

## TUESDAY, 16 JULY 2013

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### ESTIMATES—COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

#### Estimate Committee Members

Hon. FS Simpson (Chair)  
Mr TS Mulherin  
Hon. TJ Nicholls  
Ms A Palaszczuk  
Mr CW Pitt  
Hon. JW Seeney  
Mr RA Stevens

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#### Members in Attendance

Mr WS Byrne  
Mr MJ Crandon  
Mrs EA Cunningham  
Dr B Flegg  
Mr R Gulley  
Mrs JR Miller


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#### In Attendance

Mr N Laurie, Clerk of the Parliament  
Mr M Ries, Deputy Clerk  
Mr M Hickey, Director of Corporate and House Services  
Mr C Atkinson, Manager, Financial and Administrative Services

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#### Committee met at 9.00 am

 **CHAIR:** I declare the public meeting of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly open. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. On behalf of the committee, I welcome all members of parliament and members of the public. At this hearing all members of parliament are able to ask questions of the CLA and the Clerk about the parliament's expenditure and related operations. I noted some confusion in last year's reporting as to why I, as Speaker, was not answering some questions and referring them to others as a result of the amendments in 2011 and 2012 to the Parliamentary Service Act. Thus I thought it would assist at the outset if I provided a brief explanation of roles and responsibilities as well as introducing the members at the table and members of the committee.

As Speaker, I am chair of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, the CLA, though I am largely unable to vote under the legislative changes which were introduced in May last year. There are equal numbers of government and non-government members on the committee. The other members of the committee are: Mr Tim Nicholls MP, Treasurer and Minister for Trade, as the Premier's delegate; Ms Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition; Mr Jeff Seeney MP,

Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning; Mr Tim Mulherin MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Mr Ray Stevens MP, Manager of Government Business; and Mr Curtis Pitt MP, Manager of Opposition Business.

Under changes to the Parliamentary Service Act in 2011, the Speaker's responsibility for the Parliamentary Service shifted to the Clerk, Mr Neil Laurie, and to the CLA—a bipartisan body which defines the major policies relating to the administration of the Parliamentary Service. However, there are also responsibilities which remain in the domain of the Speaker, including things such as oversight of security policy and acting as the guardian of the rights, powers and immunities of MPs. Thus there will be questions today to which the Clerk will be asked to respond as the parliament's chief executive officer, the legal employer of staff and accountable officer under the Financial Accountability Act 2009. Other questions relating to policy decisions of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, the CLA, may be responded to by individual members of the CLA. In those areas where I have continuing responsibility as Speaker, I will take carriage of those responses, particularly in my role overseeing the security policy of the parliament, even though the implementation of the security review overlaps with the CLA in regard to issues of capital expenditure and with the Clerk's role in regard to administration of staff. I hope that makes the complexity of these structures a little clearer.

I am delighted to table an inaugural Speaker's report for members to provide an overview of my first 12 months in the role and direction for this current financial year 2013-14. As members will see, a key focus of my role is to improve civic education and engagement surrounding our democratic institutions. That entails a very public role as the most senior representative of the parliament as well as a direct role in trying to provide better education and mentoring support for MPs across the parliament. This is important because I have discovered that what we do not understand we do not value and what we do not value we do not defend or promote. We cannot take our democratic institutions for granted as they are the collective embodiment of our individual rights and responsibilities in a free society.

In relation to media coverage today, the committee has resolved to allow television coverage during the hearing. The committee has also agreed to the live broadcast of the hearing via the Parliamentary Service's website and to receivers throughout the parliamentary precinct.

At this meeting the committee will take questions from any member of the Legislative Assembly in relation to the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2013 for the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service. The proceedings today are lawful proceedings subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. As such I remind all visitors that any person admitted to this hearing may be excluded in accordance with standing order 208. I ask that mobile phones be either switched off or switched to silent mode. I now declare the expenditure for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Can members wishing to ask questions come forward to the microphones and state their name for Hansard. Once members have finished asking the questions can they please move back to the gallery to allow other members to come forward. I call the member for Coomera.

**Mr Crandon:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. In a letter to the Clerk of the Parliament on 1 July, the Deputy Premier requested the Clerk to restrict the allowances due to be paid that day to 50 per cent of what otherwise would have been paid pending consideration of a submission by the CLA. Can the Deputy Premier explain why the allowances were reduced and what role the CLA will have in the consideration of the allowances issue into the future?

**Mr SEENEY:** I thank the member for Coomera for his question. This issue had its genesis on Friday, 28 June, when I received crown law advice regarding the payment of salaries to parliamentarians. As I have previously taken the extraordinary step of releasing this crown law advice publicly, Madam Speaker, I table it again today for the benefit of the committee.

