



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2007-08)

Members:

**MS C LE COUTEUR (The Chair)
MR B SMYTH (The Deputy Chair)
MS J BURCH**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2009

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms A Cullen (Ph: 6205 0142)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Committee Office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

APPEARANCES

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory Secretariat146

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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 2.59 pm.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane MLA, Speaker, Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory Secretariat

Duncan, Mr Tom, Clerk

Kiermaier, Mr Max, Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms

Duckworth, Mr Ian, Manager, Corporate Services

Lilburn, Ms Sandra, Manager, Committees Office

Barrett, Ms Val, Manager, Hansard and Communications

Skinner, Mr David, Manager, Strategy and Parliamentary Education

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, everybody. I formally declare open this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in its inquiry into the 2007-08 annual reports. You all have a copy of the privilege card. I imagine that you have all seen it enough times that you do not want me to read it to you. Before we proceed with questions, do you have an opening statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. Chair and members of the standing committee, thank you for the opportunity to make a brief opening statement in your inquiry into the Legislative Assembly Secretariat 2007-08 annual report. The Secretariat provides procedural and business support for the Legislative Assembly and its committees. As you will see detailed in the report, in the 2007-08 financial year there were a number of innovations and enhancements during the year, including the webstreaming of proceedings of the chamber and committees on a permanent basis, the first use by an Assembly committee of videoconferencing facilities, the installation of a new lift at the public entrance, the finalisation and implementation of a comprehensive review of the Assembly's standing orders, improved security measures at the public entrance, and a transfer of the finance processing function to Shared Services, which has resulted in a lessening of the business continuity risk that had been identified for this function.

I believe that these enhancements and innovations, together with the other initiatives outlined in the annual report, demonstrate that the members and their staff are provided with a service that allows them to fulfil their role as elected representatives. I might briefly say that obviously I was not the Speaker during the term of this annual report. I say that not by way of excuse but, clearly, for some historical questions, I will obviously be deferring to the Secretariat. We welcome any questions you may have, and we will do our best to answer them. Obviously, with the more forward-looking questions, I can play a stronger role.

THE CHAIR: With respect to my first question, I would like to point out that no-one has asked me to ask this question: the media staff appear to be very overcrowded. Is there any possibility of getting them some more space, a little kitchen sink or something, so that they do not have to come and share our facilities?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, this is an issue that I have been considering. I spoke with the

Clerk about a week ago, and we have started the process to look at this issue. Our intention is first of all to canvass the media for their needs, to get a sense of what they may actually require, and then to look at the feasibility of providing that within that context and within the financial means of the Assembly. There certainly is a historical context in that greater facilities were provided for the media when the Assembly first opened in the nineties, but they were heavily underutilised. So we are also keen to make sure that we do not overprovide and unnecessarily use resources to provide something that is not required.

THE CHAIR: Fair enough. Referring back to the X-rays, which you talked about earlier, as a matter of observation, they are not consistently used. Is there a reason for this? Have we overprovided or underprovided with them? It does not quite seem to make sense, really.

Mr Rattenbury: I might defer to Max.

Mr Kiermaier: I do not share the same observation as you. As far as I am aware, they are utilised to the extent that they are. I can provide statistics to you on the number of items that we have scanned over a quarter. We do keep those sorts of records. As I said, I am not aware of it being underutilised.

THE CHAIR: I do not want to dob in anybody, but there are times when they are not used. Have the X-rays found any problems with things that people—

Mr Kiermaier: Not so much problems. We have certainly detected pocket knives, scissors and that sort of stuff coming into the building, but there has not been any sort of serious breach of security at all.

THE CHAIR: Are scissors a prohibited item?

Mr Kiermaier: It depends what you are doing. The rationale has always been that, if you have a legitimate reason to have a pair of scissors with you—for instance, if you are cutting up curtains in the reception room or something like that—that is fine. But if you have an appointment with the Chief Minister, for instance, and you have a long pair of scissors on you, that is probably a ground for suspicion.

MS BURCH: I have some questions on page 5. In the Clerk's overview, there is a statement at the bottom about an annual survey of MLAs and that they are highly satisfied. From my short experience, I can see where and how you would get that result. But I am curious about the survey and about whether it is retrospective-looking or forward-looking as well, so that MLAs can have input into not so much the workings but some comment on the Secretariat and the Assembly itself.

