

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2014–15 ANNUAL REPORT HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
MONDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2015**

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Liz Behjat
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 2.43 pm

Hon BARRY HOUSE

President of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, examined:

Mr NIGEL PRATT

Clerk of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, examined:

Mr PAUL GRANT

Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, examined:

Mr RUSSELL BREMNER

Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services Department, examined:

Mr ROB HUNTER

Deputy Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services Department, examined:

Ms BELINDA COREY

Director, Parliamentary Information and Education, Parliamentary Services Department, examined:

Mrs CATHY YANG

Senior Accountant, Department of the Legislative Council, examined:

The CHAIR: I think we are all ready to go; I might get underway. Firstly, on behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing, and note that it is the first of our annual report hearings for the year. Firstly, I ask the witnesses whether they can confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses, obviously with the exception of the President?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private either of its own motion or at the witness's request. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to review agency outcomes on behalf of the people of Western Australia—and of course the parliamentary departments do as well. The committee values your assistance with this.

Do any of witnesses wish to provide an opening statement, or are they happy for us to go straight to questions?

The PRESIDENT: Mr Chairman, can I provide just a brief opening statement?

The CHAIR: Yes.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr Chairman and members. Just by way of an opening statement and brief summary, both the Legislative Council and the Parliamentary Services Department took the offer from Treasury of a two per cent increase in annual budget this year rather than go through the whole EERC system. That was offered to smaller government departments, although I do not like describing the Parliament as a government department; but in our system it is sort of funded along those lines, unfortunately.

From the Legislative Council's perspective it was an unsettling year and a very difficult year in terms of staffing issues surrounding the Deputy Clerk's position, and that has been our most challenging situation for this year. But in terms of the finances I think it has been very solid. I would say, just in terms of those difficult staffing issues, that it actually demonstrated the resilience and professionalism and commitment of all of the Legislative Council staff and the maturity of the members to resolve a very unsettling and difficult situation, and work through it; otherwise it is business as usual.

In terms of PSD, the major issue we have is still the fact that the Parliament is operating in an environment where physically we have not got the facilities to deal with the requirements of a modern era. We have a heritage building 111 years old. That has got its own issues. We have a disjointed situation where the Parliament leases space in five different buildings around West Perth, and that leads to disconnect between certain operations and parliamentary departments—for instance, in the Legislative Council the committees and the chamber departments. That is always difficult and it is not cost effective, quite frankly. It is getting to a very frustrating stage but we have not made much progress on that, I am sorry to report. Along with that, we have shortages of accommodation, we have shortages of function spaces, we have outdated facilities and we still need—this Parliament still needs—a building program and we still need a commitment to connect the Parliament physically as well as symbolically with the city of Perth and connecting the people to the people's house. That will have to come one day, and the sooner it comes the better.

Numerous approaches have been made by both the Speaker and myself to the executive on this matter. I will just foreshadow that there was an opportunity during the last year when the premises at 3 Harvest Terrace came up onto the market; it was put out to tender, we negotiated with the government to make an offer, an offer was made for that building but they were not successful. It was purchased by a private operator and that opportunity was lost, quite frankly—and we start again. Basically, the options are that we do the best we can with what we have got in terms of the parliamentary facilities, physically and in terms of delivering services; and considering the constraints, I think we do a pretty good job.

One other thing I just would like to mention is we have had quite a strong focus on community engagement through the education unit—some of these things are outside the annual report, I realise—and the community engagement unit of Parliament that Belinda Corey heads up. There have been things like the Heritage Day, which involved performances in both chambers; an open-house situation; a presentation of artefacts to the Legislative Council by Mr Alexander Cockburn-Campbell, the grandson of the first President of the Legislative Council. The Speaker and I went to Curtin University and did one of their education sessions called Curtin Corner on the relevance of Parliament, and that seemed to be better attended than most of their other presentations, which was comforting. I presented a paper at the ASPG conference in Wellington on our community engagement and we tend to do what we can in terms of bringing the people to the Parliament and vice versa. So, thanks for your interest in the Parliament.

[2.50 pm]

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr President. I am sure members would concur with your opening statement about the tough year and the way in which staff have responded to it. I should say at the outset that our plan was to try to focus on the Department of the Legislative Council and then the

Parliamentary Services Department, although I think the two often cross over. We will see how we go.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Mr President, in your opening statement you said there was the two per cent increase offered by Treasury instead of going through the EERC process. Was that for 2014–15 or for 2015–16?

The PRESIDENT: It was for 2015–16.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So that is the current financial year.

The PRESIDENT: Yes, from 1 July this year.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So, not for the report that we are speaking about.

Mr Pratt: The program is called the streamlined budget program. Essentially, the Legislative Council received an amount of approximately \$110 000 in place of not making any bids for supplementary funding during the financial year.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: This question relates to the Parliamentary Services Department. As you are aware, I am a member of the Parliamentary Services Committee. We talk about the need for a lot of work to be done at Parliament House and the fact that it is the iconic heritage building of this state. Through your community engagement programs, Mr President, I know you are doing a lot there in relation to raising the profile publicly so that people are aware that that is the people's house. Governments come and governments go but Parliament House stays there. Has thought been given as to whether a joint submission from all parties perhaps could strengthen the argument that you may have that a lot of money does need to be spent and that rather than this sort of piecemeal program that you have that as the white ants get to another bit of the building, you fix that, and as the windows need to be fixed, you fix that, a current government may consider a larger amount being given to the Parliament to undertake a big program in that regard?

The PRESIDENT: In general terms, \$1 million a year is allocated to our funds for the capital works program. Obviously, we have to focus and prioritise the structural issues first, like the pointing of the stonework, which is almost completed and will be at the end of this financial year. We have to prioritise things like white ants in the Legislative Assembly and the staircase going up through the middle of Parliament House. I think we tabled in last year's estimates an outstanding list of about \$11 million worth of works just within the current building. In answer to your question, have we made approaches, yes, virtually every day in some form or other, and we continue to do it. I do not know whether Russell or Rob want to add to that.

Mr Bremner: No, just to say that in 2010 the current President, myself and the former Speaker participated in a parliamentary precinct review of accommodation in the parliamentary precinct. That report also involved Perth City Council, a number of directors general from state government departments, Planning et cetera, and also some private industry people. The upshot of that review was a submission that went forward to government, which had recommendations on what was required in the parliamentary precinct for government accommodation as well as parliamentary accommodation. My understanding is that the component of that review in relation to parliamentary accommodation is still cabinet-in-confidence.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Have you ever done a full costing on what it would take to do what you want to do with Parliament House? Are there any plans for an expansion or remodelling program and how much all that would cost? Has the wish list been put together?

The PRESIDENT: Over the last 30 to 35 years, there has been a series of plans of various forms and they have all been ballpark costed.

The CHAIR: I would say 50 years at least, Mr President. I have seen them going back to the 1960s.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: But you were not there then, were you, Hon Ken Travers?

The CHAIR: No, but I did once go into Vince Pacecca's office and see all the plans.

The PRESIDENT: During the master planning exercise that Russell Bremner just referred to, we got all these plans out of the archives. It covered the whole table in my office—a series of plans going back 50 years, if you like. There have been lots and lots of them. The master planning exercise that we did in 2010 and participated in was aimed, in my mind, at breaking through all the inertia and getting everybody's needs on the table costed. It was roughly costed at about \$70 million. Obviously, more detailed work was required. That included the needs of the executive. At the time they were faced with moving out of Stirling Tower in the Terrace. They used that portion of the report to move to the Hale precinct, which is now an executive precinct. The master planning exercise went a fair way further than what the executive had already done in terms of their buildings, but that is the only part of the master planning report that has been implemented. Our requirements of Parliament were for a complementary building next to Parliament for Parliamentary Services and longer term in other stages at the front of Parliament House and even to the north of Parliament House, perhaps commercialising some of the space that would have fronted Hay Street to bring some money back into the project, I suppose, but most importantly covering the freeway and creating a big people's space at the front of Parliament House, which would connect the whole precinct to the city and to Kings Park and open it up as—like a lot of Parliaments in the world have—a major people's place in front of the people's house. Complementary to that was a recommendation for parliamentary precinct legislation. Once again, we do not have a commitment on that yet, but that is needed as well.

[3.00 pm]

Hon RICK MAZZA: How old would the master plan and costing be?

The PRESIDENT: It was 2010. It would be different now, but the principles of the future of this whole precinct were laid out very well, I thought; but, at the moment, that is still cabinet-in-confidence. It is not our report to table.

