

Mr John Day; Speaker; Chairman; Mr John Bradshaw; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Rob Johnson; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Mr Tony O'Gorman

Division 1: Parliament, \$32 951 000 -

Ms Guise, Chairman.

Mr Riebeling, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr P.J. McHugh, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr D.K. Carpenter, Deputy Clerk (Committees) of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr R.M. Bremner, Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services.

Mr M. Crouche, Finance Manager, Parliamentary Services.

Mr DAY: The capital works program on page 56 shows an estimated cost of \$1 million for the Legislative Assembly committee rooms relocation, with \$772 000 expected to be expended in 2001-02. Much work has been done in establishing the committee rooms on the other side of Harvest Terrace, and a high standard of facilities has been provided. I commend and congratulate those who have been involved in providing the facilities, which are much better than that which we had in the past. What do you expect that \$772 000 to be expended on in this financial year?

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for the question. The member will be aware that this project commenced in the last financial year and was substantially funded in that year, with some costs extending into this financial year. For the committee's information, I will run through the costs I have that relate to the completion of the committee rooms. The total cost is expected to be about \$1.2 million. Stage 1 included the consultants' fee, \$17 600; the Department of Contract and Management Services' fee, \$1 500; acquisition costs - the leasing agent - \$1 950; and legal fees, \$1 970. Stage 2 included tender advertising, \$340; primary consultants, \$47 600; service consultants, \$26 750; fit-out by the main contractor, \$897 650; variations approved, 74 820; variations anticipated, \$6 000; CAMS' fees, \$8 500; relocation costs, \$1 550; allocation for art works, \$50 000; and equipment and facilities, \$45 000.

Mr DAY: Is the allocation for this financial year largely for work that has commenced?

The SPEAKER: It is work in progress.

Mr DAY: Some publicity has been given to the proposed relocation of the parliamentary library from its current site to the old select committee room.

The SPEAKER: Yes. It is hoped that will be done over the break.

Mr DAY: Is that provided for in this year's estimates?

The SPEAKER: Some \$250 000 is included in this year's budget. It is hoped that work will commence over the long Christmas break. It will involve the re-establishment of the grand ballroom, the relocation of the library services into that room, and the creation of a number of offices at the library's current site.

Mr DAY: Who will those offices be for?

The SPEAKER: There is provision for a meeting room, staff amenities room, at least one member's room, and a section for ministers.

Mr DAY: How many ministers will be housed in that area?

The SPEAKER: The same number as are in the grand ballroom - six.

Mr DAY: What is the motivation for this change?

The SPEAKER: We want to re-establish the grand ballroom to, as close as possible, what it used to be while keeping it as a working organ of the Parliament. It is an attempt to bring the ballroom back to the condition it once was and to utilise it as best we can. We hope the new library will incorporate a reading room. The final designs have not yet been agreed to. Three propositions have been put to the committee.

Mr DAY: Is that the Joint House Committee?

The SPEAKER: It is the Parliamentary Services Committee. I am sure the relocation will greatly enhance the facilities, especially for members. A reading facility will be created, and we hope the grand ballroom will never again be partitioned.

Mr DAY: Would you agree that one of the advantages of the library's current location is its good views of the city and river, from which all members and staff who make use of the library can benefit?

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The SPEAKER: We will not lose that part of the building. I think it a better prospect to have the grand ballroom in its original state, rather than its being three rooms. It is hoped it will be utilised in a useful and meaningful way.

[9.10 am]

Mr DAY: Will the proposed plans for the new library and also for the conversion of the existing library be made available to all members before a decision is made?

The SPEAKER: I am not sure about that. The decision will need to be made in the very near future. When we have come up with a plan, there is nothing wrong with that being distributed. There is no problem with the final plans being given to all members, or put in a place where everyone can look at them.

Mr DAY: If they could be made available, that would be helpful.

The SPEAKER: Yes. I am happy to do that. That will be in the next couple of weeks, I hope.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish the Speaker to clarify what he will make available as supplementary information.