The advice was sought from crown law after I received two approaches from former members of the Bligh government in regard to the legal liability that they thought the government may have been incurring due to the noncompliance with the Parliament of Queensland Act. The crown law advice that I have just tabled was that the former Premier Bligh and the former Labor cabinet had

acted—and I quote the words of the crown law advice—‘outside the scope of the power of the Premier and the Executive’. They acted ‘outside the scope of the power of the Premier and the Executive’ in varying the base salary of Queensland MPs other than pursuant to section 110 of the Parliament of Queensland Act.

So on Monday, 1 July, immediately after cabinet, I sent that advice to the Clerk of the Parliament, along with the letter that the member for Coomera refers to, which I have also released publicly but I now table for the benefit of the committee. The letter requests that the Clerk—and I quote from the letter—

1. Take into account the Crown Law advice and ensure that the Parliament of Queensland Act is fully complied with immediately.
2. Restrict the Members allowances that are due to be paid today July 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 by Parliamentary Services to 50% of what would have otherwise been paid pending a review of those allowances.
3. Provide the Committee of the Legislative Assembly (CLA)—

this committee—

at its next meeting with a submission regarding options to be considered in a review of the allowances to be paid in the future.

There was no question in my mind that the act needed to be complied with immediately. To decide otherwise following such definitive advice from crown law would have been knowingly repeating the grave error made by Anna Bligh and the previous Labor cabinet in acting ‘outside the scope of the power of the Premier and the Executive’.

In complying with the law I believed it was critically important that we did not impose extra cost on the Queensland taxpayer or impact on the state budget, and I said so many times. I was determined to achieve a cost-neutral response to what was a fundamental error in administration by the previous government. One part—just one part—of achieving that nil cost to the taxpayer was to cut the allowances due to be paid to all members of the Queensland parliament that day by 50 per cent, which is the subject of the member’s question.

These allowances are six-monthly allowances paid in advance. So a 50 per cent cut would still allow members to meet their obligations in their electorates until the full cost of complying with the Parliament of Queensland Act could be determined. It would mean that members receive three months in advance rather than six months and in that three months we would be able to make the determinations necessary to decide what to do in the future. No-one knew what that cost or the full implications were at that stage. Even if we had, we still had a clear obligation to comply with the act until such time as the parliament chose to amend it, and crown law made it clear that it is only the parliament that can do that.

To make the decision to comply with the act conditional on knowing what the cost was or what any individual salary may be, as I have heard it suggested a number of times since—to make the decision to comply with the act based on those conditions—was not an option for anyone who had read and understood the crown law advice. As I have stated publicly, at the time I made the decision to pass the crown law advice to the Clerk and instruct him to comply with the Parliament of Queensland Act I was not aware of the financial implications to me or to other ministers. Simply put, that was not a consideration. I made a decision that the law had to be complied with, and the crown law advice made it clear that I or the cabinet had no power and no right to do anything other than comply with the law as it stands. It would once again have been knowingly repeating the same error that was made by Anna Bligh and her cabinet when, to use the words of crown law, they acted ‘outside the scope of the power of the Premier and the Executive’.

Subsequently, the full flow-on effects of complying with the Parliament of Queensland Act as it stands has become apparent and the Premier has made an announcement as to the government’s intention in regard to both salaries and allowances, as well as the liability the parliament may have for back pay for former members. He has made it clear that the Parliament of Queensland Act will be amended to remove the section relating to members’ salaries and a bill for a new act will be introduced when parliament next meets. That act will set up an independent tribunal to make decisions about both the salaries and the allowances to be paid to members from 1 July.

Consequently, the CLA will not have any involvement in determining the amount of allowances paid to members in the future—none at all—just as members will not have any involvement in determining their own salaries in the future—none at all. The formation of an independent commission will allow the political squabbling and the political point scoring and the political opportunism that we have seen over the last couple of weeks to end and end forever. It will ensure that politicians themselves are taken completely out of the issue of deciding about their salaries and allowances.

I have said publicly many times in the last few weeks that I do not believe members should be involved in deciding their own salaries and they certainly should not be doing so in an illegal way and contrary to the act, as the Bligh government did. Now an independent commission will decide, and politicians will have nothing to do with that decision and should no longer be involved in any discussion or any decision making about these issues. The independent umpire will make a decision about members' salaries and allowances and everyone will need to accept that.

**Mr Byrne:** My question is to the Leader of the House. *Hansard* on 5 June 2013 records a motion to confirm schedule 7, which nominates the chief executives who can be subject to direct questioning during this year's estimates process. Despite a request for the CLA to consider the matter from both the shadow Treasurer and the Finance and Administration Committee, a list that excluded the CEO of the Queensland Treasury Corporation was put to the House without first going through the CLA, and I ask: whose decision was it not to consult the CLA before putting the motion to the House and will the Leader of the House explain why he told the House that the inclusion of the QTC, despite being a statutory authority like others in schedule 7, was not possible because it was not an administered item in the SDS when clearly port authorities are also not administered items in the SDS yet are included in schedule 7?