Mr Bremner: Could I suggest the basic information would be pretty much identical today as it was four years ago, because not much has happened. The difference, of course, would be the different dollar value to date to four years ago.

The PRESIDENT: But the basic issues like concrete cancer and everything with the old fountains at the front of Parliament House are still the same—they are derelict.

Hon RICK MAZZA: So you are playing catch-up for those things?

The PRESIDENT: Quite frankly, it would be foolish to spend money on upgrading some of these things because it would be throwing good money after bad.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Who coordinated that 2010 report?

The PRESIDENT: The Government Architect, Steve Woodland. Steve Woodland chaired the working party that put that together.

Mr Bremner: And they used Spowers as an external consultant to facilitate the process.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: In terms of the ownership of that report, it would be the Government Architect, right?

The PRESIDENT: The government, yes.

Mr Bremner: The executive government.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Who did it report to?

The PRESIDENT: Government.

Mr Bremner: The Premier.

The PRESIDENT: Through the Premier. The Speaker at the time and myself lobbied the Premier quite hard to get that underway. We got the commitment from the Premier for \$100 000 to put that report together. A lot of work was done—a lot of good work, I think—but we have not seen the result of it yet.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Is that master plan publicly available?

The PRESIDENT: No.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It is cabinet-in-confidence, apparently. I refer to the property at 3 Harvest Terrace that you mentioned in your opening statement. Mr President, did the Parliament underbid on that property?

The PRESIDENT: We cannot bid as a Parliament because we do not have the funds to do it. We, unfortunately, have to go cap in hand to the executive all the time, and that was the same. I do not like that situation, because the basic principle of our system is the separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, but that is the reality of it. Some Parliaments have their own appropriation process. Personally, I would love to move towards that, but that is not the reality that we are operating in. We certainly put very strong requests to the government that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, because the government owned the premises at 1, 5 and 7 Harvest Terrace and there was an opportunity for four blocks to be amalgamated into one decent building. It is not ideal; it is not our first preference. Our first preference is to have the Parliamentary Services building built on our own precinct, on this side of Harvest Terrace, not the other side.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The cameras or Hansard can pick that up.

The PRESIDENT: We are seeking a parliamentary annexe with ready access to Parliament House itself. We would much prefer it to be on our own precinct rather than across the street. That is our preference. In terms of that process, I have to say I was very disappointed in the outcome because if government could have purchased that building, it would have had a prime development site, the money from the proceeds—even if they then sold it to a private operator—could have been brought across the road to use on the parliamentary precinct for an annexe building. That would still be my wish, quite frankly. I was disappointed in the response. A bid was made for the tender. It was unsuccessful. I was disappointed in that process. I thought some of the handling of that was rather inept, to be frank, and in my mind it illustrated a bit of—I had better be careful of my words here—disdain for Parliament from sections of the public service. Here, I am not talking about the Premier and ministers—the elected officials—I am talking about the public service. Some people in the public service almost regard Parliament in a dismissive way and that it is a bit of a nuisance in the process, but it is not. Parliament is very important in the whole process.

The CHAIR: I have just a couple of questions on building issues. I might just go to the last issue. What was the problem that you saw with the purchase? Certainly one of the issues that I have concern about is about who was the agency putting in the tender for that property at 3 Harvest Terrace.

The PRESIDENT: The Department of Finance.

The CHAIR: Did they tender at the full Valuer-General's valuation or did they come in below that valuation?

The PRESIDENT: We did not have any involvement, and I do not know the exact details of the figures. All I know is that the end result was that a private operator put in a higher tender and got the bid.

The CHAIR: I am trying work out if that was an issue at the Valuer-General's—or they tried to put in a tender below the Valuer-General's. What was the inept part of the process, then?

The PRESIDENT: I guess that might be a strong word from my perspective, but in our communications with the people operating on behalf of the government to secure that site, I think it

was fairly obvious why they do not work in the private sector and are in the public sector; they were a little bit slow with their responses.

The CHAIR: Did we get the tender in on time?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. I understand the tender went in on time; there are no worries about that. But in terms of the commercial marketplace, which is what the tender was operating in, we came up short.

The CHAIR: It is clearly one of those things I would have thought you would need to give consideration to, because as you pointed out, we own the neighbouring blocks, so the value to the Parliament might be higher than anyone else because our ability to aggregate up the blocks gives us a greater development opportunity than anybody else, and potentially to maintain some of the heritage aspects around that. There are some heritage values that you probably would want to maintain and some that you would not.

The PRESIDENT: No 7 has heritage listing, but the other three do not.

The CHAIR: To the best of your knowledge—maybe we need to get the Department of Finance in—was proper consideration given to those issues in considering it? I would have thought, if you were the owner—is it the Parliament that owns the three neighbouring properties?

The PRESIDENT: It is the government.

The CHAIR: Who owns Parliament House—the Parliament or the government; and why are they not on the title, because they are all occupied by the Parliament are they not, or adjuncts to the Parliament?

The PRESIDENT: It is adjuncts, but on a lease arrangement.

Mr Bremner: My understanding is that the state owns all land and buildings notionally owned by departments within the state.

The CHAIR: Yes, but Parliament House is shown on your annual report as an asset, though?

Mr Bremner: Yes.

The CHAIR: Is 1 Harvest Terrace the Parliamentary Library annexe?

Mr Bremner: Yes.

The CHAIR: Is that held under your name or the Department of Finance and leased back to the Parliament?

Mr Bremner: It is in ours as well.

The CHAIR: What about No 5 and No 7?

Mr Bremner: No.

The CHAIR: They are probably leased to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet rather than the Parliament, are they?

The PRESIDENT: Yes. They are used for electorate offices.

The CHAIR: Again, that sort of thing is disjointed and who is running and controlling the property is part of the problem. I am raising whether that is a systemic issue across the government as to the people who own the property or the people who use the property as to who ultimately takes responsibility for it.

Mr Bremner: That is also compounded by the fact that the only person who can enter into contracts for major capital works is the Minister for Works. So, major capital works that have been done, such as the northern extension here several years ago at Parliament House, had to be done in the name of the Minister for Works.

[3.10 pm]

The CHAIR: I just want to keep going with a couple more questions, then I will come to Hon Peter Katsambanis. In the annual report for the Parliamentary Services Department, you made mention of the fact—comments about white ants and leaks in Parliament always opens up lots of opportunities for jokes, but I will ignore those for the moment —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: At least they are in the Legislative Assembly!

The CHAIR: You talk about the damage from the failed roof membrane, and also the white ants. Are you able to quantify in dollar terms what that damage has been over the 2014-15 year and also in previous years, and, if we are currently going through any work, what the quantum of the damage is to the building in terms of fixing it? So, not fixing the maintenance, but fixing the damage that has been done by water and white ants and anything because the building is not properly maintained.

The PRESIDENT: Rob will take that one.

Mr Hunter: Thank you. First, the east membrane. There are a couple of membranes that we worked on in the annual report that we are referring to. One of them is on the eastern side, which is basically the part which looks down to the city. We started pulling that membrane apart because there were leaks, and the leaks were actually coming through to level 2 on the Council side—through to the ceiling and actually damaging the ceiling. The damage to the ceiling is probably in the order of \$4 000 or \$5 000; it was not significant. However, to prevent the water from coming through again we spent about \$52 000 just on that membrane. The membrane on that side of the building consisted of, if you like, a mat with a slab on top of it, followed by a bitumen-type substance, and then sealed again. So, between the times we have air conditioned both the chambers and we had all our chillers up there, we have penetrated the membrane a number of times and made some remedial repairs, but that was insufficient and it has broken down over the years. When we did that one, we realised that we needed to do some further work, and then we had to do the Parliamentary Library side on the west side, out on that balcony there. In total the two things, I think, were in the order of about \$80 000 just for the membrane, but that does not fix the problem. The problem is that we have a sagging roof—I made this point during the last estimates hearing—and the tiles have dipped, and we have leaks that come in and we cannot identify where they are coming from. The insulation in the roof has deteriorated, and it is not the type of insulation that we need. It is very, very difficult to do without actually taking all the tiles off and completely getting the structure flat again, and then retiling it and the insulating it again. That is in the order of about \$400 000 just for the east roof.

The CHAIR: But at this stage I am more interested in the damage that is being done by the poor membrane. You said \$5 000: is that the only cost in terms of damage that has been done?