Mr Duncan: Yes, I will be writing to all members—usually it is in May each year—to ask them if they have time to fill out a short survey. We know members are busy, but it is about five or six pages, I think, in length. It is designed to ask questions on all the services that are provided to the Legislative Assembly, to ask members to rate whether they are satisfied or not satisfied—there are four categories that they can rate us at—and to add any comments to that document, regarding how members feel about the services that have been provided until the time of the survey.

With respect to the results of that survey, members can either put their names to it or they can remain confidential; it is up to the member. They are sent back to me. We tabulate those. We provide a copy to relevant managers, to give feedback to managers as to what the problem points are and, if need be, we address those issues. A summary of the results goes to the Speaker, to let the Speaker know what members think about the services. We also let members of the admin and procedures committee know the results of the survey because, as you know, they have a role in determining members' entitlements and facilities.

We have only done the survey for the last—I think we are in our fourth year now. So it is a relatively recent innovation. We also survey the ministers, because we do provide some services to the ministers that are not in the same fashion as for the members. But we find that it is a useful tool for us to get feedback.

MS BURCH: Is it a forward-use document?

Mr Duncan: If there are comments there, we certainly use those to improve. If there are issues that arise from that survey, we certainly use that information to finetune some aspects of the service. From our perspective it has been quite useful, and we hope it has been for the members as well.

MS BURCH: There is no dissatisfaction brewing over here. I am very happy with the services that the Secretariat provides.

Mr Duncan: But you might, and this is an opportunity for you to do that in a systematic way.

MS BURCH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On page 11 you talk about the OH&S management plans. Does this include refurbishment of office furniture? I am particularly referring to some office furniture which is not ergonomic, and in particular members' desks, speaking as one of the shorter members.

Mr Rattenbury: I will invite Ian Duckworth, the corporate manager, to answer that one.

Mr Duckworth: I will give the committee a little bit of the history. For some years the Assembly did not have an OH&S committee. This is a rather unusual workplace, in that we have got quite a number of employers and then the Secretariat, which has more of an overarching role as a sort of quasi-employer in some regards—certainly an employer that looks after the building and the facilities. We did put together an OH&S committee some years ago. In the early days of the committee's existence, the focus was very much around getting some terms of reference and getting some focus on some issues.

We had a compliance process undertaken by some consultants about our OH&S management systems. One of the things that was identified was that we did not quite have the formal processes of health and safety policies, risk management assessments

and so on. So we have progressed through the stage now of conducting OH&S risk management assessment. The issue that you raised about the furniture in members' offices is certainly captured by what has been identified as our most significant health and safety risk—that is, workplace ergonomics, the risk of strains, poor posture and so on.

The committee is due to meet, I believe, next week—possibly the week after, with next week being a sitting week. The committee at that stage will be looking at the results of the risk assessment and formulating an action plan to implement measures that address those risks.

Having given that more detailed background, and turning to your more specific question, the issue of furniture in members' offices is something that will be the subject of some internal submissions, probably in the coming months. It is something that we are very well aware of. Obviously, there is a significant cost because of the extent of the furniture involved, but it is recognised that the turnover of staff, perhaps more so in members' offices, does demand a greater degree of adjustability of furniture and height raising than is available from the current furniture. So it is expected that that will be an area we will need to address in the near future.

THE CHAIR: That might be a nice intro to another question I was going to ask about staff turnover. I understand it is very high. Have you got figures on that? Also, do you have any ideas on how it could be reduced? If what I have heard is correct, it is very poor.

Mr Duckworth: I think it is important to draw a distinction between the staff of the Secretariat and the staff of members.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and the political side.

Mr Duckworth: I know that we have not done any formalised assessment of the turnover in Secretariat staff. I can inform the committee that approximately three to four years ago, when it was quite apparent from an HR point of view that there was quite a turnover, the administrative work in processing contracts and documentation led us to do some sums, and we did an assessment of the number of staff employed in the Fifth Assembly. The turnover rates suggested that the average length of employment of members' staff for that particular sample was eight months. That is not a lengthy period of employment, by any measure.

THE CHAIR: That is the figure I had heard.

Mr Duckworth: That figure was calculated including all staff, some of whom had worked in the place for over a decade. We are not statisticians, and certainly it might not have been an indicative sample. If some of the very short term and long-term staff had been excluded from that sample, the number might have been different. But it is fair to say that there is a significant turnover. The Clerk has drawn my attention to some figures in the annual report that relate to the Secretariat, suggesting that the turnover there—

THE CHAIR: On what page?