**Mr STEVENS:** I was aware of the request coming forward to the House that had been asked, I think, by the Manager of Opposition Business in relation to the decision that I recommended to the parliament to adopt in relation to the schedule of people to appear before the committee. There has been the precedence before that the CEO of that organisation has never been required to appear at estimates. That is, as I understand it, a fact on my advice. The second matter was that it is an independent body on matters that are outside of the budgetary requirements and the budgetary books that questioning is made of the CEO. So it was a decision that we made consistent with previous estimates.

**Mr Byrne:** My question is about the process—the way in which the CLA dealt with the requests.

**Mr STEVENS:** It did not go to the CLA. It went to me as Leader of the House and I dealt with the matter.

**Mr Byrne:** My understanding was that it went to the CLA. It was supposed to go through the CLA.

**Mr STEVENS:** No. It did not go to the CLA.

**CHAIR:** I will ask the Clerk to clarify the timing of that matter. I do not think that is inconsistent with the response that the Manager of Government Business—

**Mr STEVENS:** When I say it did not go to the CLA, after that the whole list then went to the CLA. But I had already made the decision in the parliament and the parliament had voted on the matter. It was adopted and then went to the CLA for noting, without that person being required.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Gladstone.

**Mrs Cunningham:** We are going to be all over the shop today, aren't we, because I have some questions on the parliamentary precinct. I do not know whether it is the Speaker or the Clerk to whom I should address these questions. It is a matter that I have raised before in relation to security. I believe the latest risk management model online is 2010. My first question is: has there been a review of the risk management model since 2010?

**CHAIR:** That is a question for the Clerk, I believe, as the accountable officer under the Financial Accountability Act.

**Mr Laurie:** You are talking about security in particular?

**Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mr Laurie:** In terms of security, in the last 12 months there have been two reviews that have been completed. The results of those reviews have been considered by the CLA. In terms of our risk management framework, it has not altered since 2010 but security itself as a particular issue has been the subject of review. There have been recommendations from that review. Some of those recommendations involve financial implications and some of them do not. Some of them involve budgetary and policy issues which have been ventilated and which continue to be ventilated within the CLA, because that is the body or the board of management, if you like, that has to make those decisions.

**Mrs Cunningham:** Can you outline how the risks are assessed? How is the management plan formulated in terms of the risk assessment? The basis of my questioning is that over the years I have seen the number of security staff decreasing and I have not seen the risk—we live in a wonderful country. My concern is that, with a reduced security staff, if and when there is an incident they are not held responsible if there are not enough of them and they cannot do their job. How is risk assessed?

**Mr Laurie:** The risk framework that we have and the risk assessments that we make is a fairly standard risk assessment model. It essentially takes various components into account. The first is the likelihood of something occurring and then there are the consequences of something should it occur. To use an outrageous example, or not terribly outrageous but an unlikely example, if a terrorist were to take a plane and crash it into the building, the consequences would be devastating. In terms of the likelihood of that, we would consider the likelihood fairly low. In terms of risk treatment—how you treat your risk—you treat your risk according to both the likelihood and the consequence.

I will use another example. We use the same risk management framework in electorate offices. When we did the electorate office review, the advice that we had from the police was that the likelihood of somebody entering an electorate office with a firearm was, in their view, a highly unlikely scenario even though we had an example of that happen in the past. In their considered view, it was an unlikely scenario. It was an unusual event, if you like, whereas the likelihood of staff being assaulted by an angry constituent who had become overwhelmed by emotion or whatever the case may be was much more likely. The treatment strategies that we then employed in electorate offices were to prevent the most likely scenario, with the most likely scenario being assault. That is why we have the barriers and the security doors now and why we have bolted down furniture and things of that nature in electorate offices. As you are well aware, there are various opinions by members as to what they wanted in their electorate offices and what they didn't.

**Mrs Cunningham:** Yes.

**Mr Laurie:** Nonetheless, we rolled out what we thought was the appropriate treatment for the risk that had been assessed. In terms of the precinct, the risk framework that we use and the risk framework that entities like the QPS use in order to assess risk is very much along the same lines. It is identical. What we aim to do first off is to deal with those risks that are most likely and have a reasonably high consequence, if you like. There will be some risks that, as I said before, involve policy and budget implications that we have to take as a matter of course to the board of management, the CLA.

**Mrs Cunningham:** I am conscious of the time. I have one last question. Has the risk management plan been changed over time? You said that there have been a couple of risk managements done. I acknowledge your comment that there are some budgetary matters that have to be addressed. Do you believe based on the risk management model that we currently have for this precinct there are sufficient security staff to fill the rosters that are necessary to provide security?

**Mr Laurie:** I believe there is sufficient staff. If I had unlimited funds, there is an unlimited range of things that I would probably do to increase the security here. But we all have to live within a real-world budget and we have to make strategic decisions based upon the funding that we have and, in my case, implement policy decisions and budgetary decisions of the CLA. But I do not think our security here lacks because of the manpower issue. I will be very firm on that. I do not think it does. I know there are misconceptions put out there about the manpower issue but I do not think manpower is the issue.

