

Division 1: Parliament, \$54 528 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Mr G.A. Woodhams, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr R. Bremner, Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services.

Mr R. Hunter, Deputy Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services.

Ms D.G. Timmerman, Chief Finance Officer, Parliamentary Services and Legislative Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

The Speaker may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the Speaker to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the Speaker's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by Friday, 8 June 2012. I caution members that if the Speaker asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office.

I now ask the Speaker to introduce his advisers to the committee.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: We are ready to roll. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My question without notice is to the Speaker. I refer to "Legislative Council" on page 49 and to "Legislative Assembly" on page 55 of the *Budget Statements*. I have had a look at both of those sections of the budget and compared them with the budget of the Parliamentary Services Department. The Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council obviously have their own budgets compared with Parliamentary Services, which does not. The efficiency dividend was applied to Parliamentary Services, but it does not appear to have been applied to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. Is that correct?

The SPEAKER: What line is the Leader of the Opposition referring to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not want to say "the vibe"! I refer to "Total Appropriations" on page 55. The efficiency dividend has not been applied to the Legislative Assembly, whereas if I look at the budget of Parliamentary Services and, indeed, the budgets of virtually every other agency, the efficiency dividend of two per cent in the coming year has been applied. Has it been applied to the Assembly and the Council?

The SPEAKER: Previously, yes, it was applied. I will not reflect on anything that might be happening with the Legislative Council; that is probably more appropriate in its estimates. With respect to the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Services, that three per cent dividend does not apply to anything under \$300 000. Certainly, that would be within the budget of the Assembly and, I believe, the budget of Parliamentary Services as well. If the Leader of the Opposition wants further elaboration, I am quite happy to provide that either through the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly or the head of the Parliamentary Services Department. Certainly, that three per cent dividend —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Two per cent

The SPEAKER: — does not apply under \$300 000.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the Speaker saying that it applies to agencies only if the measure produces a saving of greater than \$300 000?

The SPEAKER: That is a good question. That is how we understand it also. What the Leader of the Opposition has reflected is really how we understand it as well. I think it is more appropriately a question for Treasury, not for me, because Treasury makes the decisions and also seeks to apply the efficiency dividend.

Mr M. McGOWAN: To finalise, "Parliamentary Services" has the efficiency dividend applied, as indicated on page 61, which is harvesting \$400 000 in 2013–14 and \$548 000 in 2014–15 and so on. Its total appropriation is less than that of the Assembly, but the Assembly does not appear to have had the efficiency dividend applied. It

seems unusual that the efficiency dividend has not been applied to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council when other state agencies with lesser budgets have had it applied.

The SPEAKER: My immediate response is—I can attempt to get more information for the member if he is not satisfied with what I am about to say—that the majority of costs in the Legislative Assembly are members' salaries. It is pretty hard to make any reduction with the 59 members. It is a set cost.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I am often surprised by the size of my monthly bill for the use of facilities at Parliament. It is usually because I have school students who come through and dine et cetera. I am curious to know whether there has ever been a situation under the current Parliament —

The CHAIRMAN: Can you take us to an item and a page number?

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to “Total Appropriations” on page 55 of the *Budget Statements*. Has there been a situation in the current Parliament whereby a member of Parliament has not paid that bill and it reached the point that a debt collector was appointed?

The SPEAKER: Quite simply, the Legislative Assembly does not deal with that; it would be Parliamentary Services.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Okay. I refer to page 61, instead of page 55.

The SPEAKER: As far as I can gather—I appreciate the assistance of Mr Russell Bremner on this—certainly in his experience in the last 12 years, there has not been an instance in which a debt collector has had to be called in. Once again, I do not know—I am not disparaging the member's question at all; I respect it—whether it is an appropriate question for estimates. It would more correctly be raised in a Parliamentary Services Committee meeting. If the member would like me to follow that through, I am more than happy to oblige.

Mr B.S. WYATT: That is all right, Mr Speaker. I will take Mr Bremner's word for it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the costs of services on page 64. I assume that the supplies and services section is the appropriate line item to ask about the changes to Parliament's security.