Mr Duckworth: That is on page 44 of the annual report. So it looks like an average of about three or four separations a year over the last four financial years in the Secretariat, perhaps averaging, just looking at those figures, around 15 per cent per annum. There is no question that members' staff are more likely to come and go. With respect to the second part of your question, Madam Chair, as to whether there is anything we can do about that, I do not know that—

THE CHAIR: I know about the political issues, but in terms of the rest of the working environment?

Mr Duckworth: There has not really been an examination of what the underlying causes of that have been. It may have been in some instances that people were only recruited for short periods. My gut feeling is that the situation over the last couple of years has not been as acute as it was perhaps four or five years ago. As you would be aware, the information session that we provided to all incoming members did highlight the cons, if you like, of not having stable staffing and the disruption to productivity within the office. It certainly seems to have been reflected in the early strategies that have been undertaken by members.

MS BURCH: At the top of page 11, and then over on page 16, there is reference to the level of committee work. It is probably outside this reporting period but you made comment that there would be a natural slowdown leading up to the election. I would hazard a guess that since the election there has been a rapid ramp-up of work. How have the Secretariat, the various committee structures and Hansard dealt with that? I know it is outside this period; is it appropriate to ask that question?

Mr Rattenbury: I will call Sandra Lilburn, the manager of committees, to the table. I think that would be useful.

MS BURCH: Knowing that today there are quite a number of committees, this is something that we need to be aware of from the Secretariat point of view?

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, just before Sandra speaks, we certainly have gone from five standing committees in the Sixth Assembly to six standing committees in the Seventh Assembly. The early indications are that, yes, the workload on those committees will be a lot higher. Historically, during minority governments, that tends to be the case. Minority governments tend to produce more references to committees; more bills are referred to committees; more committees generally take on more references themselves. But I might call on Sandra just to expand on that.

Ms Lilburn: Ms Burch, you are correct. We have slowly ramped up and we are seeing the evidence of that, particularly today. We could do with some more committee rooms at this point. But we have a full complement of committee secretaries in the committee office. Each committee has a dedicated secretary; so we are certainly at capacity there.

We are also about to recruit a research officer who will be temporary over the initial period but that is actually a designated position. That person will support the inquiry work that is undertaken by various committees and provide assistance to the

secretaries, in particular. PAC is a very busy committee; so often that person will work with that committee directly but also for other standing committees as needed. We also have an administrative officer in the committee office who provides general support as well to the committees.

Mr Duckworth: It may be worth adding to that too, for the benefit of the committee, in the government's second appropriation late last year there was additional funding for an additional committee secretary in recognition, I think, of the agreement between the Greens and the ALP which was forecasting a committee structure. So we did receive additional funding for the sixth committee, yes.

MS BURCH: The committee work from the previous Assemblies as well as this Assembly is all online. Whilst you are moving into webstreaming, there is still online access to all the reports?

Ms Lilburn: Indeed. I think we go back now—I may be wrong on this—certainly to the Fourth Assembly that you can access all of the committee reports. There is some difficulty with, of course, translating different sorts of IT formats and the way those things have been saved in previous Assemblies but we try to scan those in on a regular basis just to make sure that we have a full complement of all the Assembly's reports over time. Of course, where possible, there are obviously transcripts of hearings et cetera available on the website as well.

THE CHAIR: While we are talking about the web, have you any idea how many people access the Assembly via webstreaming and the other accesses?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. On that, I will call up Val Barrett, the Manager of Hansard and Communications.

Ms Barrett: Yes, we do keep statistics on the number of accesses to webstreaming. I do not think we have recorded them in this year's annual report but I could certainly provide it to the committee later. It is a little bit difficult to gauge whether it is the same people accessing a number of times but we look at trends, and it certainly seems to be increasing, especially on sitting days. But we do keep those stats, and I can make them available for the last year.

THE CHAIR: Can you tell whether they are within the ACT government network or external? I thought you might be able to.

Ms Barrett: Yes, we can tell whether it is within the ACT government network or external.

THE CHAIR: I would be particularly interested to find out how many people externally find this interesting enough that they would actually want to look at it.

Ms Barrett: Yes, I can provide those exact figures.

MS BURCH: With webstreaming—this is probably a technical question—that is as it happens?

Ms Barrett: Yes.

MS BURCH: Is there the ability to have a podcast arrangement where, if you cannot get to question time, you can go in at 9 o'clock at night and watch it?