Mr Hunter: It is ongoing. I do not have those figures, but it is ongoing. We spend an enormous amount of money trying to keep water out of the Parliament, and trying to get water literally out of the Parliament as well. Between drainage and leakage we spend an enormous amount of our maintenance dollars. I do not have those in a consolidated number, but it is regular —

The CHAIR: Is that something you would be able to get together? My sense about these things is that one way of actually getting people to focus their minds is to actually fully understand the cost of not doing a proper job. So, if every year we are spending X amount doing short-term maintenance and fixing issues that arise, ultimately you can put together a case that for the last five years the average cost has been \$200 000 a year, it is likely that it will be \$200 000 a year for every year thereafter, and you can do a pretty quick net present value to say that it is actually cheaper to spend \$1 million today to redo the whole roof than this sort of piecemeal approach. That is what I am trying to get my head around. Is that something you can take on notice?

Mr Hunter: Yes, we can take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A1.*]

The PRESIDENT: Yes, I was going to suggest we take it on notice. We will give your committee a report, and it would be very helpful if your committee was to make some finding or recommendation, even, to the house.

The CHAIR: This comes up every year, and my view is that it is about putting together a sound case. Also, there is the white ant damage. I know I have had white ant problems in one of my previous offices, and I cannot imagine it is cheap for the spraying, the treatment and the replacement of the skirting boards or the furniture that has been destroyed. What is the cost of that?

Mr Hunter: The white ant treatment is something that, obviously, continues. In terms of its damage, we do not believe there is any further damage now. The white ant treatment that occurred was post the damage that happened in the LA chamber, and also to the stairs that Mr President referred to. So that is a regular thing, and we think we have that covered. We have the stainless steel pits that you would have seen that lead all the way around the building; they are checked very regularly to make sure that there is no termite activity. I think we have that covered. The termite damage specifically for the stairs is \$58 000 worth of damage, just for the stairs that go from, if you like, the lower kitchen to the Members' and Strangers' Bars. For the LA chamber, doing that platform there—it is only one section of it—is around about \$35 000.

The CHAIR: Are you able to go back and look historically for the last few years—whatever is easy to do—at what the ongoing cost has been? I know it has happened in members' offices, and I thought I read somewhere that you were needing to do some more substantial work as a result of that white ant damage somewhere.

Mr Hunter: Yes, we can take that as a supplementary and see what we can find.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

The CHAIR: In terms of that 2010 approach—this is my last question on this area—have we ever done the business case on the lease costs of buildings like this versus the cost of building on a net present value? Is there a document you can make public to us about whether it works out cheaper to build a new building that is brand-new? I remember the Premier saying it was a lot cheaper to have his Hale House, rather than to rent office accommodation, and that is a heritage building that had a lot of work done to it. Is it cheaper to build a new building than to lease the offices?

The PRESIDENT: We have done some work on that, and we can make the work that has already been done by PSD available to your committee.

Mr Bremner: Certainly the figures we pay for rental for both the Parliamentary Services Department and, I suggest, the Legislative Council is freely available to you; as far as the Legislative Assembly goes, that is an issue for the other house. As to what type of building and the cost of a building would be, that is a mathematical formula on the cost of building, multiplied by a number of square metres.

The CHAIR: But just to replace the existing square metreage in a new building, have we done estimates of what the cost of that would be to construct on the land that we currently own at whatever location, and what that would mean, if we were to build it, versus the estimated cost of leasing that space over the next 30 years?

Mr Bremner: We can provide that as supplementary.

The CHAIR: Or 40 years, I guess, is the average depreciation cycle. If you could provide that to us, that would be useful. If you cannot provide the Assembly, maybe we will need to do a report asking for a message to be sent to the Assembly to get that information for us. I think that is part of the problem; we need to get all of it together to bring. If PSD cannot provide that to us in your combined role, then it does strike me that it might be worth getting that information to pull it into a complete package. Spending money on politicians is not popular, but if we can clearly

demonstrate that we are going to actually save money for the taxpayers over an extended period of time by doing the job properly rather than in a piecemeal approach, I think anyone can sell that case.

Mr Bremner: My recollection from our Legislative Assembly estimates hearing this year was that we were asked a not dissimilar question. I think the answer provided—we will certainly confirm it in supplementary information to you—was that the lease costs for the premises, put forward for, I think, a period of 15 years, was in the order of \$30 million.

The CHAIR: Do we pay lease costs for the Library annexe, or do we pay maintenance and —

Mr Bremner: No, just maintenance and rates.

The CHAIR: So whatever the costs of all those sorts of parts are. I said it was the last one, but do we have enough storage space now? I noticed in the report you talk about the State Records Office and the planning you have done for that. Do we have enough storage space or are we leasing space off site to store the records of the Parliament?

Mr Bremner: We lease space off site.

The CHAIR: Will we be required to lease more in the future to manage the records, or have we enough at the moment?

Mr Hunter: Not for records. We previously have had off-site storage for furniture and bits and bobs, but we have consolidated that; we do not have that anymore. We have made use of the fountains at the front of Parliament as a storage area, and that was one of the reasons we spent a bit of money trying to seal the asphalt so that it did not leak down into the fountains and ruin the furniture we had stored there. So I think we saved in the order of —

The CHAIR: I am not even going to get into the occupational health and safety of trying to take furniture down those stairs, but, anyway, that is another story for —

Mr Hunter: We have someone else do that. It is about —

The CHAIR: It does not matter who does it, Mr Hunter.

Mr Hunter: They have a compliance issue, too. It was about \$15 000 a year in savings we had from not storing furniture off site.

The CHAIR: Any other lease costs for off-site record storage, if you could add that into it.

[3.20 pm]

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I hate to go back to the issue of the building at 3 Harvest Terrace that was sold during the year. The President made the point quite clearly that he was concerned about the commercial market reality, perhaps, of the people that were dealing with the bid, but eventually we did get to a bid and the government made a bid. Where I am trying to get to with my questioning is: was the bid a bid that eventually reflected the commercial market reality and we were just simply outbid by somebody who was prepared to pay a lot more than made sense, or is it a situation where the bid that was eventually arrived at and submitted did not stack up to the commercial market reality at the time?

The PRESIDENT: All we know is we were informed that the government's bid was unsuccessful. We do not know any of those details because we were not making the bid. We were just providing the advocacy for the government to get in there and, to the best of their ability, purchase that building because it was a one-off opportunity, basically. You would have to ask those questions of the Department of Finance.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Okay.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Are you aware who the successful tenderer was?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, I am aware.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: That is a matter of public record. You just do a land title search.

The PRESIDENT: Do you want me to answer that?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Could you?

The PRESIDENT: The Pivot Group purchased the building at 3 Harvest Terrace. Can I go back to finish a question, which I think Hon Liz Behjat put? The Parliamentary Services Committee is an advisory committee of members which meets and you asked me if there had been a resolution. There has been a resolution of that committee. We have tabled a lot of this information to that committee and there is a resolution in principle from that committee to support what we are trying to do in terms of upgrading parliamentary facilities.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Just again on 3 Harvest Terrace, is there any knowledge as to what the Pivot Group intends to do with that site? Are there any caveats on that site as to what they might be able to do with it? I would also be quite cautious as to what could be built right over the road from Parliament House for any number of reasons. Do we know whether they are planning some sort of multistorey apartment block?

The PRESIDENT: Because it is within the broader parliamentary precinct, we have an advisory capacity only; we do not have a formal capacity in terms of the planning caveats. I am aware that the Pivot Group has put together a proposal for a building; that is all. They will need to negotiate with government if and when anything goes ahead on that site.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Thanks, President.

The CHAIR: When you say negotiate with government, do you mean negotiate as in for tenancies, or negotiate as in what they can build there?

The PRESIDENT: Both, I think. The broad concept proposal that I have seen involves a building encompassing three of the sites—1, 3 and 5 Harvest Terrace. Implicit in that, I believe, is an offer to government to sell two sites, either side of 3 Harvest Terrace, and demolish all of those buildings and construct a new building, basically.

The CHAIR: For the Parliament?

The PRESIDENT: It is a new building. I am sure that in their negotiations they might entertain the request from Parliament to lease some space, but I am not sure. As I said, that is not our preferred position as a Parliament. Our preferred position is to have that parliamentary annexe adjacent to the parliamentary building and directly connected to the existing parliamentary building.

The CHAIR: So sell the land but then use the money from selling the land to build. Although, based on the title ownership, we would not get the value of the land anyway if it was sold, would we? If we sold sites 1 and 5, the Parliament would not then get that money to spend on a new building over there, next door to the Parliament.

The PRESIDENT: It goes to consolidated revenue and we would have to negotiate with government as a Parliament to get the funds to do what we want to do.

The CHAIR: From that to then help construct it?

The PRESIDENT: Sure.

Mr Pratt: Mr Chairman, if I could, there would be little incentive for us to lease premises in another building. We already have existing leased premises that are close by.

