



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2013-2014](#))

**Members:**

**MR B SMYTH (Chair)**  
**MS M PORTER (Deputy Chair)**  
**MS N LAWDER**  
**MS Y BERRY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2014**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Dr A Cullen (Ph: 620 50142)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

## APPEARANCES

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 9.30 am.**

Appearances:

Dunne, Mrs Vicki, MLA, Speaker, Legislative Assembly

Office of the Legislative Assembly

Duncan, Mr Tom, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Duckworth, Mr Ian, Director, Business Support

Skinner, Mr David, Director, Governance and Communications

Szychowska, Ms Val, Acting Director, Hansard, Technology and Library

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome. I now formally declare open the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts inquiry into the 2013-14 annual reports. Oh, joy! On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Madam Speaker, and your officials for attending today. The proceedings this morning will focus on the Office of the Legislative Assembly's 2013-14 annual report. The committee expects to conclude this hearing at approximately 10.30.

Can I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink privilege card sitting on the desk in front of you. If you could confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement.

**Mrs Dunne:** I understand.

**THE CHAIR:** Having acknowledged that you understand the implications, can I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and are also being webstreamed and broadcast live. Madam Speaker, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mrs Dunne:** Yes, I would, just briefly, Mr Chairman. Thank you for the opportunity from you and the committee to address the public accounts committee today. I think what this annual report shows is that the Assembly has had a fairly steady year. There is considerable longevity and stability in staffing, which can be demonstrated by the certificates of service awards, which are talked about on page 27. The staff review that was conducted by the Office of the Legislative Assembly is bedded down and I think that the staff is stable. I think for the first time in a long time we have permanent staff filling all the positions in the committee office, according to the staffing profile. And I think that, generally speaking, we have good staff arrangements and they are working well for the benefit of the Assembly and the members.

Some of the highlights of the last year have been: the year kicked off with the presiding officers and clerks conference in the first week of July, which brought together presiding officers from all Australian jurisdictions and the Pacific and New Zealand for its annual conference. It was considered a substantial success, although the weather was not great for the Pacific Islanders. It is very cold in Canberra in July and it is a bitter challenge for the Pacific Islanders.

Community engagement has progressed significantly. In addition to the good work that is done by the education office, we are seeing elevated numbers of people attending the Assembly—adults attending the Assembly as well as school children—through the once every two to three months Speaker’s drinks and tour of the Assembly for community groups like Lions and the like. The next group that will be attending will be the Indigenous elected body.

We are seeing increased numbers of people attending the Speaker’s new citizens nights. At one time—I think the one before we last—we had in excess of 100 people attend. We were actually overwhelmed by the numbers.

We have seen the Remuneration Tribunal make some changes to members’ remuneration and we have seen the abolition of the discretionary office allowance, replaced by the office services allocation, which is bedding down. There are still some questions that we are dealing with.

On another front, as members know, we are twinned with the Parliament of Kiribati, and we have seen substantial exchange there. I have ongoing discussions with the Speaker of the Kiribati parliament. He is particularly keen to see work with the public accounts committee which is being undertaken by Andrea Cullen, and also work with the library and our library staff. Jan has done work in Kiribati, helping them put their library on a better footing to serve their members.

We have also seen the Assembly’s legislation adviser, Peter Bain, go to Kiribati to undertake some legislative drafting for the Kiribati parliament. And not in the year reported on but since the end of this financial year we have seen you, Ms Lawder, and Mr Wall visit Kiribati. I understand that was a very successful and worthwhile effort.

The Assembly art program is expanding and we have had a fairly active acquisitions program. The acquisition program we see as mainly providing artworks for members’ offices and brightening those offices. The acquisition of art is expensive but, through some careful acquisitions and some useful gifts that we have decided to take into the art collection, we will be able to roll out more artworks into people’s offices, mainly works on paper.

Large-scale painting works are expensive and we are limited in what we can acquire. We have now a fairly large collection of photographs and other works on paper and we are in the process of acquiring reusable frames so that we can take things in and out of frames and recycle them so that we can get more artworks into members’ offices.

