LINDELL — I suppose we cannot actually just say the electorate officers' EBA. It is both of them together. It is just that we do not receive the full supplementation, so we will have to find that increased cost through savings.

Mr NOONAN — How do you think that might be achieved?

Ms LINDELL — We will be looking at the renegotiation of the IT supply contracts. We expect some savings there. There will be some supplementation through the CPI escalation of the parliamentary appropriations anyway, so there are two there. There are some changes around some of the business rules that apply to the electorate officers' EBA — the start at the base grade and the restricted office structure. All of those things will help, and we can always seek the Treasurer's authority to access higher year earnings if we see this as a one-off expense.

Mr NOONAN — What is the quantum of savings that need to be made over the life of the agreement?

Mr LOCHERT — About 250 per annum, which after supplementation is actually quite manageable.

Ms PENNICUIK — Speaker and President, last year I asked you a little bit about this, and you mentioned in your handout that you gave us under sustainability there has been a rollout of segregated waste management to improve recycling and waste reduction. There is not a lot of detail there. I wondered whether there were any figures that you could provide in terms of what has happened and does that include e-waste? Last year I was asking about water and energy efficiency measures in the parliamentary precinct and in electorate offices, and you mentioned a pilot project with Sustainability Victoria, so I was wondering about the status of that currently.

Ms LINDELL — I will pass to Peter in a moment for where we have got to with the pilot program because there were a number of impediments, I believe, to that ongoing issue. Our water conservation has led to a number of different things on water. We certainly harvest rainwater and use that, and we purchase recycled water for the gardens. We are gradually replacing the lead roof flashings, which allows us to increase that water harvesting, and that will continue as we go around with our heritage asset management strategy and doing the roof and the stone, and all our flashings are replacing the lead; 55 St Andrews has harvested rainwater, and waterless urinals have been provided at 55 St Andrews. The energy conservation was still going through that systematic replacement of our lights and light fittings at Parliament House with energy efficient lighting.

All our IT equipment conforms to high energy efficiency standards. Our current PCs use 60 per cent less power than the previous fleet and 90 per cent of the fleet is carbon neutral production. We are gradually upgrading all of the electrical fittings, not just in Parliament House but in all of our appliances and machinery.

Obviously sustainability is one of the core tenets that is built into the precinct master plan, so we will be looking at the most sustainable building that we can create in any of the forward changes that we make. We have 100 per cent green power. I think I told you that last year. We do have some measurements, but I do not have them with me, on our reduction in electricity and water. We do report that back at staff meetings to the staff of Parliament House.

As to the waste, I do not know that we would have figures. It has not long been introduced at Parliament House to separate our paper and cardboard and then the recycling of glass. It is only a couple of months old, and we have obviously tried in the documents that are presented to Parliament to reduce the amount of paper so that we double-side bills now. We have reduced the font. All of that has helped in reducing our paper usage, and I think allowing people now to submit to committees electronically is once again helping in that overall saving of paper. We recycle all our garden waste on site, but as for specific figures I do not know whether Peter has any. We might have to get them across to you, but we do measure on an ongoing basis our water and electricity.

The CHAIR — You are required to provide some of this detail in the financial and performance questionnaires and outcomes.

Mr LOCHERT — That is what we are working towards now. The report of operations will have those at the end of the financial year. What we now do is, for example, with all our energy consumption right across the precinct and electorate offices, we no longer monitor just what we have spent, but also what we have spent it on. That is a change that has only been possible, I guess, in the last 12 months while we have updated our financials and things that.

In the first two years we harvested about a 17 per cent reduction in energy use in the precinct, and that was by going for the easy options and the sort of low-hanging fruit, if you will.

We are unlikely to do much better than that without actually investing in some of the work that we have to undertake at Parliament House. We are talking about an electricity infrastructure that is decades old, and modern power consumption management systems would help us a lot. What we have done, as the Speaker indicated, is change the globes and manage the way that heating, cooling and ventilation get switched on and off. All of those sorts of things have given us some benefits, but it is also at a cost because everything has to be done manually. You have to have somebody here at 6 o'clock in the morning turning things on and off in order to save the electricity; we cannot manage it automatically. But in terms of the measures and our ability to report on water consumption and waste production and so on, it is improving. We cannot report yet on waste because we do not have a full cycle.

Mr SMITH — But there does seem to be a quite deal of support being generated from within the staff for the whole process or idea of sustainability.

Ms PENNICUIK — So it would seem into the future that we need to actually go beyond the basics, where we are at now, and step it up to a proper strategy?

Ms LINDELL — As I said, it is one of the central tenets of the precinct management plan.

The CHAIR — There are a couple of things which the committee has been interested in on an ongoing basis. One is that the previous Premier provided — certainly our understanding was that it was on a four-year

basis — an almost 50 per cent increase in the funding going to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. Our understanding is that this will continue to be carried forward, although I know the next year will be a short year because there is an election. That is the committee's understanding in terms of that, certainly for the four-year period.

The other issue which we have raised in the past is the issue of performance bonuses and assessment, particularly of executives. This seems to be the only area that does not have performance bonuses for executives. Obviously this relates to performance assessment, and I know statutory officers are somewhat different. The Auditor-General, of course, and, presumably, the clerks are statutory officers. It is a common system right throughout the public sector, but it is not in Parliament. Maybe that is something that could be done in terms of some system or other which could be looked at to emphasise the performance assessment and provide obviously an incentive for the high performance of people. The committee has raised this in the past. There may be some creative and innovative ways of achieving that, because the committee's interest is obviously the best use and efficient and effective expenditure of public money.