The CHAIR: No, that is why I was thinking the other option was if they want to build there is to sell 1 and 5, but if we could then get the value of that to build an annexe on the grounds of the existing Parliament, that would make more sense. We could time it for when the leases of these existing premises run out so you do not lose the value of the fit-outs and the like, particularly the palatial fit-outs in the Legislative Assembly committee rooms!

The PRESIDENT: I think Hansard recorded the tongue in cheek there!

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The question is with regard to the community engagement, Mr President. I am a huge fan of making as many people aware as possible of two things: our committee system within Parliament that I do not think enough people know about and also the way that we make the building publicly accessible and noticeable to tourists who come to Western Australia, and also the citizens. One of those things that I know you have been very instrumental in, Mr President, is the lighting up of the facade of the building into different colours. I have personally been involved with the global illuminations when we made it pink for October. My understanding was that it was lit orange last week for Diwali. It was great, but I actually did not see it anywhere that it was lit up in orange for Diwali. Diwali, through the Indian community this year, has had a massive lot of publicity surrounding it. I know Council House has a much more sophisticated lighting system; we all know about how much money they must have spent on that one. This weekend it got a lot of publicity when they lit theirs up in red, white and blue to commemorate the atrocities in Paris. I am wondering what we do to engage with social media to let people know on Facebook pages or whatever, “Look at Parliament House. It is beautiful this week; it’s pink for breast cancer” or “It’s orange for Diwali.” Do you have any thoughts as to how we can engage in that a bit better?

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps Russell and Rob may be able to update you with the structural things we have done in terms of assisting that, but Belinda heads the group that have done a great job on some of the individual items.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Yes, I think it is fabulous.

Mr Hunter: Maybe I will just do the structural part. First of all, the lighting; I would love to have lighting like Council House.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Wouldn’t we all!

Mr Hunter: But I think you have heard our cries about no budget. You will be happy to know that we are upgrading our lighting again at the front to make it a little more intense than it currently is. When you are standing very close to the building, it is very hard to see the colour properly. If the house is sitting, obviously, it just floods out with the backlighting, so we are upgrading our lighting yet again. We are keeping the voltage low and the costs low, but with more intense lighting so we will be able to have a bigger hue of colours so that we can do more things. In relation to the Diwali request, it came in very late; we actually got it the day before so there was not really much opportunity for us to do anything. It also happened to coincide with a Remembrance Day request. Fortunately, the colour was similar—they were both orangey-red—so I said yes to both and I told them both that the other party was having it at the same period. We expect to see some better lighting any day now because we are waiting for the installation of the new lights. In terms of actually publicising it, we do do it.

Ms Corey: PSD does have a social media account—we have a Twitter account—that we use, it is fair to say, on an ad hoc basis. One of the things that we are looking at as part of the community engagement strategy is how we harness that one in a more coordinated way. One of the things we have done a lot more of over the past two years is advertise things on the front page of our website. The Remembrance Day wreath that was on the front steps last week, we put that on our website.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: That was stunning, by the way.

[3.30 pm]

Ms Corey: It was a beautiful wreath. We have publicised some of the building illumination projects. We did World MS Day and we lit the building for the two weeks around the Anzac Day commemorations. The Diwali request obviously came in very late. We did not make the most of that opportunity, but it is something that we have a strong focus on.

The CHAIR: Who makes the requests for those?

Mr Bremner: Sorry?

The CHAIR: What is the process for making a request for the lights? Who makes them and how do you do it?

Mr Bremner: An email or phone call to a Presiding Officer or via a member. Then each one is assessed on its merits and a decision is made, normally by the joint Presiding Officers, as to whether we will agree to it or not.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I am going to ask a couple of questions on security. We had an upgrade of security after the incident at the Canadian national Parliament. Are there any plans to further upgrade, considering the latest world events, or have you actually completed your security upgrades to this point?

The PRESIDENT: To a point. There is always—it is a work in progress. Some things are not appropriate to talk about, but in terms of a general overview, perhaps Russell or Rob might be able to give the committee a general picture of what we have done and what might be in train.

Mr Hunter: About this time last year, about 27 October, was the exercise, which was three days after the Canadian bad experience. We put a lot of things in place. We had a lot of things in place already in terms of the infrastructure. We have tried to put infrastructure in place to do a few things. One of them is to actually have CCTV so that we can monitor. We have trained our staff to be more vigilant, to keep an eye out, keeping in mind that they are only security personnel and they are unarmed. We have engaged with Western Australia Police, the TRG in terms of their tactical response, and various other security groups to try to get a response capability if an event was to occur, which is obviously the most extreme event that are you referring to. We have installed doors on the first and second levels, which I know are quite inconvenient, but that creates a further delay point in the event of what is referred to as an “active shooter”. We have installed further cameras in three locations around the Parliament. I say “installed”; we have one to go. We have also put some security passes on members’ doors, and that is happening as well. So there are quite a few things. In terms of what we are going to spend, we are at the point where we have spent all our money. We have spent about \$212 000 on security to date, between this financial and last financial year, so hopefully that will make a difference if something does happen.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I ask the question because I visited another Parliament recently and their security was certainly a lot more rigorous, or appeared to be a lot more rigorous, than ours, so I was wondering what sort of plans are worth —

Mr Bremner: If I might add, in some other Parliaments in Australia, their state police, or in the case of the federal Parliament, the Australian Federal Police have an armed guarding service, if you like, and they actually provide security at those installations, so there are armed police there 24/7 basically doing a lot of the roles that our security officers do. However, so far as I am aware, WA Police do not have that capability and they are not operating in that space.

The PRESIDENT: With regard to the exercise that Rob referred to, a video was made of that and a very comprehensive assessment was done. We actually took that to the Presiding Officers and Clerks’ Conference in Hobart last year, and shared that with other Parliaments around Australia and the Pacific. We also took it to the Canadian CPA Conference—this was fresh in their minds, of course, after the situation in Ottawa. That was, I think, acknowledged as perhaps the best example of a situation that might emerge in an institution such as we all work in, and quite a few lessons could be taken from that exercise. That video is on our intranet and available to members if you want to see it in all its graphic form.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Can I follow on from the issue of security, because Parliament House as a workplace not just for members of Parliament but for all the staff, needs to be as safe and secure as possible. During the period of the annual report, we also had an incident in which a member of Parliament was approached by a registered dangerous sex offender. I am wondering

whether there was an assessment of the security response from the security officers at Parliament House to that incident, and whether a report was done, whether it was looked into, and what the findings were, if any, of that assessment or report?

The PRESIDENT: I was made aware of it as a Presiding Officer, and obviously the Speaker and I were kept informed and asked questions and so on; but for the details of the incident, I think Rob would be able to provide them.

Mr Hunter: When you talk about it post-event and know the details, it obviously sounds quite bad, but on the day it occurred, a person walked up to the member involved. It was an unknown person to us. We keep a list of people who are known to be problem people within the community or known to be threats. The person was being followed on a camera and being monitored by two security officers. They approached the member. One of our staff members went directly out there and stood in close proximity, next to a tree. The member waved the security officer away and said that everything was okay. Then a second security officer went outside and the member made their way inside and was able to talk the person round. That is what happened. In the wake of that, we did some research to find out who that person was and it was discovered who it was.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I understand each individual incident as such, but what concerns me is the proximity of a public thoroughfare to the entry point—that particular entry point, but other entry points in the building as well. Has any work been done around perhaps providing a barrier between that public face and the ability—I am careful of what goes on public record here, but the ability of members of Parliament to get in and out of the building without the risk of being accosted. I have to say that that one incident is not the only time that members of Parliament have been accosted as they enter and exit the building.

The PRESIDENT: There is no doubt it is unsatisfactory at the moment. We need a secure underground car parking facility for access to the building.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Hear, hear! You do not get any argument from me.

The PRESIDENT: We need a gatehouse-type system for security where exits and entrances can be controlled much better than we have the ability to, with quite a few different entry points around the building. Most other Parliaments in the world have some sort of perimeter fencing, too; we do not.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Is that in the master plan?

The PRESIDENT: It is all in the master plan.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Rob mentioned earlier that the recent internal doors are inconvenient, and I agree it is inconvenient, but I do not think there is one person who uses the building or comes into the building who does not understand the reason for it and is very happy to suffer that small form of inconvenience for the broader general security that it provides. Is there any prospect of external work of any kind, be it the things that you mentioned, Mr President, the gatehouse or perimeter fencing or some sort of screening?

The PRESIDENT: Under the current situation, no; we simply do not have the funds to do it.