Looking forward, I think that the big issue for this financial year will be the work that is needed to be done in the Assembly to accommodate the size of the Assembly. That is still an embryonic work. We know that work will need to be done, but there is currently work afoot on costings of various options because someone is going to have to move out of this building if we are going to have 25 members.

It is not a big issue but something that I think we, in time, will become very proud of is that, especially with the able assistance of David Skinner, the Assembly has started work on addressing the issues of slavery-proofing our supply chains. This is an issue

that I took to administration and procedure for a tick-off six or eight weeks ago, and it is an issue that is becoming an important issue around the world. Under the able leadership of Mr Andrew Forrest and his Walk Free Foundation and in consultation and discussion with other Speakers, we have decided it might be a path that we go down as a form of leadership. We are at the early stages of looking at our supply chains, but there are issues for us.

We understand that our stationery supplier, which is one of the biggest suppliers we have, ticks all the boxes because they work out of the US; so they are bound by the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act. I think, by luck or good management, we have got a good supplier there. But we will have to be very vigilant when we are making acquisitions during the refurb of this building to ensure that we are buying ethically. Also we need to make sure that when we are acquiring IT equipment, which is an area fraught with conflict minerals and ethical disposal, we are buying ethically as well.

I think I will leave it there and leave it over to you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We will start where you finished. I was there when you brought this to admin and procedure. How will a slave-free supply chain actually work and what are the implications for the Assembly?

**Mrs Dunne:** It is still early days, Mr Smyth. How it will work in the long run is that we will be able to guarantee that we are like the increasing numbers of corporations who are looking to guarantee that when they are purchasing they are purchasing ethically and that they are doing everything that they can to ensure that the people who provide their goods are not working in slavery or slavery-like conditions and that they are not using goods and materials that are made by children or disposed of by children in unsafe conditions.

We are in a different situation than we were at the end of the 18th century where, if you were opposed to slavery, you could take sugar out of your diet and then there was fair-trade sugar, slavery-free sugar. Our supply chains are very complex. IT equipment, for example, is one where we have to be quite careful because there are lots of rare minerals in the backs of our computers. They usually are supplied through countries which are quite poor and there have been issues in the past with bad supply chains. But we are now, across the world, developing protocols to deal with conflict minerals in the same way as the world has previously dealt with conflict diamonds.

We think that it is quite a complex process, and it is not something that you can do easily overnight, but it is also a conversation that we need to have. It will be a gradual process.

Also, because we in the Assembly are often part of a wider supply network through the government, I have written to the Chief Minister to ask the Chief Minister what is the executive's view on this and what approach they are proposing to take. I have not received a response yet, but I suspect that somebody in Shared Services looked at it and went, "Oh, that might be a bit difficult." I am sure that people are thinking about it, because it is a difficult issue, but I think it is one that is worth kicking off.

**THE CHAIR:** Do we use Mr Forrest's website, for instance? Does that affect us?

**Mrs Dunne:** The Walk Free Foundation provides a sort of audit tool that helps you ask questions about your supply chain and how you might monitor your supply chain. For instance, in California, they have anti-slavery supply chain legislation which has been in place for many years—four or five years anyhow. What we are now seeing is that there are international standards, ISOs, to deal with how you audit your supply chain and to ensure that people in the supply chain are acting ethically. But it is not a one-off thing. It is not a matter of “set and forget” where you do it once and then everything is right, because there is nothing to stop the next purchasing officer coming in and doing something, even unwittingly—perhaps saying, “Well, this is cheap; we'll buy that one instead.” It has to be a constant vigilance thing. It will be a process over many years to get it really right.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you intend to report this to the Assembly? Will we see something about it in next year's annual report?

**Mrs Dunne:** We have not quite worked that out. It will be something I will be taking to admin and procedures. The other thing is that quite recently I have been approached to see whether the Assembly might sign a pledge through the Walk Free Foundation—to pledge our commitment to this. I have been asked that this week; I will be taking it to admin and procedure. That is when we would probably take it to the Assembly to see whether the Assembly wants to go down that path.