The SPEAKER: As soon as we have the plans, we will make them available - not as supplementary information. It may take three or four weeks for the committee to make its decision.

The CHAIRMAN: They will be provided just as information for members?

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr BRADSHAW: Will the \$250 000 in this year's budget allocation be enough to move the library? I will put my views on the relocation of the library. I think it is a step in the wrong direction, in the sense that currently the library staff have a pleasant working environment, and putting them into a dark place with no windows will be pretty depressing. The area will not be totally dark, because I imagine it will have a few lights. However, the library staff will move from a pleasant working environment. I do not expect that they sit looking out the windows all day, because I know they are hardworking staff. However, it is important for them to have a pleasant working environment because they are there for 52 weeks of the year, whereas some of the people who will get the advantage of those new offices will be there on a limited basis. The current location of the library is also handier for members. The proposed location is out of the way. Some members rarely, if ever, go in that direction. To some extent it is out of sight, out of mind. It is a step in the wrong direction. However, going back to my original question, will the \$250 000 cover the cost of the relocation of the library and of setting up the new offices in the current location of the library?

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for the question. My understanding of the budget process is that \$250 000 is allocated in this year's budget. That will not meet the full cost of the relocation. Money will also be allocated in the next budget to finalise the financial part of that relocation. My understanding is that there is a commitment for another \$250 000 in the next budget. That will also be supplemented by other funds within Parliament. The end product will not be a dark, dingy place in which to work. The whole process will make it a very attractive place in which to work. Hopefully, it will be not only attractive but also stimulating for the staff who will work there. In fact, there are more windows in that ballroom, because there are windows on both sides to the outside world, so to speak. No windows will be closed off. It will be as bright and cheerful a place as is possible. I suppose the only difference is that the lift well, which is at the entrance to the current library, will not be at the entrance to the relocated library. The area in which the library will be relocated is more spacious. It cannot in any way be described as a dingy place. In fact, that is the reverse of what we hope to achieve. If it becomes a dingy place, we will have failed, and this time next year the member will be kicking me. However, it is not intended to make it a dingy place; the intention is to make it a place to which people want to go.

From what I have seen, the trend in library services throughout Australia is for people to access those services to a large degree through computerisation. The trend is away from in-house library services provided from a building or a place within Parliaments. This decision will cement the library services inside Parliament. The trend towards computerisation will continue, and the use by members of the library's services will continue to tend towards computerisation.

Mr BRADSHAW: The library has been refurbished only in the past year or two. I want to know how much was spent on that and whether that will be wasted. Secondly, who made the decision to relocate the library? I know that there is a Parliamentary Services Committee. However, I would like to know whether the Speaker and the President made that decision, or whether it was a Parliamentary Services Committee decision.

The SPEAKER: The decision was made by the Parliamentary Services Committee at its last meeting. I understand that the amount that has been spent over the past couple of years on carpets and the like is about

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\$80 000. A refurbishment was associated with that process. Unfortunately, a portion of that will be lost. However, in the President's and my view, the greater project is to re-create the grand ballroom. For many years, this Parliament and most members have wanted that project to proceed. The days of using at least one-third of the room as a billiard room have long passed. In a building that is so confined by its walls, it is time to maximise the use of the space within those walls to try to create a pleasant environment. That will come at some cost.

Mr BRADSHAW: What do you have planned for the grand ballroom? Is that where the library will be located, or will it just remain the grand ballroom?

The SPEAKER: No, that is where the library will be located. The two partitions that now divide the room into three areas will be removed. It is hoped that the books will come out from the far wall - that is, the western wall - towards the middle of the room. We are constrained in where we put those books, due to the inability to distribute weight evenly throughout that part of the building. The library office will be on the courtyard side of the building.

Mr BRADSHAW: Therefore, the grand ballroom will basically house the library. However, there used to be two billiard tables. What happened to the one that disappeared, and what will happen to the one that is left?