Mr Hunter: But we have asked for them.

The PRESIDENT: We continuously ask for them.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Is there, therefore, a prioritised list of higher priority, let us say, work that could be undertaken if those funds were available?

[3.40 pm]

The PRESIDENT: We have always got that in mind. Whether it is documented as such at the moment, I am not quite sure.

Mr Hunter: We do have a list and it was tabled at the Parliamentary Services Committee, where we put an outstanding list of works of about \$30 million, and some of those things did relate to security. It is often very challenging to determine where to put the money. I said that we spent around \$212 000 on security in the last 12 months. That meant that we did not fix something else. In a building of this age, with a \$30 million backlog of work, it is very difficult to then divert the money to security. The contact by people coming to the building is very difficult to stop because it is a public place and it is a place where people are entitled to come. Having a safe entry point has been mooted a number of times and costed at the north, south and front entrance. We looked at a model some years ago which New South Wales introduced, which is essentially a building outside their main building which allowed people to come through before they made it onto their reserve, and that would be ideal. The best we have been able to achieve is really just monitoring, some vigilance in terms of our training and making sure that the stand-off areas for vehicles is between 25 and 30 metres so vehicles cannot get close to the building, for obvious reasons. That is what we have been able to achieve at the moment. It is an ongoing thing. It never loses our focus and, unfortunately, at some point—I hope this does not happen—there may be an incident that will penetrate our security, and it will not be through our lack of trying.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I hear that. I think we are all working here together. There is absolutely no pointing the finger at the Legislative Council or the Department of Parliamentary Services in any way. I think we are all trying to work to the same outcome with our limited funds available.

Mr Hunter: I will just give you that figure because you asked—\$3.75 million is the security outpost that we have costed. So, \$3.75 million is to create the secure entrances for members and staff.

Mr Bremner: That does not address car parking.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: No, I understand that.

Mr Bremner: The New South Wales gatehouse works very well, but you have got secure car parking for members.

The CHAIR: In terms of the security issues, the member talked about an incident with a registered sex offender, but I note that since the annual report period, we also saw the situation where we had Geert Wilders attend Parliament House with his own security people. Were those security people authorised and have we done any review about the way they behaved? The control of the Parliament seemed to be taken over by private security people, all with umbrellas—I do not know if anybody knows why they all had umbrellas—where they were taking and controlling movement around Parliament House. Have we done any review about that?

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I will educate you later on why they carry umbrellas.

The CHAIR: I have got an idea. Have we done any review about that incident, because it ties into the whole management of security around the Parliament?

Mr Hunter: If I can just talk in general terms around that particular —

The CHAIR: And were those security people authorised to act?

Mr Hunter: No. Let us start with that. First of all, Geert Wilders' appearance at Parliament was not part of the request that was made through a normal request process; it was from the Australian Liberty Alliance, I think they were called, which is the political party they were looking to establish. No mention of Geert Wilders appearing was made at the point of the submission, which was some week and a half beforehand. It met the guideline requirements. We gave them the by-laws; they agreed to comply with the by-laws. As for any group, and any person for that matter, they have an entitlement to come to Parliament House as a protest or whatever they wanted to do.

The CHAIR: We might not like them but we have got to accept that is democracy.

Mr Hunter: And there are plenty of people we would prefer not to come, but that just happens; that is the nature of it. We got some word unofficially or anecdotally—it certainly was not through the police—that Geert Wilders may arrive. I was asked the question directly whether we would deny access, to which I answered, “No, we would not, as he has the same right as anybody else.” We were aware that the Premier had made some comments publicly about government buildings, but obviously this is not a government building, notwithstanding what the President said previously.

The CHAIR: I understand you cannot restrict a member of the public turning up at Parliament House. We are a place of democracy and we cannot say, “You can’t come.” It was the way the security was managed that I am interested in.

Mr Hunter: I will go through the process as opposed to the security aspect of it. We were not aware that they were going to have hired security there. On the day before, we were approached by some gentlemen who said that they were going to be escorting Geert Wilders on-site and asked if they could have access to the building, cameras and normal things like that and we said, “Absolutely you will not. You cannot. You will have to comply with the by-laws out there. This is the environment that you can operate in.” They had no issue with that. On the day that the protest occurred, a number of other well-dressed men with earplugs in and umbrellas, as you say, arrived.

The CHAIR: And bulletproof vests, I understand.

Mr Hunter: I do not know if they had that. When that was taking place, we were very, very clear with them that they could not restrict anybody from moving around the Parliament or anything else. We got an early report that a person said, “Can you please stay away from this area?” The security manager and I addressed that immediately and made sure that the security officers would not do that and that they had no right to do that. That is the extent of it. Everything else that unfolded on the day were things that we were unaware of or did not control.

Mr Bremner: I might add that with all our protests up here—larger protests or particularly boisterous protests—it is not unusual for the organisers to provide marshals in some form, who try to move protesters or move people who are protesting or stop them getting onto the steps et cetera. That is not an unusual situation. I guess the unusual part of this was the particular dress and manner.

The CHAIR: That is why I asked. I understand you cannot control who turns up and what happens if someone does not follow the rules. That is why I was asking whether we have done a review of what occurred on that day. You say you addressed it, but the sort of feedback I had from a number of people was that they continued to try to issue instructions as if they had some sense of authority in terms of controlling the place. They were not a marshal identified as that group’s marshal; they were seeking to present as some form of security detail, directing people about the performance around the building.

Mr Hunter: The review that we have done is we have talked about what happened and how we might do it differently next time. It unfolded without our knowledge. I was standing there and Russell was with me, it looked like someone was being prevented from coming down the stairs to where, I guess, the conference was being held. Tony Paterson, our security manager, quickly established that that had not happened at all. The person simply stopped and asked, “What’s going on down there?” and the person at the top of the stairs apparently said, “You might want to go another way. It’s pretty congested down there.” That was the extent of it. We were on top of that, making sure that that was not happening. In fact, the seven protesters that were there were able to move freely around up until the very end. Everything was going according to plan. The security detail that was there from WA Police and various other groups were coming to us and asking whether they needed to do anything and we said, “No. It’s a peaceful protest; let it go.” That is basically what happened.

The PRESIDENT: They at no stage, as I understand it, attempted to come into the building itself.

Another point I think is worth adding is that with protests of all different sizes, descriptions, backgrounds and purposes, often the marshals in charge of that protest, if you like, are important for our security staff to negotiate with in terms of the actual protest if there is a hint that something might be going astray or whatever.

The CHAIR: I understand all of that, but the sense I got was it stretched beyond what was normal.

Mr Hunter: There were no special permissions. It was very standard.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I go to the effectiveness indicators, and first of all starting with the Legislative Council on pages 74 to 75? With the first three, there has been not a dramatic but a steady decline from 2012 to 2015 in the level of reported effectiveness of procedural advice for the house and committees and the provision of administrative support. Now, I note that these effectiveness indicators are taken from members' ratings. Can you comment generally on the decline in those areas and what factors might be attributed to that; and, secondly, about the effectiveness of the effectiveness indicators and whether the method of data collection is still relevant or effective?

[3.50 pm]

Mr Pratt: On the first issue, before I talk about those two questions, the response rate is something that affects the way the eventual percentages are calculated. You will note that in this reporting period we only got 16 responses from Legislative Council members, which is 44 per cent only of the membership.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I was one of them.

Mr Pratt: Thank you.

The CHAIR: You would have been a lot higher if she had not!

Mr Pratt: Please spread the word. I think that possibly reflects some survey weariness on the part of members. It is a PSD survey. The Legislative Assembly no doubt surveys its members as well. As we get through Parliament, the tendency is that at the start of the Parliament, generally speaking, we may have up to one-third new membership in the house. People are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, can I say.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I would accept that if that were the case, but the 2012 actual is much higher. Not all of them are but some of them. The figure for procedural advice to committees is higher for 2012 than 2013, and 2013 would have been the new members, not 2012.

Mr Pratt: Yes. I am just talking generally. As I say, there is a little bit of survey weariness. The other matters are particularly in relation to our committee staff. In the past six years, there have been five Clerks Assistant (Committees). There is an element of staff turnover at that very senior position, and I have no doubt that the survey figures are a reflection of that turnover. That position has been advertised and closed last Friday, 13 November, and interviews will take place over the next couple of weeks. I am very hopeful and very confident that that selection process will result in the appointment of an experienced staff member, or experienced applicant, who will hopefully be a long-term officer of the Legislative Council and you will find, I am sure, that those figures will improve. They certainly, I think, will improve if we have more members do the survey. For example, with only 16 people responding to the survey, if we have one particularly poor response, that can significantly affect the outcome.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Have you thought about reviewing the methodology for assessing the effectiveness or whether the effectiveness indicators really are relevant to the work of the Council, anymore?