**Mr SEENEY:** Madam Speaker, I think it is worthwhile noting that this issue has been discussed in the CLA. Perhaps the Clerk could explain the way the numbers vary. The numbers are not the same all the time. You do have additional staff. I think that is an important part of the answer.

**CHAIR:** I am going to take a question from the House and the Clerk may wish to supplement that.

**Mrs Miller:** Through you, Madam Speaker, will the Clerk please outline details of all refurbishments that have been conducted at the electorate office of the former LNP member for Redcliffe since 26 March 2012? Which of these refurbishments was scheduled and which were requested personally by the former LNP member for Redcliffe?

**Mr Laurie:** I will check this and if the answer is any different I will certainly get back to you. My recollection and the recollection of my director of corporate services is that the member for Redcliffe moved into an office that had only recently been established. Prior to the election there had been a new electorate office established and the former member for Redcliffe had occupied that for six to 12

months or something of that nature before the election. Then the current member for Redcliffe moved into that office. It is our recollection that there has not been any refurbishment of that office and it would not need it. I have been there myself. It definitely doesn't need anything.

**Mrs Miller:** As a follow-up, is the Clerk or Madam Speaker aware of any information that indicates whether or not the member for Redcliffe has complied with his duties and responsibilities as an MP representing the people of Redcliffe?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, I believe that is not a question relevant to estimates. As you would be aware, there are other matters before other committees. In that respect, it is a matter that is for the other committees that have issues before them at this time.

**Mrs Miller:** Madam Speaker, with respect, the member for Redcliffe is being paid by the Legislative Assembly to undertake work on behalf of the people of Redcliffe. In relation to the SDS, he is being paid a salary to represent the people of Redcliffe. My question relates to whether or not he is complying with his duties and responsibilities as a member of this House and a former member of the LNP in relation to the people of Redcliffe.

**CHAIR:** The member for Bundamba would be aware that issues to do with the code of conduct or other breaches are matters for another committee and not for this committee. That is the jurisdiction that will deal with those particular issues. There are matters currently before other committees being considered.

**Dr Flegg:** The new portfolio based committee system has now been in operation for about two years. The Parliamentary Service provides support to those committees. Are you able to inform us as to what activity the new committee system has generated and whether any particular outcomes have been identified?

**CHAIR:** I will ask the Clerk.

**Mr Laurie:** The current portfolio committee system was established in August 2011. Essentially we have had seven portfolio committees in operation since that time. As you are aware, at the same time that the new committee system was introduced there were some dramatic changes to the way in which business was conducted in the House, particularly the passage of legislation and the automatic referral of bills to committees and the House not sitting on Wednesday mornings when it is expected that the committees would mainly do their functions.

I understand that from the commencement of the 54th Parliament in May 2012 to June 2013, a period of just over 13 months, there have been 197 committee hearings and briefings. This is an incredibly large increase on the committee system that it replaced prior to August 2011. It is probably at least a 50 per cent increase over that time. I am also informed that the portfolio committees held a further 236 private meetings during this time, making a total of 433 committee meetings and hearings during a 13-month period. This is a significant increase on the meetings and hearings held under the previous system, probably more than double.

In terms of the work of the committees, a high level of public consultation has been undertaken during that period. Between May 2012 and June 2013 the committees have received and considered 2,577 written submissions. They also examined at their hearings and briefings a total of 555 public servants and other officers, 237 representatives of peak bodies, 263 representatives of other groups and 106 individuals. I think this is a fairly significant indication that the committees are doing that very important work of consultation and scrutiny of the public sector.

The number of bills examined by committees has also increased. Combined, the seven portfolio committees of this parliament have examined 83 bills, an increase of around 40 per cent on the 57 bills examined by committees in previous financial years. In terms of the outcomes of those committees, the committees made 521 recommendations other than that the bill be passed, and 176 of those were legislative amendments and 345 were other recommendations in the same 13-month period. Of the bills referred and finalised, a total of 221 recommendations were made for legislative amendment. Of those 221 recommendations, a total of 138 or 62 per cent were accepted by government. Of the 130 recommendations for legislative amendment, 62 or 47 per cent were accepted. Of the 91 other recommendations, 76 or 83 per cent were accepted by government. So there is clear evidence of a lot of activity, there is clear evidence of consultation, and there is clear evidence of outcomes.

**Mr Gulley:** In reference to the previous question and answer re the new committee system, the Parliamentary Service also provides service to the Legislative Assembly. Has there been any evidence of the effect of the new system on the legislative program and the work of the House itself?