The SPEAKER: The first one is on loan to the University of Notre Dame Australia, and it is being stored free of charge, apparently. I presume that the arrangement will be similar for the second one. However, as far as I am aware, that has not yet been considered. That sort of institution will probably store our second billiard table free of charge somewhere.

[9.20 am]

Mr LOGAN: I refer to pages 45, 51 and 59 of the *Budget Statements*, which deal with the statement of financial position of the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Joint House Committee. Under current assets on each of those pages, I notice a significant drop off in cash assets from the estimated actual for 2000-01 to the budget estimate for 2001-02. Can the Speaker explain?

The SPEAKER: Before I move on to that, part of the \$80 000 for the refurbishment of the library was spent on airconditioning and the like, and that will not be lost. It is planned to salvage as much of that as possible. I do not want the member to think that the \$80 000 is all gone.

The cash assets on page 51 comprise primarily cash in the bank at the end of June of \$596 000, and that is offset by accounts payable of \$837 000. Effectively this represents amounts held for works not yet invoiced and for invoices received but not due for payment until July 2001. The member will need to get a Council member to ask the questions with regard to the Council. The cash assets on page 59 comprise primarily the same amounts, but with different figures. Cash in the bank at the end of June was \$2.093 million; and that is offset by accounts payable of \$2.160 million. Effectively this represents commitments against capital and recurrent projects for works not yet invoiced and also for invoices received but not due until July 2001.

Mr JOHNSON: Can the Speaker provide details of the various components of the \$4.2 million listed as operating revenue in the output and appropriation summary on page 43 and in the statement of financial performance on page 44? What is the reason for the increase in operating revenue from \$3.6 million last year to \$4.2m this year, an increase of nearly 17 per cent?

The SPEAKER: Unfortunately the member is talking about the Legislative Council. This is the Legislative Assembly Estimates Committee, and the member will need to have those questions asked in the Council Estimates Committee.

Mr JOHNSON: I was under the impression that we could ask those questions in this Estimates Committee.

The SPEAKER: No. The person who has responsibility for the Council is the President, and during the Council Estimates Committee I am sure Hon John Cowdell will be able to tell the member all about the Council's expenditure. Even though we sit jointly in most things, it is his responsibility to answer those questions, plus answer questions about the Joint House Committee.

Mr JOHNSON: Can the Speaker provide details of the various components of the \$7.01 million listed as operating revenue in the output and appropriation summary on page 49 and in the statement of financial performance on page 50? What is the reason for the increase in operating revenue from \$6.022 million last year to \$7.01 million this year, an increase of about 16.5 per cent?

Mr McHUGH: The operating revenues represent resources received free of charge from the Parliamentary Services Department and the Office of the Auditor General, and a small amount of revenue from the sale of publications. The figure on page 49 of \$7.01 million represents \$7 million that is our estimate of the resources that we receive from Parliamentary Services for things such as accounting services, Hansard operations and

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financial services, and a small amount for revenues that we receive from the sale of publications. It is effectively an accounting or book entry. It is our best guess at the value of those services that we receive free of charge.

Mr JOHNSON: Is it estimated that there will be an increase of about 16.5 per cent this financial year?

Mr CROUCHE: The largest component of operating revenues is for an appropriation from the Parliamentary Services Department to the Assembly, which is an accounting or book entry. The 2001-02 figure also includes a capital user charge of \$1.9 million, which was not included in prior years, and a component of which has been appropriated to the Assembly; so there is no 16 or 17 per cent increase as the member has stated. It is effectively a book entry to account for a capital user charge that has been brought in this financial year.

Mr JOHNSON: Can the Speaker provide details of the components of the totals for adjustments of \$2.271 million for last year and \$1.787 million for this year, which is shown in the outputs and appropriation summary on page 49?

The SPEAKER: It would take some time to put all that together, and we are happy to provide that as supplementary information.

Mr JOHNSON: What is the reason for the increase in administration costs last year and in the current year as shown in the statement of financial performance on page 50? Interest is warranted, because this year's expenditure of \$8.759 million is a 9.1 per cent increase from last year's expenditure of \$8.027 million, and that is in addition to a 14.5 per cent increase in 1999-2000 from \$7.012 million.