Mr Pratt: Our members are our clients—our principal clients. If we are to compare one survey with the next, they have to ask very similar questions. Short of actually starting afresh and

looking at new questions or new methodologies to determine performance, we have not looked at any currently.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The methodology around effectiveness can be enhanced; it does not have to be thrown out the window altogether. Have you considered that that might be needed to make effectiveness indicators relevant?

Mr Pratt: I have not considered that. I have not seen the responses. I am not sure. They are anonymous. I do not recall seeing any suggestions from the respondents as to different methodologies.

The PRESIDENT: Do you have any suggestions? Withholding their pay until they submit their survey form?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I was going to say that! Great minds!

The CHAIR: And that will enhance the numbers how, sorry?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I do have some suggestions, actually.

The CHAIR: “What do you think of the PSD?”

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: But I do not want to take up the committee’s time doing that right now. I do have some suggestions around that.

The CHAIR: A prize for members that get it in on time, Mr President!

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: A trip with you, Mr President!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Actually, that is going to be one of my questions.

The CHAIR: And the second prize is two trips!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I noted that the President did not undertake any delegations this financial year. Is that because of budgetary constraints, Mr President?

The PRESIDENT: Not particularly, although I am always conscious of that, of course. It was just that a couple did not come together. It is possible that in the next financial year, two delegations might go somewhere. There is some talk at the moment about a delegation to Japan, because in my time as President I have not been on a Legislative Council delegation to Japan. There is a MOU that hangs on my wall between the Japanese Parliament and our Parliament. That is one, for instance, and there may be others under consideration, together with the Clerk, too.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It was not meant as a throwaway question, I did actually have it on my list of questions.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: No, I think they are very important trips that are undertaken, having been lucky enough to have been on one of them to India in 2010 with the President, which was a very successful delegation. Although, it was not directly under the auspices of the Legislative Council—it was done independently—but it was very, very good.

The PRESIDENT: We were very conscious of our budget then, and we all used our imprest accounts.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: We did use our own.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: While we are talking about the budget, can I come back to the efficiency indicators? On page 77 is “Support of the Committees of the Legislative Council”. Are these figures for this financial year? Are all the indicators expressed as a calendar year? Is it correct that it is a calendar year?

Mr Hunter: It is the financial year.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is it correct that the budget for the support of the Legislative Council committees has actually decreased?

Mr Pratt: On page 77 is the average cost.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It is the average cost.

Mr Pratt: It is the average cost, so it depends on the number of sitting days. If we have more sitting days, the average cost tends to go down because you are dividing the total budget by more days.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thanks. I refer to page 68. Why are you holding more cash?

The CHAIR: The notes explain that travel was down. Finally, I admit that we are in the black, which I have got to congratulate you on. I should have done that at the beginning.

[4.00 pm]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It was actually going to be part of my question, really.

Mr Pratt: It is a result of a surplus of \$617 000. If you go to page 29 of the annual report, you will see the comprehensive income statement surplus for the period, \$617 000. Mr Chairman, you will be very pleased that we are in the black.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: We do not have to give it back, do we?

Mr Pratt: We do not retain those funds.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So that goes back to consolidated revenue.

Mr Pratt: Yes, correct. The only time that you are required to essentially retain funds is if you get permission to carry over funds from a prior financial year, which we have done, for example, in relation to some consultants' costs to do with the review of the Auditor General's Office. We were permitted to carry over funds for that.

The CHAIR: How will that be recorded in next year's annual report, then, if you lose that? It shows elsewhere in your budget papers that you now have a surplus on your balance sheet, but if you have to then return the \$617 million, which I assume is the cash—

Mr Pratt: Thousand.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Thousand.

The CHAIR: It is \$617 000, sorry; my apologies. You have got \$1 million in cash and you have to give that back next year. How does that all work out? Does it not show up now as an accumulated surplus? Will you have to run a deficit this year to bring that down? It does not make sense to me if you are saying you have to give the cash back. Did you draw it down?

Mr Pratt: No; that is funds that were not expended in that financial year. Some of those funds not expended were allocated to funding for the review of the Auditor General's Office. That review had only just commenced in that financial year, you may recall, Mr Chairman; you are on that committee.

The CHAIR: As are all members of this committee.

Mr Pratt: So, to prevent those funds that were not expended going back to consolidated revenue, we went through a process with Treasury for the approval of those funds to be shifted and allocated into this financial year.

The CHAIR: Did we hold \$1 million in cash on 30 June or have we not drawn that down? We just had a right to draw it down and we had not drawn it down.

Mr Pratt: We had a right to draw it down. I do not think it sits in our bank account.

Mrs Yang: Yes, it is.

Mr Pratt: It is sitting in our bank account.

The CHAIR: That is what I am saying. You are saying you have to return it, so will that be shown as an expense in the 2015–16 budget, will it? How will it now be shown that that money has been returned to Treasury, or will you have your drawdown reduced by that amount?

Mr Pratt: Sorry; there is a correction. We do not return it. Apparently it sits in our bank account.

The CHAIR: So we do retain it.

Mr Pratt: We do retain it.

The CHAIR: But they may adjust an appropriation for this year if they think we have got too much money.

Mr Pratt: Yes. We just cannot draw it, so effectively we cannot get to use it.

The CHAIR: Have you not now got a deal that you get last year's plus two per cent without any debate? Is that not the deal? In theory, you should now have the money for the President's upgrade of security —

The PRESIDENT: We do not know about that yet because —

The CHAIR: —or the President's —

The PRESIDENT: We have not received any extra requests from Treasury on that yet, so we do not know about the next financial year yet.

The CHAIR: Whether you have been given that. For 2015–16, though, you have, have you not?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

Mr Pratt: Yes, \$110 000.

The PRESIDENT: Which is two per cent.

Mr Pratt: Correct.

The PRESIDENT: But we do not know whether they are going to repeat that exercise for next year.

The CHAIR: For 2016–17, yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Pages 87 and 89, employee classifications and demographics: what is the percentage of employees level 7 and above by gender and the percentage of employees by gender levels 2 to 6? Have you got those figures?

Mr Pratt: I have not got those; I will have to take those on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A3.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: While still on the Legislative Council, we talked about the appropriation process. Can we talk a bit more about a process for changing the appropriation process, because this fits, in part, with other issues in the way in which members' entitlements are administered. Some are administered by the Parliament and some are administered by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Some of that is travel; some of that is IT, so I am interested to know whether any work has been done from our last annual report hearings about how members' entitlements might better be accommodated by Parliament as distinct by the government.

The PRESIDENT: A general comment first: the separation of powers is important in our whole system between the executive and the legislature. In principle, there is no question in my mind that parliamentary entitlements should be administered by Parliament, not the executive. We do have a mishmash, as you have explained. Some are administered by us and some by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and some by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. It is confusing and, in principle, it is not straightforward.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: That is an understatement.

The PRESIDENT: Once again, it is almost an annual request to the executive, but, as a Parliament, we certainly, in principle, want to put up our hand to administer that, but certainly not without the resourcing that goes with it, which involves the physical resourcing and personnel that go with it. If the executive just said, “All right; you can have the lot right now”, without the proper resourcing that goes with it, we could not cope with it, to be honest.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: But it is a bit like the white ant and other costs problem really, is it not, in that we have two sets of infrastructure to manage members’ entitlements and those two sets of infrastructure cost money, so would it not be, from a simple cost effectiveness point of view —

Mr Bremner: Might I suggest the same argument goes with accommodation. I do not know whether logic is playing a part in the answer to the question, I am sorry, member.

The PRESIDENT: I totally agree with you that we should rationalise the responsibility where each of these areas lie and rationalise the delivery of the service. It would be far more economical to do it and far more efficient.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: And effective.

The PRESIDENT: And effective, yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: There are different levels of efficiency, but in terms of effectiveness of the provision of services to members, it would certainly enhance that as well, I would think.

The PRESIDENT: Yes. It is probably worth repeating—you probably know already—that in terms of electorate offices, each member has an electorate office, and I am technically the employer of the electorate officers as well as the manager of the electorate office that each of us has, as members, but at the beginning of every Parliament, I have signed a delegation to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to administer certain aspects of that. I would love not to sign it, but I would not dare do it if the resources did not come to manage that ourselves. If I turned around and said to Russell and Rob that they were now in charge of electorate offices without any extra resources, I think they would resign tomorrow.