Ms Barrett: That is a really interesting question, because we have just been discussing that this morning. At the moment we do an audio-only replay of question time, which is accessible about 20 minutes after question time. If you have ever looked at it, you will have noticed that it is the audio replay of questions and answers, with a photograph of the member asking the question and the minister answering.

We are doing an investigation at the moment into whether we can do a permanent audio record that is available the next day of sitting. You will be aware that the transcript is not usually available for a couple of days, and just this morning we have been discussing the possibility of, instead of just streaming the vision, having it available to be accessed on demand the next day.

The difficulty with that is that, without having any text, it would be difficult for a viewer to search the bit that they need if they wanted to go to a particular bit. We have not got any text-search capability. But we are looking at the information that we do have available in terms of the daily program to see whether we can provide a useful service which would allow people to bring up the vision and/or audio against a particular time or against a particular piece of business or against a particular member or minister speaking. It is looking quite hopeful.

We hope to conclude that feasibility study by the end of April and, if we think it is possible, then we will be looking to implement a project, provided it is within our budget because we think it would be useful extra information.

MS BURCH: That sounds quite interesting. So many of the community are time poor and need to access it at a time more realistic.

Ms Barrett: Yes. And if we did it, we would be likely to start it first on a trial basis with Assembly proceedings and then we would be seeking to extend it to committees, once we have proved that it is feasible.

THE CHAIR: I might continue because my question is probably for Val also. Have you looked at being a bit more electronic in terms of getting the information? We give our speeches and then you take our pieces of paper. Most of those pieces of paper, in fact, will be available electronically. Have you looked at trying to reduce the paper use and reduce your use of time and becoming more electronic in your recording?

Ms Barrett: Yes, we do. I wrote to all members at the beginning of this Assembly giving them a bit of an outline of *Hansard* procedures and suggesting to them that they might like to send us any material they have electronically and reassuring them that, if you deliver a speech and you have given us the electronic version and you depart from it, you will still have your words actually recorded. We will check all electronic versions against the speech as delivered.

We are constantly asking ministers' offices for electronic versions of in-principle

speeches on bills. Our administrative assistant chases up people all the time whenever she thinks that there is something electronic. We do get some copies of questions electronically, which we can use.

Yes, I am perfectly happy to write to members and staff every week to say, "Please let us have things electronically," because it helps us enormously. We can send it to our transcript provider and that means that they can turn the transcript around much more quickly. If we are doing things in-house, it makes our lives much, much easier and it delivers a much quicker service to everybody.

So, short of asking people fairly politely to give us electronic copies, there is not a lot more we can do. But we can certainly write to people a bit more often, because busy offices probably forget or they are not aware.

MS BURCH: Yes, we forget those instructions from the first week.

THE CHAIR: See whether you can get an announcement in the chamber, as you have some connections.

Ms Barrett: That sounds like a very good idea. I will follow up on that.

THE CHAIR: Have you looked at the other side of it? We get huge piles of bills et cetera in sitting weeks, some of which people are not going to read. Is there any possibility of producing this electronically and reducing the amount of paper that is immediately recycled?

Ms Barrett: In terms of bills, I would have to turn to Max to answer that specifically, but I might just say that we have asked people in this Assembly too whether they want to receive their weekly copies of *Hansard*. I think at the moment most members still want the weekly hard copies of *Hansard*. They are all available online, but we still print copies for each member and, of course, we print the bound volumes as well. We ask the question all the time. In terms of bills and things, I will have to hand over to Max.

Mr Kiermaier: I am going to defer to Tom. Because he has got the history behind it he might be able to shed a bit more light on it.

THE CHAIR: It is not just bills. On sitting days, the pile goes up and up.

Mr Duncan: We have talked about this from time to time. When we did the major review of the standing orders we talked about adopting a system that the House of Representatives has: the manager of government business simply tables a document and says, "These are the papers for today," and you will have a list of papers. That way, if members are interested in a particular paper, they can go to the chamber support office and pick up a copy.

The problem with that was that sometimes ministers may wish to make a statement on a paper or they may wish to move a motion to take note of it and sometimes members may wish to get up and speak straightaway but they have not got a copy of the paper in the chamber. Some members like having hard copies of documents because they go

straight from the chamber out to the courtyard to do a press conference and they like to hold the paper and say, “This report was long overdue,” for whatever reason. We have to balance those needs.