The CHAIRMAN: Just repeat that.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am referring to supplies and services on the income statement, and to the actual and projected figures. I would like to know the current and forecast costs of security for Parliament, given that we have now moved to a contracted system. What is that cost, and how does that compare with previous costs for security?

[9.10 am]

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I cannot provide an answer off the top of my head, but there may be an opportunity for Mr Bremner to provide further detail. It is a question that has a great deal of import at the moment. I think everybody in this place has noticed the change to security services around here, and obviously there are some budgetary implications. If I may be permitted, I can provide the member with this information: the President of the Legislative Council and I have looked at security arrangements, and we have done that in a number of ways, and certainly always with the assistance of Council and Assembly staff and particularly with advice from PSD through Mr Bremner. Quite simply, I hope the member has noticed the change to visitor scanning as visitors come into this place, the change to the internal doors, the arrangements that have been made particularly around Forrest Foyer and what happens with visitors and where they can proceed from there. The member might find it hard to believe that I walk around various places in the building at different times just to see what the security presence might be. Certainly, when I am in the chamber, I make fairly strong observations that I often reflect to Assembly staff, particularly the Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms, about security arrangements that might be in place in here at any given time. I also ask to be alerted to any possibilities of what might come under the description of a security threat.

The other part of the process that I think is vital and important in answering the member's question is that we have introduced a substantially different visitor management system. I would say that roughly 85 per cent of all our guests have been pre-registered when they arrive at the front of Parliament, so there is an expectation that they will be there. It has enabled that process to be streamlined quite substantially, as opposed to the circumstances that prevailed in the past. We will continue to review security in this place. One of those changes is to move the switchboard operations to the ground floor. We think that that will give us increased and enhanced security capabilities. Another change is that there will be a more personalised approach to how we staff visitor and reception areas. I would suggest that over the next couple of years in this place, we will have a very different way of managing security, and some of the increases in the budget will be down to that.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. Members have noticed that as well as staff members there are now security guards at the southern and northern entrances, and there are also security guards at the

front entrance. I would like to know what the contract for those security guards is for the current year and the out years. Even if that could be provided as supplementary information, I would appreciate it.

The SPEAKER: I will undertake to find out from the head of the Parliamentary Services Department, Mr Bremner, whether we are able to do that.

Mr R.M. Bremner: The situation regarding staffing of the security unit has historically been a combination of permanent Parliamentary Services staff, including full-time permanent, part-time permanent, sessional staff and casual staff, and some contract staff. The after-hours security of Parliament House has always been undertaken by contract staff, and that continues. This coming financial year, Parliamentary Services was successful in a bid, and Treasury provided \$260 000 in additional funding on a one-year basis—that is 2012–13 only—to pay for additional staff. We have engaged four additional part-time security staff; they are parliamentary employees. We are also using part of those funds to pay for contract staff to assist us with our newly introduced front foyer screening and also some of the static guarding done around the Parliament. The total pre-existing contract cost with the outside service provider was in the order of about \$260 000 a year. I would anticipate that that will probably go up to around \$300 000 to \$350 000, but it largely depends on parliamentary sittings. We staff only according to the business of the day.

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Mandurah still seeking supplementary information?

Mr D.A. Templeman: I would just be very concerned should our telephonists become front-line security staff with the change to the position to the front!

The SPEAKER: They will be wearing armour, member for Mandurah!

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I refer to the line item, “Item 109 Capital Appropriation”, on page 61. There is an increase from the 2011–12 estimate of \$585 000 to \$1.36 million. That is also detailed under “New Works” on page 64. Could you, Mr Speaker, explain where that \$1.36 million is going to be spent?

The SPEAKER: I do not know whether the member for Scarborough wants to write some of this information down, if it is going to be of use to her.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I would just like a general idea of where it is going to be spent.