[4.10 pm]

The CHAIR: You will know if the President wants to get rid of you then, won’t you, gentlemen!

Mr Hunter: Just in terms of scale, to get that into perspective, there are about 102 electorate offices, as in physical infrastructure. There are about 270 staff that make up that and over 100 vehicles, and our budget is \$15 million for about 180 for the Parliamentary Services Department, so we are talking about a one-and-a-half times scale of our existing operation, if you like, and we have some accommodation issues, as you know. We have done some exercises previously, Russell and I, over the last decade dare I say, and we would be more than happy to take it on, even though we know it would be very challenging, but without the resources it would be a very ineffective service.

Mr Bremner: And it is pointless taking it on unless you are going to do it more efficiently.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: It is effective now; we did not know that!

Mr Hunter: The effective part was really about what PSD are doing and the Council, not so much DPC.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: No, we are saying you are effective.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: We just injected some humour into the conversation, Hansard!

You are aware of all of the issues and you have done some work on some of how much it would cost and what would be required to transfer all of that and to effect a complete separation.

Mr Bremner: Every other state Parliament operates in that situation.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Correct, and there are concerns regarding the undue influence of the executive.

Mr Bremner: Yes, Presiding Officers basically dictate what happens in respect of members.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes, and their staff.

Mr Bremner: And their staff.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: And particular issues in relation to occupational health and safety—legislative requirements that are not being fulfilled, as well.

The PRESIDENT: As Presiding Officers, the Speaker and I get informed and requested to comment, agree or disagree on a recommendation in terms of some staff matters. Not all of them come to us, but there is a bit of a threshold and salary increments, for instance, come to us with a recommendation and salary incremental requests. Most of the time, I have to say, the staff handle it very well and reasonably. From my perspective, there were a couple of instances where I have questioned things and gone back and spoken to the member involved and clarified some situations.

The CHAIR: I just have a couple of questions on the LC. On page 85 you have the list of the website statistics. I note that the second most visited part of the site is actually Tabled Papers. There is a footnote 2 there, but I cannot find footnote 2, so I do not know what footnote 2 refers to; maybe you can enlighten us. The issue that I regularly get from people is the timeliness of tabled papers going up. I do understand that at times it can be difficult if you get a flood of annual reports on a single day, trying to get them all up that day, but even questions that are tabled at question time can take a period of time. I have to say that the procedure office is very good at providing copies when you ring them and ask as a member to have them provided to us, but it seems incredibly time-consuming to have them going through that process, so is that something we are looking at to see if we can speed up the process by which tabled papers are actually on the website? I would expect that the time at which people seek a tabled paper would be very quickly after it has been tabled. They will read about it in *Hansard* or whatever and see that a paper has been tabled, and then want to access it, but it can be days before it appears on the website. Is that something we are looking at? What is the reason for the delay?

Mr Pratt: Mr Chairman, this is the first I have heard of the issue. Tabled papers that are tabled during our proceedings, our procedure office staff put those up on the net and my understanding is that the State Law Publisher does the other materials, so there may be a delay, I would think there is a delay, probably more as a result of that process at the State Law Publisher. I will consult with the State Law Publisher, John Strijk, and have a look at those figures. I will provide you with a response.

The CHAIR: I am happy to talk to you outside the committee as well about trying to get a faster process. It was just when I saw that it was the second highest area, it reminded me of an issue that I was going to raise with you anyway.

Mr Pratt: In relation to footnote 2, I cannot find it either!

The CHAIR: No, so if you can find out and let us know what it is, that would be good. I will not ask for supplementary information; you can just let us know what it is.

Mr Pratt: I will let you know.

The CHAIR: The other question I have goes to the Legislative Council, but I ask the same one of the PSD: do we have any formal Aboriginal reconciliation plan for the Parliament, through either the Legislative Council or the Parliamentary Services Department? Most agencies have an Aboriginal reconciliation plan. Do we as a department, either of them, have an Aboriginal reconciliation plan? Is it something that has ever been given consideration?

Mr Bremner: Not that I am aware of.

Mr Pratt: Not us.

The PRESIDENT: I cannot recall it coming up in discussions either with the Clerk or with the PSD staff.

The CHAIR: All right. Maybe I can make a formal request that we think about it. Whilst I am at it, is there a reason why we do not fly the Aboriginal flag at the Parliament? Many other Parliaments do, and I know it is causing great angst amongst a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that we do not formally recognise the Aboriginal people by flying what is an official flag of Australia at the state Parliament. We can fly the Eagles and the Dockers, but we cannot on a regular basis fly the Aboriginal flag, as many other Parliaments do. Is there a reason why we do not?

The PRESIDENT: We do have a policy, and it is not quite true to say we can fly the Eagles and Dockers differently to the Aboriginal flag because they were only put up there in terms of a specific point in time when they were both involved in finals football.

The CHAIR: I am not complaining about them going up, Mr President; I understand why we put them up.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Perhaps I might be!

The PRESIDENT: Yes, well, we will not endorse the Collingwood flag going up there!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Pardon?

The CHAIR: See the problem I have, Mr President!

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: We almost have unanimity!

The PRESIDENT: We do have a written policy on that we can provide to you, but we have had some requests from members and we have responded that our Aboriginal flag is displayed for specific instances surrounding, for instance, NAIDOC Week or some other specific events relating to Aboriginal involvement. We do not have a policy like some other Parliaments do, I admit, that the Aboriginal flag flown all the time.

The CHAIR: When was that policy last reviewed?

The PRESIDENT: Formally, I do not know, but informally I guess it is under review all the time.

The CHAIR: I think it detracts from the Parliament because it is, as I understand it, a formal flag; it is recognised as one of the flags of Australia and I just do not understand why it is not flying regularly. We have the Aboriginal People's Room and the Aboriginal People's Gallery, and it just detracts by not also having the Aboriginal flag.

The PRESIDENT: I will offer to discuss it with the Speaker and take it up with the Speaker, and also canvass it at our next Parliamentary Services Committee meeting for some input from the members who are part of that committee.

The CHAIR: I appreciate that, Mr President.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I go to page 11 and parliamentary questions under "Information Technology". I notice that in the Legislative Assembly there is an upgrade to allow users to access the questions on notice system from Apple iPad devices and that members of the Legislative Assembly can input their own questions directly into the system. How is that working?

[4.20 pm]

Ms Corey: I understand it is working well. I have not had any feedback to the contrary.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So, that only works for members of the Assembly?

Ms Corey: No. Apple iPad is across all users of the questions on notice system. When the questions on notice system was implemented—I think in 2012 but I would have to check that—Legislative

Council members were given access at that point and the Legislative Assembly did not provide that access to their members but they have now.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: In terms of the upgrade of Microsoft Exchange and the Lotus Notes database and the web development platforms, my understanding is that parliamentary committee uploads are quite difficult and time-consuming because of the interface between Lotus Notes and the parliamentary web operating systems.

Ms Corey: Are you talking about reports or submissions, those sorts of things?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: All those sorts of things, yes. And that, although I am not an expert in Lotus Notes, I do understand that —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Most of those people are dead by now, I think, that use Lotus Notes! It is such an antiquated system, but there we are.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The member said it! I do understand that there is a complexity, a difficulty, that means that it is very outdated and that there are more modern ways of being able to upload documents to websites. Has that been investigated? Is there any plan to investigate that?

Mr Bremner: We had a look at that. We are aware of those issues, that and similar issues. Lotus Notes in itself is a very robust product. The problem with Lotus Notes is that it is not particularly well supported in Western Australia. It is in the eastern states, however, and people with Lotus Notes expertise are few and far between in Western Australia. We had a look at moving to —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is nationally as well.

Mr Bremner: Certainly. For example, Victoria is largely Lotus Notes right through the government and, you know, both email and databases. They are just moving off Lotus Notes email now. Anyway, to get back to your question, we looked at moving to SharePoint, which is where most other Parliaments around the world and Australia have gone to. We did an exercise, probably going back as much as nearly 10 years ago on that, and each year we put in a submission to Treasury for funding of that. The funding to do it and to convert off our existing Lotus Notes database—and Lotus Notes database and Lotus Notes underpins our web system as well, so it is not as simple as just the databases—was in the order of \$3 million to \$4 million. Those funds have not been forthcoming; therefore, we are left with this residual issue of having to continue to support Lotus Notes and make the best of it that we can.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Okay; thank you. On page 13 on the same question, is there going to be or are there plans for a general website upgrade for the Parliament?