We have had discussions with the relevant officers of the Chief Minister’s Department who are responsible. We have definitely cut down on the number of papers that are given to the Secretariat. We used to get 120 copies or something like that, which was ridiculous, because each member was entitled to six copies of every paper. If they wanted to, they could go out to the community and say, “What do you think about this document? We need to let you know.” That is why they needed copies of the document, to enable them to consider it. It is the same with bills. When they asked people to comment on bills, community groups would say, “Well, where’s my copy? I want to be able to see it in hard copy.” Community groups did not like to be told, “Well, go to the web; there’s a copy on the web.”

We have to balance the needs of members and how they do their duties with environmental needs. I have not given up on the proposal that we might try and streamline the procedures. You have to be able to cater for all 17 members. All 17 members have different requirements. I think that is the best way I can answer that question.

MS BURCH: Page 15 is around building management. I note—and, again, it is probably outside this report—that when new members came into the building there seemed to be a flurry of activity. Is there a building maintenance plan that the Assembly works towards, and are we on track with that?

Mr Kiermaier: Yes. We have a strategic asset management plan to replace assets over the lifetime of the building. The flurry of activity that you are probably referring to was when we had a lighting system which basically was dead, for want of a better expression.

Mr Rattenbury: That is the technical term.

MS BURCH: I like technical terms.

Mr Kiermaier: The control, yes. We had a situation where a number of members’ offices had movement activated lighting but in quite a few—for instance, yours was one of those offices—the lighting control was no longer working. We undertook this project to make sure all members’ offices had movement activated lighting. That is now the case and every single toilet in the building has movement activated lighting too.

Our next plan is to roll that out into the corridors. It is smart lighting. It is not only movement activated; it is light sensitive. The lighting will not come on if there is sufficient light in the corridors, for instance. We do have a plan and we have budget funding—or we are hopeful we will have budget funding next financial year. We have put up our hands for a bucket of money to roll that out in the corridors.

With the painting and the recarpeting, that was year two of a three-year program. The previous year the second floor was recarpeted. What probably spurred that on was the

really bad hailstorm in February 2007, I think. There was a lot of damage at the time. Besides fixing up the damage the decision was taken to recarpet the second floor. Last year we had budget funding to do the first floor. Next year, as I said before, we hope to have budget funding to do the first floor, although a lot of the first floor has been done. The chamber and a number of the corridors—sorry, the ground floor—has been done, but there are a few offices on the ground floor that have not been done yet. We do have a rolling program.

MS BURCH: A long-term plan?

Mr Kiermaier: Yes.

MS BURCH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Also on page 11 you have mentioned the installation of power factor correction equipment which will significantly reduce annual power charges. Did this work?

Mr Kiermaier: It is still early days. It happened in about March last year. Looking at the power accounts that have come in—we get a monthly account—it certainly is down. It is more consistent. Electricity is charged under a very complicated scheme, and I am not really able to explain it. Ian might be able to explain it better. But the point is it certainly has reduced our power fluctuations.

Mr Duckworth: I can probably clarify this. I was involved in the early stages of the installation of this equipment. As Max was just alluding to, the way in which the electricity utilities charge for power is not just based on your consumption; it is also based on the amount of capacity that you require to cope with your maximum usage during the month. There is a very scientific way—and it is way beyond my comprehension—in which the efficiency within which power moves into a facility is measured.

This equipment is called “power factor”. It assists in minimising it. All it does is make the power that we consume arrive here more efficiently. It does not reduce the amount of power we use; it just reduces the charge. As a result, the payback period on the equipment we installed, I think, was 2½ years or something like that. As Max indicated, we are already seeing reductions in our energy bills, but it is not reducing the amount of energy we actually use. It does not have an impact on that.

Mr Kiermaier: Unsurprisingly, the January account was quite high, but that would be due to the hot conditions and the chiller running at extremely high capacity. The January figure was lower than the previous January figure, so that indicates that it is—

THE CHAIR: Have you looked at external shading from that point of view? Do we have heritage restrictions in terms of what we can do externally?

Mr Kiermaier: I am sorry?

THE CHAIR: External shading. We have some beautiful un-shaded eastern and western facades on this building. Would it be possible to shade them or is there some

heritage listing problem?

Mr Kiermaier: You have probably hit the nail on the head there. There is a Civic Square precinct, but there is a management plan for that and we would be subject to—there would be some issues in putting shades up in Civic Square.

Mr Duckworth: There is a conservation management plan that has been, I will say, developed-drafted. There is some conjecture as to whether it is in final draft form or a final. But it is being developed by a locally based heritage consultant. That plan does really impress upon the building custodians the need to value the conservation and heritage elements of the building. If it is not being too controversial, the same person who developed that plan has also developed one for Civic Square and has been quite critical of the loss of heritage values in the square, pointing the figure fairly heavily at the new library building and the north building.