**THE CHAIR:** On a different issue, the size of the Assembly is mentioned on page ix. Where are we at with that? I understand a consultancy is being done. What is happening with that?

**Mrs Dunne:** As you would be aware, Mr Smyth, there has been some discussion in the Assembly. Soon after the legislation was passed, I had preliminary conversations with the Chief Minister. We agreed that we needed to agree on a way forward. The Office of the Legislative Assembly and the Chief Minister's department have been commissioned to go and look at options. There were some consultants who came through the building and talked to members and staff about the things that members thought they needed.

My understanding is that there are about three options on the table, which are close to being costed. I have been told to expect something next week from the working group, which would give us a set of options, at which point the Chief Minister and I would be having a discussion. Then—I am not quite sure of the exact timing and the exact process—there would be a conversation with the Leader of the Opposition and the crossbench, and we would decide on which option to take. Then there would be a budget bid to make sure that there is enough money for that to happen.

The conversation I have had with the Chief Minister is about the fact that somebody is going to have to move out of this building and whoever that is should be moved out over the Christmas-new year period of 2015-16 so that there is an opportunity for large-scale work in this building and whoever is moved out is not disrupted during the sitting year in the run-up to an election—so that their accommodation will be somewhat settled by Christmas next year. That gives us opportunity to clean out and

do what needs to be done in this building.

That is going to be a big task. No matter what happens, we are going to have to make some reconfiguration of the chamber. People have made suggestions, and I am open to suggestions, about how we might reconfigure the chamber; we have to put in four more seats. There is then the issue of how we reconfigure this building for 25 people. Even if some people move out, they are all going to need an office here for sitting days. It is a big task.

**THE CHAIR:** The capacity of the chamber is the critical thing; that is a seat everybody has to have. How big can the chamber be expanded to? You said four seats. I would assume that is reasonably easy, but beyond that?

**Mrs Dunne:** I think beyond 25 the chamber would become very cramped. There have been some suggestions that we replace the central table with something more like a table with dispatch boxes. We would not necessarily have dispatch boxes, but a table more like the ones you see in most parliaments, where perhaps the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the deputy leader of the opposition would sit at that table rather than at benches.

The easiest thing would be to put some extra seating behind the current crossbench curve, but that brings whoever sits in those back seats physically very close to the gallery. The other option is to fill in the gaps; that would make circulation a little more difficult, but not the end of the world.

They are the sorts of things that we are thinking of. In this era of heightened security, I am a little concerned about having people quite so close to the galleries—with their back to the gallery as well; if something is coming, you are not going to see it coming.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter has some supplementaries on the issue.

**MS PORTER:** I wanted to know what would happen to the people that were left in the building while all this reconfiguration was happening. I understand the chamber; that is, I would think, manageable, because you can do it in that contained space. But whoever is left here will be here while you are reconfiguring. I am wondering how that is going to be managed. Obviously whoever is here may have to move around to accommodate the reconfiguring, and, as you just pointed out, it is a crucial year for members.

**Mrs Dunne:** This is one of the things that we are going to have to be very mindful of. The staging is going to be very difficult. I think that we might find ourselves in the situation where, by the time the Assembly finishes sitting—which is usually, on the normal program, the end of August in 2016: the Assembly usually has its last sitting towards the end of August; then there is a sort of hiatus and you go into caretaker in September—almost everyone would need to move out of the building. People who are still currently here would probably need to vacate as well so that there might be one last push. That means that whatever happens, we are going to have to find office space outside the building for people.