**CHAIR:** I call the Clerk.

**Mr Laurie:** I think the indications are, in a broad brush, that even though all the legislation in the main is referred to committees with very few exceptions one of the fears of the new committee system was that the legislative process would be hampered or slowed down. There is no evidence of that. If you look at the average time it took for a bill to be passed under the old system and the average time under the new portfolio system, they are roughly similar in terms of the number of working days that the bills are being considered. So there is no evidence that the process has been held up, if you look at it in a global sense like that.

In terms of what happens during that period, though, I would say a lot more happens. All that public consultation, all those public hearings, all those recommendations that have been formulated are occurring, which did not happen in the system pre the new portfolio system. There has certainly been no evidence that the work of the House has been hampered but plenty of evidence that a lot of good work has come out of it.

In terms of the sittings of the House itself, we no longer sit Wednesday mornings, which is significant. If you take that into account and you compare the average number of hours that we sit, in 2011 we sat about 11.1 hours, in 2012 we sat 10.34 hours on average and in 2013 thus far we have sat about 10.45 hours. So our average length of sitting days has not changed terribly much.

**CHAIR:** Member for Coomera.

**Mr Crandon:** In recent budget papers and in estimates the increasing accessibility of the live broadcast of committee hearings and of the Legislative Assembly and the archiving of those proceedings was flagged. Can you advise us as to how many people accessed either the live broadcast of the Legislative Assembly or its committees or the archived copies of the broadcast?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Coomera. I am going to answer the first part of this question and then pass to the Clerk in respect of the issue of archiving and the on-demand video system, which I assume you are asking about with respect to Hansard. We have in the House also a broadcast system that goes live through a DVN link and that has been upgraded in the last year. It is not only on demand but there is a live link via a DVN to television networks that do not necessarily have to be based here; they can be based anywhere in Queensland. Certainly the live broadcast of the parliament is more available now than it was before through this particular DVN link that has been used for live broadcasts and taken up by a number of outlets.

In relation to the issue of the broadcast proceedings with regard to the archiving, in 2012-13 a large number of clients accessed either the broadcast Legislative Assembly committees or the archived copies as referred to. I am advised that the break-up of the hits are: live chamber broadcast, 58,985; archived chamber broadcast, 12,329—there are a number of other figures but you get the gist of what we are seeing—and committee live broadcast, 25,257. That is through the web based system. But combined with the chamber upgrade and the DVN link, the broadcasting of parliament has been extended. Member for Gladstone?

**Mrs Cunningham:** I have a more generic question. I have never made a secret—it is on the record—of the fact that I did not support the changes to the structure in relation to the Speaker. We deal a lot today with efficiencies. As we have had this new Speaker process in place for a few years, I wonder if anyone on the panel, particularly Madam Speaker, wants to make any comments on any efficiencies or lack of efficiencies in the new structure?

**CHAIR:** Member for Gladstone, thank you for your question. The new structure, I will be frank, has created greater complexity. It has in some areas actually fractured lines of authority. For instance, I have responsibility over security policy but I do not actually have the authority to implement the capital changes or some of the operational issues that I may believe are required. So the matters around the implementation are not necessarily sitting with the Speaker but the responsibility around the policy is. From that perspective I think it has created more complexity.

With some of the structural changes in regard to efficiency, I would say that it creates more challenges also around conflicts of duties as to who is actually able to take responsibility. One thing that I will take responsibility for is that I will continue to advocate for the appropriate resources for the security of the parliament and the other services, and I will work with the CLA as far as the policy issues and the implementation of those are concerned because at the end of day we want to see this place work in the way it needs to. There will be different opinions about those structural changes, but my view is that it has created additional challenges. Member for Bundamba?

**Mrs Miller:** I note on page 3 of the SDS that the parliament was responsible for coordinating the travel arrangements of not only MPs but also their delegates to the Queensland Plan summit in Mackay. I note that the Queensland Plan is an LNP government plan and manifesto. So are the Speaker and any members of the CLA aware of the doctrine of the separation of powers and also aware of previous precedents where the parliament has actually been involved in implementing the initiative of the executive? How much did it cost?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I see that this is a question from the member for Bundamba, who is a less-than-enthusiastic participant in setting a plan for the direction of Queensland for the next 30 years to guide its developments and initiatives.

**Mrs Miller:** You won't be here in 30 years.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It is not surprising that she takes a negative view and her comments have consistently—

**Mrs Miller:** No, it is a legitimate question.

**CHAIR:** Honourable members, I will allow the Treasurer to answer the question but I would also ask him to answer the question.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I put it in the framework of the negativity of the member for Bundamba about a plan that addresses the aspirations of Queenslanders for 30 years, because she is on camera and recorded in the media as casting doubts on it. In respect of the doctrine of the separation of powers, the member for Bundamba would do well to remember that the decisions in relation to regional and community parliaments were made by the executive and the parliament carried out the direction of the then Premier of the day to hold parliament in Rockhampton, in Cairns, in Townsville and in Mackay. Simply put—

**Mrs Miller:** Madam Speaker, with respect, parliament is different to an LNP plan.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, we will allow the member to answer the question.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Simply put, that was a direction of the then executive constituted by the Premier, who said, without consultation with the then opposition or anyone else, 'We will have a parliament in' whatever city happened to be the choice. It certainly was not something that was spoken about amongst members nor was it anything that was debated on the floor of the parliament.