The SPEAKER: There has been a change in the accounting systems that have been used to put those documents together, and that gives the impression of major changes when it is just a different way of accounting.

Mr JOHNSON: I am happy to get that as supplementary information.

The SPEAKER: We will provide that as supplementary information. It will not take us long to get it together; it is just that it is not all in the one spot.

[9.30 am]

Dr CONSTABLE: As the Speaker would know, I have always been a champion of the idea that we need a major upgrade of Parliament House, so I would like to return to the issue of capital expenditure. I recognise that over the past few years the Presiding Officers and staff have done a fantastic job in dramatically improving our working environment. I refer to page 56 of the *Budget Statements*. Except for the committee rooms, it appears that we are still fiddling at the edges of what is required. It was a grave disappointment that the previous Government did not at least plan a major upgrade. Once again, that is not included in these estimates. Given that 2004 is the centenary of the construction of part of this building, do the Presiding Officers see any light at the end of the tunnel? Will we at least start planning for a major upgrade and will the upgrade happen in the next few years?

The SPEAKER: I hope it will. The money allocated for the re-creation of the ballroom -

Dr CONSTABLE: It is still peanuts.

The SPEAKER: That is a \$700 000 project. We are not talking about allocating \$50 million for a new Parliament House. However, the President and I hope - as I presume previous Presiding Officers have hoped - that we will see a major injection of funds to provide better and bigger facilities in this place. The workload increases each year and the requirements of staff working in the shoebox-like offices around this place are constantly expanding. Given the current budget scenario, achieving a major upgrade would require innovation in planning and funding. Funding for improvements on that scale cannot come from the Government's coffers. The member can rest assured that, if a method exists to achieve our goal, we will implement it.

The centenary in 2004 is an opportune time for something major to occur. I hope that upcoming budgets include allocations to make that year significant. How significant it will be will depend on how effective the President and I are in obtaining funds. I see some members who have been involved in previous Administrations smiling. The Premier has acknowledged the significance of 2004 and has expressed his desire to do something to mark the centenary. How much money will be allocated is yet to be determined.

Mr BRADSHAW: Is there any plan to add another wing?

The SPEAKER: We have about 20 plans.

Dr CONSTABLE: They are still dreams.

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The SPEAKER: I have seen plans to extend the building over the freeway - which some people call the "moat" - to reconnect Parliament to Perth. I do not think that is feasible. However, plans have been formulated to construct a major walkway connecting the two precincts, and that may be achievable in the not too distant future.

Dr CONSTABLE: We should have the new building first.

The SPEAKER: It is all part of the plan. Many plans have been developed. Each Government has presented a plan right back to the Burke era, when we had many grand plans. Progressively smaller plans have been developed since then. I favour the construction of an office block at each corner of the building to provide accommodation so that this place can work properly. There is nothing wrong with the Chambers; they are historic and can probably be used for another 100 years.

Dr CONSTABLE: The Chamber is fine, but we could do something about the furniture.

The SPEAKER: As long as any replacement furniture is blue, I do not mind.

Dr CONSTABLE: I take it from the answer that the Speaker and the President are trying to find an innovative way to fund a major extension.

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Dr CONSTABLE: I will ask the same questions next year. I hope we have progressed by then.

The SPEAKER: I also hope that we have taken some steps. If we are successful, the member will hear about it well before then.

Dr CONSTABLE: I hope I will be one of the first people to hear about it.

The SPEAKER: The member will certainly be one of the first to hear.

Mr O'GORMAN: I refer to page 56 and the allocation of \$618 000 under "New Works" for the 2001-02 computer hardware and software program. I would like details about that. Will it deliver better online services to members and staff?

The SPEAKER: Members can expect improvements in information technology services, including further intranet and extranet developments, an enhanced wireless local area network in Parliament House, printing from Parliament House offices, TV sets providing video/radio broadcasting in members' offices, electronic library services, bulletin boards and annunciation captioning of broadcasting.