It may not have to be extraordinarily flash office space because most of us are going



to be in election mode by then. We are probably going to be out in the electorate much more than we are going to be in our offices here. But it may be that at some stage the entire building is going to have to be vacated for that last push. The aim would be that, come the first week in November 2016, after the poll is declared—and we normally come back in the first week of November—we would need to be able to accommodate 25 in the chamber and whoever is supposed to be accommodated in this building, whether the executive stays in the building and the non-executive goes or vice versa. There are other options which I am very opposed to. I have to be persuaded a lot, and it would have to be very cheap. I think we would pay for it in the long term if we have a lot of the support staff move out of the Assembly. I am very opposed to the idea of moving the library or the committee office out of the Assembly.

**MS PORTER:** Can I just ask another supplementary in relation to security? You mentioned the heightened awareness at the moment and about moving members in the chamber closer to the gallery. My question is: how are we going with all of that? Madam Speaker, in the last sitting period you talked about the security review that we are doing at the moment and all the risk management functions that you have in relation to running this whole place for us. How are we going with that? Have we made some decisions yet?

**Mrs Dunne:** I have made some interim decisions about changes to security, but that is all I will say about that. There have been some decisions that have been made. There has been a commitment from the Australian Federal Police, in conjunction with ASIO, to revisit the security assessment on this building. Members will understand that, generally speaking, for a long time the security assessment has been that this is a low-risk building. I tend to take the view—and it was certainly a view that was reflected by my conversations with the Australian Federal Police—that although over a long period of time this may have been considered a low-risk building, I have to ensure that this building is prepared for what could be a very devastating event: low risk; high probability of something really terrible going wrong.

That is where we are at the moment. A review of many of our procedures is currently underway, which is going to the security committee next week. There is a more high level review, and I have asked that the AFP, who are involved in security assessments at Parliament House, also be involved in the reassessment of this building. Everyone says, “We don’t think that anything will happen here,” but, as I said to the AFP, I am sure that is what they told the Speaker of the Canadian parliament at some stage as well, and that was a potentially very catastrophic event. There were huge numbers of parliamentarians in the building at the time. I have some quite good friends who are members of the Canadian parliament who were there, and it was a very scary experience. Not one of them has been able to say that they were not afraid and that they were not afraid for their life at the time. Although everyone says it is low risk, I want to be sure that, if an event like that happened here, we are as prepared as possible.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you. May I ask my substantive question now?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS BERRY:** I have a supplementary.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you. You talked about the reconfiguration of the building and the chamber. Last year during estimates I asked about open days in the Assembly. It is great to see so many people coming in for the new citizens nights. Has there been any consideration for an open day before the changes occur?

**Mrs Dunne:** There will be an open day. We are planning an open day for next year, probably in the spring. It is probably about a year away. We can do it in February-March. We do not want to do it in the winter time because it is just too cold. We might do it around Floriade. That is the thinking at the moment. It is on the program for next year.

**MS PORTER:** My substantive question was around visitors to the Assembly. I think it is fantastic that we are having so many people come in for these events that you are planning, Madam Speaker. Do you think that we have reached saturation point in terms of the numbers? The report says on page 23 that 1,924 people visited the Assembly during the reporting period. I presume there have been a lot more since the reporting period. How many do you envisage we could actually cope with, given all of the things that we have to do in order to welcome people here and the heightened security risk, and whether that places additional stress on your staff?

**Mrs Dunne:** I do not think we are anywhere near saturation point. To the credit of the education office—the education office is the point of contact—it is never in a position where it has to say no to someone. Anyone who wants to come can come. I do not think we are near the situation where Neal and his staff would have to say, “We can’t accommodate you at the moment.” I was encouraged to see, for instance, in relation to our lettings of the reception room and the exhibition space, about 50 per cent of our lettings are to non-government or outside organisations, and that is a fairly consistent pattern. It was a little bit more than 50 per cent last financial year. So the venue hire is a metric. It is not just the agencies using the venue. External organisations account for more than half of the lettings. We cannot easily break that down into which organisations they are. It is very pleasing to see that people are coming to use the Assembly on a fairly regular basis and with increasing frequency, but we are still not at capacity.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** I want to ask about the Commissioner for Standards. Are you able to provide a general update on the number of instances referred?