Mr Kiermaier: That said, we do have a lot of tinted films on windows and we have got a program to roll out more window tinting.

THE CHAIR: Good.

Mr Rattenbury: Madam Chair, I think we can have a further look at the possibility of shading the windows, at least on the internal side of the building.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I would have thought there probably would not be many heritage issues on the internal sides, or maybe I am showing my naivety about heritage.

Mr Rattenbury: We are not sure either, but we will have a look at that.

THE CHAIR: Continuing on the ESD line. It is really good to see this four and three-star rating—and I am not sure it will happen for the next report—but other agencies have reported the energy usage and the energy usage per person. Would it be possible to upgrade the Assembly's reporting along those lines, and include water, to enable comparison with other agencies?

Mr Duncan: Between December 2007 and August 2008 we got Rudds Consulting Engineers to do an environmental sustainability audit of the building which calculated our greenhouse gas emissions and our water usage. I have the figures here: 3,427 kilolitres per annum is the water, and the total greenhouse gas emissions for the building—David can jump in here if I am reading out the wrong figure—is 897,375 kilograms of CO₂.

THE CHAIR: So 897,000—

Mr Duncan: 897,375. Can I tell you, Madam Chair, that the Assembly building received a four-star rating, four stars out of a maximum five, which the consultant considered to be a very good rating.

As to future annual reports, we have established an environmental sustainability committee which is chaired by me, a staff committee. We have an action plan based on that report. Part of the issue is trying to capture and monitor the energy use for the

building. That is not an easy task. In the initial stages of that committee we have been trying to put in place a system where we can monitor and work out how much energy we are consuming across the building in terms of water, electricity, waste and things like that. Gradually we are working our way through an action plan. From time to time we will be giving briefings to the Speaker, and I expect he will be briefing the admin and procedures committee as to what we are doing in relation to that energy audit plan.

THE CHAIR: What difficulties are you having in measuring your energy use? I would have thought this was a discrete, stand-alone entity. We are not in the circumstances of shared tenancy where we do not know what is going on. I am not quite sure what the big problem would be.

Mr Rattenbury: David Skinner can cover the more detailed questions on this topic.

Mr Skinner: I think you are quite right that we have always had billing data from Actew available to us to show annual consumption. That issue probably was not collated in a meaningful way. I think you have had an opportunity of reading through the Rudds Consulting Engineers report. There is some quite detailed data in there about annual consumption. It would certainly be our intention in next year's annual report to have much more detailed reporting of our carbon emissions, looking at tracking benchmarks that we hope to have in place and reporting on the things that will come out of that committee. I think, rather than having a lack of data, it was rather having a lack of a way of interrogating that data meaningfully. So we hope all that will dramatically improve in the next reporting round.

MS BURCH: While David is here, the next question is on page 25, Strategy and Parliamentary Education Office, and the number of general visitors through the Assembly, the number of school groups and what we offer. We seem to have a slight increase in visitors.

Mr Skinner: Yes, there is a slight increase for the last financial year. Probably the reason for that is just the function of demand. We were talking about this earlier in that really we respond to demand that is expressed by schools and community groups that wish to come to the Assembly. It just so happens that last year there was a little bit more demand. We meet all the demand that is placed on us. We are never turning schools or community groups away.

MS BURCH: This number is groups, predominantly schools?

Mr Skinner: Predominantly schools but, if you look at page 28, you will see that of that number just over half, or 1,108, were students. The remainder would have been community group visitations. As I said, that would have just been a fluctuation in demand for that year that would explain that.

MS BURCH: And the education sessions are popular and the feedback is good?

Mr Skinner: They are popular. The way that they have traditionally been evaluated is: there was a questionnaire that went to each participant that would ask if they would recommend this program to others or not. We took it, if they would recommend it to

somebody else, that they were satisfied. We have since become a little bit more sophisticated in our client feedback on offering some gradations of satisfaction so that they can indicate that they are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. We are still tracking very highly, in the satisfied or very satisfied responses. So we are quite confident that people gain a lot of value out of those programs.

Mr Rattenbury: I might add that I think we will expect a further increase in visitor numbers this year. We have the 20th anniversary of the Assembly.