Mr Bremner: We upgrade our website virtually continually. It is an incremental upgrade process. If you are suggesting that the look and feel needs a substantial upgrade, that is not something we are currently looking at. But if we get that feedback, we would certainly have a look at it.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So it is not sort of something that is scheduled in as a —

Mr Bremner: Certainly not.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: — strategic part of the community education kind of —

Mr Bremner: No. The community education and our emphasis on community engagement and that side of it has meant that there have been several elements of the existing website, both the intranet site and the extranet site, which have been enhanced over the past 12 to 18 months; and they all continue. We are in the process of developing a comprehensive community engagement strategy, and part of that will deal with the communication aspects. An element of that will be the web interface and an element of that will be the social media interface et cetera.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is great. That is fantastic, except it could do with better funding.

Mr Bremner: Welcome to any suggestions from any members.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Really?

Mr Bremner: Certainly.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I will design one for you, shall I?

The PRESIDENT: We are here to help.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So the review that was being undertaken on IT —

Mr Bremner: I am sorry, what page, member?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It is on page 13. What is being looked at specifically and in relation to where it talks about quality streaming? What is being looked at there?

Mr Bremner: Page 13 for Reporting Services?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes.

Ms Corey: Our broadcasting infrastructure is about 10 years old, so we have just put in place a process to look at how we upgrade that to last us for the next 10 years and that involves things such as moving to high-definition, more contemporary control infrastructure to improve the way we broadcast. As part of that is how we interface a lot better with our web streaming system so that we are getting a better quality web stream out to all our users, and also how we manage to capture that information so we can make it more of a view-on-demand service.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Okay, that is great. What does that actually involve? Does it involve new infrastructure in the Legislative Council offices, for example? Does it also involve —

Mr Hunter: That is both, yes.

Ms Corey: The control infrastructure is across both chambers. It is a staged process too, so we are going to start with control infrastructure and then we are going to move beyond that to the cameras as we get funding.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Okay, so upgrading the cameras.

Ms Corey: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So in terms of streaming committee hearings, for example, where are we at with that?

Mr Pratt: We are very close indeed. As part of our strategic plan for this year, one of those items is to install broadcast facilities at the Legislative Council Committee Office. Officers there have been consulting with Belinda and our broadcast staff to select the right equipment. That is being installed, and testing is going to be happening very, very shortly.

Mr Hunter: This week.

Mr Pratt: Yes, this week. That also includes a capacity to videoconference as well.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Very good; congratulations.

Mr Pratt: We are trying hard.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: You might want to take this on notice: how many photographic portraits are there displayed throughout the Parliament?

The PRESIDENT: We will need to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A4.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Could you also take on notice what proportion of those are women to men?

The PRESIDENT: We will also take that on notice.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you very much.

The PRESIDENT: But seeing you have raised it, I will just briefly mention that the focus of this year's Heritage Day and the Parliament's involvement was People who Shaped Perth. We put a specific focus on Edith Cowan as a person who shaped Perth; indeed, shaped Parliaments right throughout Australia. So, there was a very strong focus on the first woman member of any Australian Parliament.

[4.30 pm]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I was going to get to that and offer my congratulations to those people involved in that.

The CHAIR: I will make both parts of that question A4.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How many photographic portraits of the first woman Premier in Australia are in the Parliament House display?

The PRESIDENT: We will take that on notice as well.

The CHAIR: I will make that all part of A4.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How many photographic portraits of the first woman Indigenous member of Parliament are displayed in Parliament House?

The PRESIDENT: We will add that to the list.

The CHAIR: Yes, that is part of A4.

I just wanted to turn to page 12 of the report. You refer to the library cafe. You say you are opening the area to selected community groups. Who are these selected community groups?

Ms Corey: When community groups go on a short public tour, we intend to trial ending it in the library cafe with a coffee and a talk to a parliamentary officer about something that is parliamentary specific. We are in the formative stages of planning that. We get a lot of community groups such as Probus and Rotary coming through so we will probably target those in the first instance just to determine how well that concept goes and then look at opening it up a bit further.

The CHAIR: So it would be groups that are coming for a tour of Parliament House?

Ms Corey: Yes.

Mr Hunter: Initially.

Ms Corey: It would be part of that community engagement program when the community groups come for a tour anyway. Currently there is no facility for them to have a cup of tea or something at the end of it unless it is sponsored by a member. We would make that part of the program.

The CHAIR: Are members now able to book groups to get the education officer to do tours? We used to be able to and then I thought that had been cancelled. Are you saying that groups can now book tours again?

Mr Bremner: As far as I am aware, that never stopped. Members can and do.

The PRESIDENT: We have opened up the whole booking of facilities to all members.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Yes, I am hosting a lunch in the Centenary Room on Friday; thank you, Mr President.

The CHAIR: Is the library cafe a separate accounting centre? Do we have records of how much we have spent on it and how much income we have received from it?

Mr Hunter: It is actually through the parliamentary refreshment rooms, so the income will be for the parliamentary refreshment rooms.

The CHAIR: Do you keep internal records of how much it is costing to run and how much we are receiving in income from it?

Mr Hunter: Yes, we certainly keep the records for the sales and the stock that goes into that.

The CHAIR: But not for the time spent managing it?

Mr Hunter: No, but it is fairly nominal.

The CHAIR: Are you able to provide that as supplementary information—the total sales and the total cost of materials?

Mr Hunter: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No A5.]

The CHAIR: I know a couple of years ago you did an OSH report on the Parliament of all the OSH issues. Has that been updated in recent times or are you still working off the old report?

Mr Hunter: There are two things. One of them is that the occupational safety and health management plan is enduring. It just keeps going, and is updated regularly; not so much the plan, Mr Chairman, but more the activities that relate to it. A schedule is published on our intranet for staff, for example, that says what the activities will be in each quarter. It could be anything from workplace hazard reporting, fatigue training, ergonomic assessments or training in relation to the use of particular equipment. Those things are done fairly regularly, and it is available on the intranet.

The CHAIR: I refer to the report that was done a few years ago that was identified. Do we do that on a regular basis?

Mr Hunter: The independent reviews?

The CHAIR: Yes, of outstanding OHS issues within the building.

Mr Hunter: There are two ways of dealing with OHS-type issues. One of them is looking at it from a staff perspective and the other one is looking at it from a building perspective. Through our faults and reporting, we remedy anything that comes up as being a hazard. Sometimes there is not actually a fault; someone just says that something needs to be dealt with, so we will deal with it that way. In relation to staff, we will take it through either an incident or a hazard report that they can do voluntarily or they will have to, as most of the staff will understand, complete a hazard inspection checklist each quarter for their areas. That is how we input to that plan. The plan itself is just an overarching guideline about what we should be doing.

The CHAIR: When was the last time we had an outside review of OSH?

Mr Hunter: In 2010.

The CHAIR: When is the next one due?

Mr Hunter: We do not have one scheduled at this point.

The CHAIR: Do we have a 10-year strategic asset plan for the Parliament?

Mr Hunter: Yes.

The CHAIR: Could you provide that as supplementary information?

Mr Hunter: There is an unfunded section and a funded section which looks at our \$1 million, so that does not go very far, obviously. That \$30 million I referred to is in the unfunded section. That also changes from time to time depending on what happens. If we have to deal with water problems or fix roofs, it will change.

The CHAIR: I understand that.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

The CHAIR: If members have no further questions, I will call the hearing to a close.

The PRESIDENT: Mr Chairman, can I just ask you one question?

The CHAIR: Yes, of course. We do not allow that of other agencies but for you, Mr President, always!

The PRESIDENT: Can we expect a report from this committee on your hearings in terms of the annual reports of the different departments and Parliament? I am just perhaps hoping that the committee might reap some findings and make some recommendations in terms of some of the things we have discussed today.

The CHAIR: One of the things that we noticed was that we had not been doing reports for some time on both the annual budget hearings and the annual report hearings. It is the committee's intention to get back to making sure that after we complete each set of hearings, we do a report to the Parliament. Certainly in terms of the section with respect to the parliamentary departments, I guess obviously it would be up to my members to decide what they want to do but we have all noted your comments and it is an issue that affects us all. Hopefully that information that we have asked for on notice will help us put together a case. I think the key issue in that whole area is being able to show clearly to the people of Western Australia that there is money to be saved by actually doing both the maintenance job on the existing Parliament properly but also developing a long-term plan for better offices rather than leasing offices and all the rest of it. Apart from the convenience factor of it, it is about showing that it will save money and hopefully that information you provide us will help us in that regard.

I will draw this hearing to a conclusion. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the President in writing in the next couple of days together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have any unasked questions, I ask them to email them to the committee as soon as possible after the hearing. On behalf of the committee, I thank you all very much for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 4.37 pm