**Mrs Dunne:** The answer is zero. As you would be aware, in February I announced the appointment of Dr Ken Crispin QC as our Commissioner for Standards. I said at the time that I hoped that we would never have to call upon him. He has been put on a retainer which is about—refresh my memory, Tom—\$20,000 a year. There was an additional set of moneys in the first year for him to take time to write a set of procedures for dealing with any complaints, which has been done and has been tabled.

How much was that, Tom—\$12,000?

**Mr Duncan:** I think he did it for the same amount.

**Mrs Dunne:** So about another \$20,000?

**Mr Duncan:** No, I think it was in the original \$20,000. I think Dr Crispin was engaged to look at establishing the office and a set of protocols between himself and the admin and procedures committee. If any complaints come to the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker and then to the Commissioner for Standards, the Commissioner for Standards will do a report and a report will be made to the admin and procedures committee. So it was important to set out the procedures by which that sort of investigation would be done. That was agreed to by the administration and procedures committee.

You might know that we have got a pamphlet at the entrance for people who want to make a complaint. There is also some material on the website as well. In terms of the rate, I think he was quite keen to ensure that he was not paid for an investigation because that might be seen as an incentive to do investigations: “If I do more investigations, I’ll get more remuneration.” It was agreed that he would do all the work in the initial year. Of course, the position is going to be reviewed after two years. That was in the resolution of appointment.

**MS LAWDER:** When you say “setting up the office”, it is not a physical office?

**Mrs Dunne:** No, it is really setting up the protocols and things. I think Dr Crispin has a fax machine and an email address.

**MS LAWDER:** Is there informal discussion on an ongoing basis or is he just waiting for an event that might occur in the future?

**Mrs Dunne:** He is essentially on a retainer to provide us with a service if the need arises.

**Mr Duncan:** He stands ready.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** I understood that last year or early this year a new provider for removing the recycling bins, the green waste bins, out of the offices was contracted to do that work, and I wondered how that was going, given the problems that you had previously.

**Mrs Dunne:** I think that is over to you, Ian.

**Mr Duckworth:** The difficulty that we have encountered with that particular contract is the reliability of suppliers. We are on our third supplier at the moment, and I understand it is working fine, but the previous supplier had to be replaced because they were not coming to collect the organic waste, and odour was a major problem in the loading bay. At the moment there are not a large number of suppliers in the region

who do this work, and I think it is fair to say that we are not producing a large stream of organic waste. So we are just keeping an eye on it at the moment. If we have further problems with contractor performance, we may have to review whether or not there is, in fact, a viable arrangement. But for the moment, it is still working.

**MS BERRY:** I was wondering, then, if the amount of waste that is being produced by the offices here, given the size of the building and even with the increased number of people in the building, it probably still would not be that much. I understand—I could be wrong about which parliament this is—the South Australian parliament has worm farms. Is that something that this office could consider, given that we have got those little gardens out the front and this year we had the leftover herbs and lettuce from Floriade?

**Mr Duckworth:** The issue of a worm farm has actually been raised in previous Assemblies. One of the issues we have is contamination of that stream. On a small scale, things like meat and citrus and things like that mean that the worms do not eat the goodies. That has been identified as a problem. Contamination of that waste stream on a small scale is a problem, whereas in the arrangement we have, where it goes to a larger facility, the operators have said they can cope with a small level of contamination because of the scale of the operation they have. From my perspective, it is something that we did look at about eight years ago and discounted. As I have just indicated, there are some issues, on the small scale here, of whether or not it would be effective.

**MS BERRY:** Just on the recycling then, particularly our paper recycling, do we measure how much we dispose of each year? Are we doing a lot of paper removal and recycling?

**Mr Duckworth:** I do not know whether or not my colleague down the table might be able to—

**Mrs Dunne:** David may have the answer to that.

**Mr Skinner:** We do measure a range of waste measures, Ms Berry. I am just looking at pages 56 and 57 of the report. What you can see there is that there has been some reduction in the amount of paper that is purchased by the office—2.57 per cent variance. There has also been a reduction in the amount of cardboard recycled, and that is an interesting figure to ponder. That could well mean that there is less cardboard coming in or it could mean that some of that cardboard is ending up in a different stream. There are some different interpretations that you could have there.