In respect of the Queensland Plan, in fact the parliament simply facilitated the travel arrangements—other than that the parliament had no other involvement—as the custodian of members' travel entitlements, and the travel for members was taken out of the members' travel entitlements as a result of that operation. Members were free to not come if they chose not to. It was simply, if you like, the facilitator for the transport there. The balance of it was undertaken by the executive under the direction of Minister Powell, who, under the government, has been given responsibility for formulation of the Queensland Plan.

In answer to the member for Bundamba's question, yes, the government clearly understands the doctrine of the separation of powers. There has been in that sense complete and utter compliance with that doctrine. The member for Bundamba's antipathy to a plan for Queensland for the next 30 years is well noted.

**Mrs Miller:** I note the arrogance of the Treasurer in that he thinks the LNP is going to be here in 30 years.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, I will ask you to put the question.

**Mrs Miller:** The question that I have—

**CHAIR:** I would ask you to pause for a moment. I will ask you to put the question without imputation and I will ask members, in responding to the question, not to put imputations in their reply. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs Miller:** Thank you for your protection, Madam Speaker. I ask also: how much was spent on these travel arrangements? Does this include staff costs and, if so, what is the number of equivalent full-time staff—FTEs—who were involved in this LNP manifesto Queensland Plan?

**CHAIR:** I will ask the Clerk to respond to the question.

**Mr Laurie:** Member for Bundamba, I should at the outset say that the Parliamentary Service's role in relation to this was simply facilitating the travel. That was done on the basis that the members were utilising their standard allowances and entitlements in order to get to the function. It seemed efficient, if you like, for the area that was coordinating members' travel to also do so for the other



invited guests. In terms of that, as at this time—we are only early in the financial year—we do not have an exact cost in terms of the members' travel. However, we originally estimated it to be around \$75,000. In terms of constituent and other costs, the practice we had in terms of regional parliaments—if I can just explain this—was that, even though the parliament facilitated the travel and facilitated all the bookings and incurred all the expenses, the budget for the regional parliament was actually held within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The practice that had been developed in estimates in the past was that questions about anything relating to the regional parliament budget were best directed to the Premier as the responsible minister. In this instance, apart from the members' travel, we are actually almost acting in a shared services arrangement. Therefore, we just bill Premiers but we do not talk to them about their business with others.

**Mrs Miller:** I have a follow-up question in relation to this matter.

**Mr Crandon:** Madam Speaker, with due respect, we have a limited time and the member is now—

**CHAIR:** Member for Coomera, I will allow your question after this supplementary and then we will move on.

**Mr Crandon:** That is the third question from the member for Bundamba.

**CHAIR:** We will have a quick question and a quick reply.

**Mrs Miller:** I have a very quick question to the Clerk. Will the parliament be repeating this role for the follow-up summit in Brisbane in October? Given that the Clerk cannot give us any answers in relation to how much it cost for the previous LNP Queensland Plan summit, is there any expectation under these budgetary arrangements as to what it might cost in October as well?

**Mr Laurie:** The answer to the first part of the question is, yes, it is anticipated that we will be assisting. In relation to the second part, I do not think I can answer that at this time. We have not even started the planning. I think we may have dates, but that is about it. We have not started the planning.

**Mr PITT:** Madam Speaker—

**CHAIR:** The member for Coomera has a question. Are you wanting to answer that as well?

**Mr PITT:** I am on the CLA as well. I would like to respond to the member's question.

**CHAIR:** I apologise, Mr Pitt.

**Mr PITT:** Just adding to the Treasurer's response, I have to say that I have heard what the Clerk has had to say about the efficiencies of this. It should be noted that the CLA was never asked what the parliament's role in the Queensland Plan or any travel arrangements were. I thought that, as a courtesy, if there was nothing to be concerned about that should have been forthcoming. That is a query that I myself had. Secondly, the example of comparing a regional parliament to something that is essentially the tool of the executive of government is flawed. I think that should also be put on the record.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If we are going to have a debate about the CLA there is no point answering questions here today.

**Mr PITT:** Member for Clayfield, I am entitled to respond to any questions put from the floor.

**CHAIR:** Members are able to respond through the chair as well on behalf of the CLA. I call the member for Coomera.

**Mr Crandon:** I refer to page 10 of the SDS and an upgrade of data cabling within the precinct. What does this program relate to?

**CHAIR:** I will ask the Clerk to answer in respect of the issue of the data cabling upgrade in the precinct. There have been a couple of different projects, but this is the upcoming cabling project. I will ask the Clerk to answer that.