MS BURCH: That was my next question, really, when I had the chance, about the planning for our 20th anniversary. Do you want to talk about that now?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly. Perhaps the only other comment I would make is that, with the combination of the 20th anniversary and the evening sittings now, I think there is the potential that the numbers in this year will show perhaps a bit of an increase. I know the education office continues to work quite hard to invite as many groups as possible to come to the Assembly. On the anniversary, yes, probably the Clerk will best be equipped to take questions on that.

MS BURCH: So what have you got planned?

Mr Duncan: Just today in fact, I sent a series of letters for the Speaker to sign in relation to the 20th anniversary. The 20th anniversary is actually on 11 May 2009. That is the day that the Assembly first met.

MS BURCH: That is not too far away.

Mr Duncan: It is not too far away. We have three days of rolling activities. On the Sunday, we have an open day for the Assembly between 11 and 4. We will be having a youth parliament, with two representatives from every year 12 school in Canberra being invited to participate, and have two hours of sittings. We intend unveiling a major art work that has been commissioned for the 20th anniversary. We are also inviting every primary school in Canberra to participate in a time capsule project and to send in an A4-page item and we are thinking of housing that in the front entrance of the building and maybe opening it in 20 years time.

We are also running a school of art. We have asked the University of Canberra, the Australian National University and the CIT school of art classes to run a competition about what self-government means to them. Interestingly, CIT was so enthusiastic that they came back and not only do they want their photography class included but they want their visual art class and their fashion class to do a competition to design—

MS BURCH: A time capsule of the fashion of the Assembly.

Mr Duncan: Yes. The Speaker will be giving out prizes to the prize winners, we will be choosing—

MS BURCH: So they are going to create a piece of art?

Mr Duncan: We are asking the whole class to participate in an assignment based on

self-government in the ACT. That is the Sunday's activities. We are going to have a reception for all the youth parliament participants and prize winners. We are also inviting all the presiding officers and clerks from the states and territories and the commonwealth to attend.

On the Monday we are having a ceremonial sitting, starting at 10 am, and then we are having a morning tea and inviting all former members of the Assembly. There are 52 former members, I think we found. We are also launching a book. The Speaker will be, hopefully, launching a book called the *Companion to the standing orders*, which is a book designed to help members and their staff and people who are interested in the Assembly understand how the place operates.

That night we have invited the Prime Minister to open a 20th anniversary conference. Rosemary Follett will be the keynote speaker. The next day there is a conference being held here at the Assembly. We are inviting, again, presiding officers, clerks, former members and the general public to participate in that conference as well.

The Speaker will be writing to all members probably later this week or early next week inviting members to participate in the tours, because in the past we have had members greet visitors in the public entrance and personally take them around the building for a tour. Members have indicated they enjoy doing that. I think the constituents thought it was quite nice to have their local member show them around the building. So we have tried to put together a series of events that involves the ACT community as much as we possibly can and, yes, mark the occasion appropriately.

MS BURCH: It sounds like there are a few days of quite full programs.

Mr Duncan: I think so, yes.

MS BURCH: And a lot of promotion locally and through radio and newspaper?

Mr Duncan: We are going to be advertising. We have invited 2XX to consider whether they want to broadcast. 2XX already broadcasts our question time and our adjournment debates, as you are probably aware, on their community station. So the Speaker is writing to them this week to invite them to consider broadcasting live from the Assembly on the open day. There will be a big banner going on the Assembly building in the next few weeks with a sign saying, "Open day". Yes, we will be trying to promote it as much as possible.

MS BURCH: Fantastic.

Mr Duncan: It happens to be Mother's Day, 10 May, so we are considering whether we might give a small gift to any mothers that might happen to attend on that particular day. So we are trying to cater for and trying to encourage as many people to come.

MS BURCH: That sounds exciting, and that will come through the Assembly as those plans are firmed up?

Mr Duncan: Yes. As I said, the Speaker will be writing to all members. At the

conference, we have a range of people speaking. The Chief Minister is speaking; Mr Seselja has been asked to speak; we have the Speaker chairing one session; the Deputy Speaker is chairing another session; the Deputy Chief Minister is chairing another session; and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is chairing another session. We have tried to involve all parties. I think we are writing to Ms Hunter to have her involvement as well. We are trying to make it a bipartisan approach.

We have invited the commonwealth minister for territories. We have invited Jack Waterford from the *Canberra Times* to give a paper. Michael Moore, Kerrie Tucker, Andrew Cappie-Wood and some academics are giving papers. We have invited the young Canberran of the year, Chris Peters and Roslyn Dundas to give papers. Again, we have tried to get as much—

MS BURCH: And who is the audience? What is the target audience?