The SPEAKER: I will give the member a brief generalised summary as I understand it. The \$85 000 supplementary funding is for 2011–12 only. The additional \$500 000 has been added to the base funding for infrastructure and equipment and the asset refurbishment and replacement program for 2012–13, and a further \$360 000 will be provided in 2012–13 only for the final stage of the fire services project. The member can find some documentation around that on page 64 if she would like. If the member for Scarborough wants a total breakdown of the other areas which we are looking to enhance and on which money will be spent, I am happy to provide that as well.

[9.20 am]

Mrs L.M. Harvey: That is sufficient; it was more a general idea of the variation between the 2012–13 budget and the 2013–14 budget.

Mr M. McGowan: I refer to the “Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Grant Funding Discontinued” line item under “Major Spending Changes” on page 55. I just wonder what that line item means.

The SPEAKER: The funding and responsibility for Western Australia being involved in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association sits with the Assembly one year—or within Parliament one year—and then moves to the Council the next; so it moves back and forth.

Mr M. McGowan: Is that per term?

The SPEAKER: It really effectively is the term of the Parliament. Therefore, when we conclude our term of Parliament in 2013, the responsibility then will rest with the Council for the next term of Parliament. That is where it sits and that is why this figure will swing quite substantially whether it is in the Assembly or the Council.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: My question is to the Speaker, but I dare say he will not answer this one. I did some rough calculations between the total appropriations for the Legislative Assembly, being \$22.7 million —

The SPEAKER: Does the member have a page number for that?

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Yes, I refer to pages 55 and 49. I did a quick comparison of the total appropriations for the Assembly, \$22.791 million, and the Council, \$15.699 million. Although it may be an unfair way to compare, I did a rough division by 59 members for the Assembly and by 36 members for the Council. It seems to me that

the Council has an allocation of \$436 000 per member of Parliament, whereas the Assembly has an allocation of \$386 000 per member of Parliament—that is, a difference of nearly \$50 000 per member of Parliament. If I was to therefore apply the allocation per Legislative Assembly member to the Council, there would be a reduction in the Council's budget of some \$1.79 million. My question is: does that show perhaps superior efficiency on behalf of Legislative Assembly members?

The SPEAKER: I will let the member for Victoria Park make that conclusion. My position in this place is to never make any remarks about the Council or what it might or might not be able to do. Quite simply, we have 59 members and the Council has 36 members. I will let the comparison end there.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all!

The SPEAKER: I am not saying anything.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is the additional cost of all those morning and afternoon teas they have up there?

Mr B.S. WYATT: That is the \$1.2 million debt.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is the \$1.2 million.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: With regard to my previous question about security, can the Speaker confirm two things? First, are there still police officers in the building; is there any change to that aspect?

The SPEAKER: It will be far better, because Mr Bremner is involved in this on a day-to-day basis, if I get Mr Bremner to answer the question.

Mr R.M. Bremner: There is a uniformed and armed police officer here at all times that a house is sitting.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: As per the new legislation that was passed to allow the police service to charge for police officers, is Parliament charged for that police officer's attendance during sitting times?

Mr R.M. Bremner: There have been no such discussions at this stage.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There has been no communication with them with regard to —

Mr R.M. Bremner: Certainly not with me.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the register that is kept of visitors. Whose property is that register, and under whose authority is anyone allowed to view that register of visitors and who they visited?

The SPEAKER: Those documents, member for Mandurah, effectively sit with the Parliamentary Services Department under the head of Parliamentary Services, Mr Bremner. If the member, for example, wished to access them, he would seek my permission to do so.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: So, if a member of Parliament wished to view the register —

The SPEAKER: They would have to come and see either me or Hon Barry House in the other place.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Will any other person be authorised to seek the Presiding Officers' permission to view that register?

The SPEAKER: Can the member elaborate further?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to people such as a member of the Premier's office, the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet or a member of the public. If someone wished to see who had visited or met with a member of Parliament, would they be open and able to do that; and, if so, would the Speaker grant that?