Mr DAY: Can the details be provided as supplementary information?

The SPEAKER: We will provide details of how that money is to be spent, but the timeframes for that work have not been finalised. That detail will be provided as supplementary information so that members know when they can expect to have these new facilities. The supplementary information will include the allocation of the \$618 000 to the various projects and the anticipated timing of those projects.

Mr JOHNSON: I refer to page 47 of the *Budget Statements*. What is causing the administration costs to rise from \$1.47 million last year to \$2.34 million this year?

The SPEAKER: The figures on that page relate to the Legislative Council. Mr McHugh will provide the relevant information about the Legislative Assembly.

Mr McHUGH: The figures for the Legislative Assembly are on page 49. To what figure is the member referring?

Mr JOHNSON: I cannot provide the figure. This is what happens when one burns the midnight oil.

Mr McHUGH: I will provide the member with information outside the Chamber.

Mr DAY: The Speaker is aware that the Premier has put in place greater reporting and approval requirements for members' travel. The Opposition does not have any difficulty with that in principle. However, it is not entirely appropriate for all members, regardless of their membership of a party or otherwise, to be required to provide that information to the Premier, who is the leader of one political party. Is the Speaker comfortable with that arrangement or would it be preferable for that information to be provided to him, as Speaker? Could the Speaker put in place appropriate administrative arrangements for information to be provided on a confidential basis by all members to ensure accountability?

[9.40 am]

The CHAIRMAN: Which part of the budget does that question relate to? Is it more a policy question?

Mr DAY: It relates to how members spend travel funds, and to reporting arrangements to the Parliament.

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The SPEAKER: The changes that we have put in place will achieve more than the 20 per cent reduction that the Government has indicated other departments must cut from the travel budget. The allocation is indicative of what we think the committees will use this year. The operating cost of each committee is about \$80 000. The changes that we have introduced to travel will result in a far greater saving than we have been asked to consider. The imprest account is not under my control and probably never will be. This Parliament, rather than anywhere else, is the correct place for at least the tabling of itineraries. I do not know whether members of the Parliament would appreciate having their itineraries and the like tabled in Parliament. Of course, the rules that the Premier has introduced are his business. If the imprest accounts ever come to this place, the rules that govern committees would also govern local members. The inference from the question is that members do political things while travelling under the imprest account. They may do that, but that is not what the rules of imprest allow. The rules of imprest allow members to conduct parliamentary work, not political work. Although some political work does occur, when an opportunity arises, members carry out electorate work and the like. That, of course, is not what the imprest system is designed to do. The major problem of political parties, when explaining what they are likely to do under the imprest account, is the political nature of what sometimes occurs. As I understand, the rules of imprest do not allow that to happen and, therefore, members probably should put the emphasis elsewhere rather than use that as an argument.

Mr DAY: The motivation of my question was not that members of Parliament were involved in extensive party-political activities when using their travel allowances. To a greater or lesser extent, everything that we do is political; it does not necessarily have to be party-political. Some aspects of what we deal with as members of Parliament may be highly political and it may not be appropriate for a leader of another party to be aware of those matters. However, that does not necessarily mean that it is party-political - if the Speaker can see the difference.

Mr JOHNSON: The line item on the previous question is on page 52 of the *Budget Statements*. Under cash flows from operating activities, what is causing the administration costs to rise from \$1.471 million last year to \$2.34 million this year, which, as I said earlier, is an increase of 59.1 per cent? That is quite a high increase.

The SPEAKER: The increase allows for the capital user charge that the Treasury has introduced. This has led to an accounting entry being included in these accounts. On page 60, the quantum of the capital user charge payment is shown as \$1.907 million. That is allocated through the Joint House Committee and then flows back to the Legislative Assembly. It is a book entry rather than an actual money transaction.

Mr JOHNSON: It still forms part of the budget income and expenditure.

The SPEAKER: It does, but the reason for the change is that it did not form part of income and expenditure in the last budget; it now does and that is the difference.