Mr Duncan: We think the target audience would be anyone that is interested in the anniversary. But bear in mind that it is on a Tuesday that the conference is being held. We expect a lot of the presiding officers and clerks to come and expect a lot of former members might be interested in coming, a lot of academics, all the people who are interested in the workings of parliament. There are a few people out there that actually are interested. There is a group called the Australasian—

MS BURCH: I think an open program like this gives them an opportunity to come.

Mr Duncan: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: I have got a question about the IT infrastructure. In particular, members' staff only have 100 meg of space for their email. I guess I am used to something bigger. Virtually everyone I know has a lot bigger than this where they work. It is not a lot in this day and age, the space. Is there something that can be done about it?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I will call Val Barrett back to the table for that one.

Ms Barrett: I am sorry, Madam Chair, I was collating some statistics that I have just got for you on webstreaming. Would you mind repeating the question, please?

THE CHAIR: Email space: in a nutshell, 100 meg in this day and age is not a lot of space for email. That is all the staff have.

Ms Barrett: Yes. Apart from saying that I agree, I can add that certainly Val, the Assembly IT manager, is talking with InTACT now about increasing the space for members. We have a little bit of money allocated in this year's budget and we are just looking at how we can get some more storage available.

THE CHAIR: So the issue is financial? It is a matter of the Assembly deciding to allocate the money to do it?

Ms Barrett: There are two issues, really. One is good management of email and, if we can provide assistance and training in how to better use email, I think that is

important, rather than just increasing everyone's storage space and letting it pile up and pile up. That is why we are looking into the whole storage issue and whether we can make better use of various storage methods so that people can keep information.

But certainly we were just saying this morning that the best option now is to talk to InTACT to get some increased storage. So I think it would be fair to say that we recognise that it is a limited capacity for most people, particularly with the amount of business that is conducted by email. We are certainly looking at that.

THE CHAIR: A related question is, as you mentioned, about better management. Again, I do not know why the limitation is but we do not appear to have full searching of documents available. You cannot search by keywords. I understand that that has been turned off and I am not sure at what level this has happened. You may be aware that you can search by keywords in documents. That is something you cannot do here. It is a facility which has been disabled but I do not know—

Ms Barrett: I am not aware. Do you mean in email?

THE CHAIR: Email has got real searching problems but in Word documents there are document properties which you can search. In other environments you can put information into document properties, keywords, and search by those. It is not a full-text search but it is a lot faster than that. It is a lot like meta data on a website. That service is not running on our servers. I have already had the conversation with Richard and it does not work. He has not come back to me as to why it does not work. I was just wondering whether it was a decision that InTACT made. Was it an ACT government decision or an Assembly decision?

Ms Barrett: Rather than perhaps try to give you a less-than-comprehensive reply now—and I am just looking at Val to see whether she can give you more information—I think we would be better off taking that question on notice and giving you a thorough reply rather than trying to answer it now, perhaps not terribly satisfactorily, if that would be all right.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. That would be fine. Searching for information is one of the major things we have to do.

Ms Barrett: Certainly. We will take that on notice. Would you mind if I updated the answer I gave earlier about web statistics?

THE CHAIR: No; great.

Ms Barrett: I did not have them on hand. I now do. We have not got statistics for very long, because the webstreaming service is relatively new but, in the last two quarters of the financial year under review, there is definitely a trend of increased access to webstreaming. The number of hits in the third quarter, from January to March, was 298, which increased to 682 in the next quarter; so that was quite a leap. That was for people within the ACT government. But even outside the ACT government, the number of hits was 194 and then increased to 517. They were pretty comparable. There were a number of people accessing it from outside.

Val has just brought me the stats for the first two quarters of the current financial year and they are pretty similar. For the first quarter, there were 522 hits from within the ACT government and 374 external to the ACT government. The second quarter was 270 within and 361 externally; so there are still quite a large number of people from outside the ACT government.

The numbers over the quarters vary with how many sitting days there were because they tend to be the proceedings that generate the most attention. But it appears to be well received and sustained by both people within government and outside.

Mr Rattenbury: I add that we will undertake to include this data in the coming annual report as well. I think this would be a good one for the Assembly to incorporate into our reporting.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS BURCH: I do not have any other questions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your attendance. On behalf of the committee, I wish to thank you all for attending and declare the meeting closed.

The committee adjourned at 3.55 pm.