**Mr Laurie:** In the last financial year we had a review of our telecommunications and IT infrastructure. One of the recommendations arising from that was that, in relation to telephony, we should transition to a VOIP model—voice over internet protocol. Essentially, the telephones will operate not on your traditional telephone line but rather on cable. This is the way of the future, if you like—how most communications are moving forward. There are some longer term cost benefits associated with that as well as utility benefits.

In a nutshell, the cabling that was talked about there, both in the Annexe and particularly in Parliament House, is essentially to upgrade our existing infrastructure. We already have some cat cabling within Parliament House. It is now getting a bit dated. They talk in cat 2 or cat 3. We think we need cat 6 going forward to future-proof us a bit. Also, where we currently have telephone lines that run through the walls, under the floors and the carpets and things of that nature, they will have to be replaced with cabling instead. With cabling and things of that nature come connections to routers and all sorts of IT gear that occur. I can give you a much more technical answer if you like. Essentially, it is about replacing old cabling that is in the precinct with new cabling which will be better adapted for primarily the telephony, but obviously also the other connections that we have.

**Dr Flegg:** I refer to page 10 of the SDS and developing design options for the upgraded fire protection systems within Parliament House. To what does this program relate?

**Mr Laurie:** It would come as no surprise to members that I am somewhat passionate about maintaining the heritage value of the old Parliament House and the general maintenance of the building full stop. In 2011-12 the Parliamentary Service engaged a fire safety expert to conduct a full fire risk assessment. In positive terms, the review found that the existing smoke detection systems utilised within the building and the current fire management practices and controls provided some measure of protection and that the building design provides reasonably good exit and egress for occupants in the event of a disaster.

However, the review also found that the building is fundamentally deficient in its resistance to fire and smoke spread, given its highly combustible construction and contents. The building design effectively forms one very large fire smoke compartment with multiple smoke- and fire-spread paths, and the roof space poses the highest fire safety risk due to large, interconnected spaces. The review found that in the absence of any fire suppression system, i.e., sprinklers, if a fire did break out, it would spread quickly and cause widespread damage. So whilst we have systems in place for early detection—and hopefully we can get there and put something out before it spreads—if a fire did start in the wrong place, it could spread pretty quickly. That would have devastating consequences for the building.

Taking all of these things into consideration, the review recommended a significant upgrade to the fire protection systems in Parliament House. Central to this upgrade is the introduction of fire suppression sprinklers and some degree of fire compartmentalisation. This matter has been taken to the committee for consideration, and a budget has been set aside in this financial year for further design work to take place.

The budget that you see is essentially one for the design of a system. That design might have two options: it might be a limited system or it might be a more widespread fire sprinkler system, but we will take the advice of that review when it comes out.

**Mr Gulley:** I note the recent highlights section of SDS refers to the implementation of the three-year regional education program designed to reach all major Queensland regional centres within the parliamentary term, with the first program delivered in the Cairns region in May 2013. Can you provide some more detail on what the Cairns program entailed, what was achieved, and any learnings for future regional education programs?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Murrumba. I am delighted to speak on this and to acknowledge the outstanding work that is done by our Parliamentary Education and Communications Secretariat. I have been delighted to work with them. What they have been undertaking are regional education activities. In Cairns it was wonderful to see students coming in from across Far North Queensland to participate in that particular program. There are more of these planned. Essentially, it is there and it is free for students to participate, as it should be. There are other programs the parliament actually receives funding from as well, such as Public Service training, and that enables public servants to be trained in committee processes and procedures. I believe that was something that used to occur in previous parliaments as well.

These regional parliamentary education activities provide an opportunity for young people who will not always have the chance to come down to our parliament to participate in some of the youth parliaments or tours that we have here. It is a fantastic program and provides more outreach that we can take to the regions involving all the state members across the political spectrum. I would have to say that the work of this particular secretariat of the parliament is outstanding.

**Mr PITT:** I wanted to add to your comments and endorse them. I was participating in the Cairns educational series. From a local member's perspective, as well as someone who looks at what the next generation of leaders looks like, it was an amazing experience for all of the young people

involved. Certainly, though, when we have visiting groups come into this place, they often come during question time and see us on our best behaviour—tongue in cheek. People often talk about politicians acting like schoolchildren. If they acted like the schoolchildren I saw, we would all be far better off.

On the second part of that, I would say that speaking to local public servants and others who came along to speak to and hear from members of the government as well as the opposition, I know that whilst people who work in the Queensland public sector deal with matters every day and deal with the parliament and MPs every day, I think the feedback I got was that they learned an extraordinarily large amount out of the sessions, and I would encourage the parliament to continue in this vein.

**Mr Byrne:** Through your question to the Clerk, I note that in 2012-13 changes were made in regard to the employment and engagement of cleaners in Parliament House. Will the Clerk outline how many cleaners are currently employed at the parliament, who is responsible for the employment of those cleaners, and how much was spent in 2012-13? I would like that to be compared with the spending in 2011-12 and/or 2013-14.