The SPEAKER: At this point, I suggest to the member that they would not be able to do it. I have had no such requests—I let the member know that—from people outside the Parliament, from parliamentarians or from other people who work in the Parliament. At this point, member for Mandurah, it would not be my intention to enable that at all but the member coming to me and explaining the reason, yes, but not for anybody else, no.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: In the event that a request was made of the Speaker to allow someone to view the register, how long will the register be stored? Do we intend to keep it for X number of years or is there a set time when that register will be destroyed? My second question relates to lobbyists. When a person is visiting either a member of Parliament and/or minister—I have not seen the register—is it simply their name that is recorded or is other information required of the person visiting Parliament?

The SPEAKER: To answer the member's first question, because the register has been initiated only recently, the intention at this point is to keep it indefinitely. That is our intention at this stage. In answer to the member's second question, it is quite simply a person's name, title and whether they represent a particular organisation.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can I just clarify with one last question on this?

The SPEAKER: Which line item is this?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is a very important one; it is services to Parliament on page 64, I think. My understanding is that the only people who do not currently sign in as such are members of Parliament. Is that correct?

The SPEAKER: It is members of Parliament and staff.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What about former members of Parliament?

The SPEAKER: And former members.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Therefore, a former member of Parliament —

The SPEAKER: It is current staff of Parliament and current members of Parliament.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Therefore, a former member could walk in without having to register.

The SPEAKER: They would have to indicate, obviously, with a pass. A majority of former members of Parliament who attend Parliament on a regular or irregular basis will normally have a pass, which they apply for.

[9.30 am]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Former members of Parliament are also quite often lobbyists or consultants as well.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mandurah might possibly be right.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the Speaker.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Last question, Mr Speaker, because we would like to move on to the parliamentary commissioner at some point. My question relates to the efficiency dividend on page 61 of the *Budget Statements*, which is three-quarters down the page. Can the Speaker advise what programs and services are being cut, and whether there has been any restriction on full-time equivalents in order to manage that efficiency dividend? If there was any such capability, have any charges been increased to manage that efficiency dividend?

The SPEAKER: Whereabouts on page 61?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Three-quarters of the way down on page 61. So basically, I am asking what programs are being cut to manage that efficiency dividend. Have there been any restrictions on FTEs? Have any charges or fees been increased to manage the efficiency dividend?

The SPEAKER: Effectively, the Parliamentary Services Department was excluded from the efficiency dividend in 2012–13, because, as I mentioned earlier, Leader of the Opposition, the moneys fell below the threshold that Treasury indicated. I can go through some other detail about the impact of meeting some those efficiency dividends for the Leader of the Opposition; if he would like me to do that, I am happy to.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sure.

The SPEAKER: There is not a lot of flexibility in PSD or the Legislative Assembly—I will not say anything about the Legislative Council—because the majority of the moneys that we have are effectively staff salaries. They are set and locked; the Leader of the Opposition’s and my salary is, as are those of other members and staff in this place. Some of the ways that the efficiency dividend may be invoked would be to defer some maintenance projects. We could, with the greatest respect to the Hansard reporter who is in this place at the moment, possibly change the printing arrangements for Hansard. We could change the ways, from PSD’s perspective, that casual staff in the dining room, for example, are employed or not employed. Therefore, they would perhaps not be areas that a member would notice a substantial change in on a daily basis, but I would suggest that over the course of four years of a Parliament, or then into another Parliament, that members might substantially notice that its services are not as, dare I use the word, high as they used to be or that there are certain projects that are just not being met in this place. There are obviously numerous examples, but these examples come to mind just thinking immediately about what the impact of the efficiency dividend might be.

Just to reinforce, the majority of our funds in the LA are around the Leader of the Opposition’s salary, my salary, other members’ salaries and staff salaries, and it is a very similar set of circumstances in PSD. Given that PSD is responsible in great part for the maintenance and planning in this building to enable it to work efficiently and effectively for the Leader of the Opposition, me and others, there is not much capacity to reduce those budgets at all.

The appropriation was recommended.