Mr SMITH — I want to put on the record that my strong position is that no public servant should get any bonus associated with doing their job. As I have seen the bonus systems rorted to the extent we have across this country, particularly in the private sector, I would say to anyone pursuing that here, 'You've got to be kidding!'. But that is my personal view.

Dr SYKES — This is a bit of rorting in a few departments that will be exposed too.

Ms LINDELL — My understanding is that the additional resources for PAEC is in the appropriations. I will take on notice your comments about the performance bonuses. Although I should say the difficulty that Parliament has in a general sense is actually being able to retain the excellent staff that we do have. It actually works the other way. I think Parliament is seen as a good place to work to advance your career, regardless of whether there are bonuses there or not. Many of our staff are actually moving into other departments within government once they have — —

The CHAIR — Learnt the ropes.

Ms LINDELL — They have learnt the ropes here; absolutely. I am sure that staff will remind me that the PAEC chair thinks that we should have performance bonuses!

The CHAIR — The committee does actually.

Dr SYKES — I may have missed it, having not been here earlier, but I have an issue in relation to the provision of servicing of laptops by the IT department. Is there any budget or plans to provide 24/7 IT servicing for our staff and our members with laptops? This issue was raised with me by Russell Northe, the member for Benalla, who has had difficulties with his laptop. To cut a long story short, he has not been able to work at home with it. The message is, 'If it is broken, bring it down here and we will fix it'. That is not overly practical.

The CHAIR — I did not think you lost preselection, Bill!

Dr SYKES — The member for Morwell!

Ms LINDELL — There is an ongoing problem that we have had with the remote access. It is actually to do with the hardware, the dongle modems. It is a Telstra problem rather than a Parliament problem. I am advised that Parliament is working with Telstra to try to resolve the issue, but we understand it is taking a long time. It has been escalated within Telstra to senior executive level to see if we cannot actually provide this service to all members. I suppose that is the overwhelming lesson to be learnt. The Next G network has meant, for many members, a real improvement in what they can do and where they can work, but when it is not reliable and when there is a problem that is outside of the Parliament's domain it makes it very difficult. The 7-day-a-week, 24-hour support service is something that would obviously have great financial implications that would need to be considered, but can I also say that many of our IT technicians do work over the weekends. It is when all the back-of-house servicing, upgrades et cetera are actually done.

If we say, 'Okay, you can respond to support problems as well', then how do we do that? How do we ever upgrade? How do we ever keep the system actually fully maintained for what is a normal five-day-a-week

operation? It is something that I suppose in the future we will need to look at, because IT and the reliance upon IT is ever increasing. But we do need to be able to maintain and upgrade the system as well. I understand there are problems when the system is down on a Saturday because of vital work that needs to be done, because many of us are still trying to put out media releases. We actually are working on a Saturday but, as I say, there has to be a balance somewhere, and it is not quite so easy to say we will just do it of an evening, because members are working of an evening and the Parliament is sitting of an evening. I take on board the comment. Certainly the IT department, I think, since I first became a member has certainly swung itself right around. It is much more focused on fixing problems for members, and the service we are receiving is excellent, but acknowledging that it is not seven days a week 24 hours a day.

Dr SYKES — I would like to put on record my appreciation of the IT department's excellent service and their understanding of my low level of technical competence.

The CHAIR — You are not the only one, Bill.

Ms LINDELL — There are no Robinson Crusoes for that one.

The CHAIR — I think we have just about finished. There are only a couple of other things I wanted to mention. One was that the committee remains of the view that the classification for the executive officer of this committee is too low. We have had that discussion in the past.

Ms LINDELL — The position has been reviewed, and I suppose there will be another review at another time.

The CHAIR — I am sure, but we think that continues to be wrong.

The other thing we have a concern about is after-hours access for committee staff. There seem to be some constraints put on our staff servicing the committee out of hours, including in terms of access to their offices out of hours, so perhaps that could be looked at.

Mr LOCHERT — Sure.

The CHAIR — Of course we do not want the staff to be overworking, but this has been raised with us in terms of access on the weekend being denied to senior staff. We find this quite unusual. I do not think it occurs anywhere else in the public sector that senior staff — —

Mr SMITH — To here in the Parliament?

The CHAIR — To 55 St Andrews Place; to the offices.

Ms LINDELL — That is simply a management issue, an operational issue. Staff simply need to request access.

The CHAIR — Okay. Thank you very much for that. That concludes consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolio of the parliamentary departments. I know we are dealing with the appropriation bill. It also includes the Auditor-General. We have a relationship with the Auditor-General, and we have discussed with the Auditor-General his budget, but we actually have not called the Auditor-General before us as part of this presentation of the parliamentary budget. I should note just for the record that as the Chair I do note there is actually a difference between the performance outputs and the way they are distributed for the Auditor-General and the Auditor-General's office in the budget paper and those for the Ombudsman. I think they need to be reviewed, because certainly from the Chair's perspective the Ombudsman ones do seem to be more pertinent in terms of outputs and outcomes to be achieved, but that is probably something we can take up with the Auditor-General in the future.

I thank the presiding officers and departmental officers for their attendance today. It has been a very interesting session. Where questions were taken on notice — and there were several of those — the committee will follow up with you in writing at a later date. The committee requests that written responses to those matters be provided within 30 days. Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.