**Mr Laurie:** While my colleague is getting some more detailed information, I will give you the general overview. Prior to last year, the cleaners here were essentially contracted by us through the Department of Public Works. The Department of Public Works used both full-time employees and also casual or contract staff. That was something that had a long history as well.

The cost under the old system for some 16 cleaners was about \$937,000 per year, a portion of which was actually DPW management fees for which I do not have the figure. The cost under the new model is \$762,000. I cannot give you the management fee component of that, but the management fee component was a significant part of the difference between those two because we used to pay, if you like, a loading to DPW in order to manage the cleaners. I will undertake to get the break-up of that to you. So the savings were made in two ways: with the alteration of the number of cleaners and also with the elimination of the management fee. After it became clear that the department would no longer be in a position to provide cleaners to parliament after changes to policy last year, there was a briefing paper provided to the CLA regarding options for the precinct, and the CLA approved those.

Essentially, now we engage cleaners directly. We have taken on some of the former employees or contractors, and we have taken on some new ones as well. Now we have a total of 14 staff, so there is a difference of about two staff. One of the other things that we do is essentially we have two shifts. Under the old model, all of the cleaners used to come in in the morning. That did cause us some difficulties if there had been some cleaning to attend to in the afternoon, functions to be prepared for and things of that nature. Now we have two shifts. The majority come in in the morning, but there is a smaller shift in the afternoon.

I will check the component of that difference between the sums which was made up of the management fee. It is 16 FTE as compared to 14.

**Dr Flegg:** I note the SDS on page 3 mentions SharePoint as the platform for the parliament's new intranet. Can you provide some more detail on why SharePoint was chosen for this purpose?

**Mr Laurie:** Last year we conducted a major project in Parliamentary Reporting Services because the software which Hansard used to take the transcript in the House and committees, which translates it into written speech and the fully digested Hansard volumes, was essentially over ten years old. We suffered from issues because the software was not able to keep up with the more modern software which supported it, so we had to change our software system in Hansard. We looked through various options. We went out into the market and looked at various options to replace the Hansard system.

My recollection of that process was that most of the people that tendered for that or put up some sort of initiative for it pretty well all used, to some degree or other, SharePoint as a base platform. It is the new Microsoft collaborative workflow product. Essentially, we ended up taking on SharePoint to do the Parliamentary Reporting Services project. We were impressed internally by the SharePoint product and the power that it actually gives us to do other things. As part of the Hansard project, we also had to create a back office SharePoint environment, if you like. We had to create the environment as well. So we had it there, and we have essentially decided to use it. We are pretty impressed with its ability to be able to be used for multiple different databases and processes. Going forward, we see a lot of our older software databanks and things of that nature being translated into the new SharePoint platform. But essentially, the reason why we went that way originally was because of the Hansard project.

We like it. We think it has a lot of good utility. We are using it for a whole range of things now. My people the other day in the Table Office from their own initiative have started putting precedents of the House on to the SharePoint platform and creating its own database. It is so easy to use. The IT people only have to be there for a little time as compared to what it would be under some of the older software products.

**Mr Crandon:** As a nice segue back into the original discussion around the cabling and what have you, you mentioned that there would be some broader telecommunications improvements and what have you. Can you provide more information about what the improvements would be?

**Mr Laurie:** There are a number of things happening over the next little while. We are very much moving towards our overall strategy, which is: anywhere, anytime, any device. So what we are trying to do is rather than lock members down to the fact that you have to use this sort of vehicle, you have to use this particular software and this is the only way you can talk within the precinct or within the parliamentary network, we are trying to move to a situation where members can work remotely, they can log on at any time, and they can talk to data in their electoral office and at parliament or committees or elsewhere, if you like. That is the overall strategy.

In order to make that strategy work, we have spent a lot of money in the last couple of years and we will be spending a lot of money—in terms of our sized budget, a lot of money; I am sure in terms of others, not so much money—but a lot of money on basic infrastructure. The cabling is one aspect of that. There were new routers put in last year which replaced the existing material. We also added the wireless network which we currently have now within the precinct. Members will be given new laptops. They have been received and are currently being readied for members to roll out. They are not only a laptop, but they are a tablet as well. Members can choose to use them in their tablet form or in their laptop form, and they come apart. We really are working more on this issue of being able to talk between various devices, whether it be MSB or Parliamentary Service.

**CHAIR:** The time for this hearing of the CLA has finished. I wish to acknowledge and thank the work of Parliamentary Service staff in the complex. I am sure my colleagues would join me in acknowledging that there are some very dedicated members of this service and we appreciate their efforts and expertise. I also thank the members who have attended to ask questions today and my colleagues at the table. The time for this session has closed.

**Committee adjourned at 9.59 am**