Similarly with paper recycling, that will be measured differently depending on whether it has ended up in the secure waste stream or it has ended up in other normal paper recycling streams. But overall, those figures seem to suggest to me that recycling is working.

I am told anecdotally by the facilities manager that there are still some issues with contamination in the waste streams. I think that always happens in any organisation. You will have a different level of awareness around what sorts of things can go in what particular streams. From time to time we do a little reminder in the newsletter

and things like that around what can and cannot go in those streams. In fact, we have had ACT Waste out a few times, and I know a few members have been along to those sessions, to see what, in fact, you can put in, say, the mixed recyclables stream. And it is actually a far broader range of things than you might think initially.

So we have over the years undertaken a few different approaches to try to educate people about the sorts of streams these different things belong in. I hope that assists.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Possibly a question for Mr Duckworth: what is the sum of 39 and 25?

**Mr Duckworth:** Sixty-four.

**THE CHAIR:** If we go to page 44 of the annual report—64 is the correct answer—table 9, employment category by gender, if you add up all the numbers in the female column, it actually comes to 39, not 34. So which is the correct number?

**Mr Duckworth:** I would have to take that on notice, Mr Chair. And I do apologise for the error. But we will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** So have we got 59 or have we got 64?

**Mr Duckworth:** As I said, rather than tell you now, I would rather check those figures and come back to the committee with the correct answer.

**THE CHAIR:** And then if you go across to table 12—in table 9 you have got 34 females, or 39 females, depending on which number is accurate—you have only got 23 females. And in table 9 you have got 25 males, whereas in table 12 you have got 36 males.

**Mrs Dunne:** I think there is a problem there. Thank you, Mr Smyth, for your usual eagle-eye. We will get back to you.

**THE CHAIR:** What are the correct numbers, if you could? That would be kind. Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Just on the recycling, I think every office needs a recycling hound—a person who really makes it their business to go around removing things out of—

**THE CHAIR:** Would that be a beagle or a terrier?

**MS PORTER:** In my case it is a terrier. It is me. You remove things from bins and say, “Look, this does not go in that bin, it goes in this bin.”

**Mrs Dunne:** I think members should lead by example.

**MS PORTER:** Yes, exactly. My question was a bit more about the community engagement that we were talking about before. On page 22 it talks about the use of Twitter. Madam Speaker, are we thinking about using other forms of social media to

increase community awareness?

**Mrs Dunne:** Snapchat perhaps?

**MS PORTER:** I have only come lately to this stuff.

**Mrs Dunne:** I have no idea what Snapchat is, but I know that people use it.

**MS PORTER:** I was just wondering if someone might like to make any comment as to whether other platforms—I think that is correct lingo, is it?—might be used.

**Mr Skinner:** That has been the subject of a lot of discussion over the years, Ms Porter. What we have found and what the sort of overarching social media strategy at this point in time is to really use Twitter as a mechanism to point people towards the website where there is actually quite rich information about the business of the Assembly. In a way, using shortened URLs and linking to recent materials that are published on the website is the strategy.

Some of the other social media platforms that are out there are very interactive. One of the challenges for the office that operates these is that we are not really in the business of having a policy discussion with the community on behalf of the parliament; we are really trying to advocate and explore the process of parliamentary democracy. Some other social media platforms, I guess, invite a certain transactional approach, whereas we are more interested in pushing out our material, pointing people to the website as the source of authoritative information and encouraging people to access it via that route.

We have seen quite a big uptake in our Twitter followership over the last year, and that is encouraging. I think one of the trends we have observed is that people become engaged with Twitter particularly around specific issues that are emerging in the chamber or in committees. Where there is a particular issue that excites popular interest and maybe passions on various sides, you will see people seeking information through that channel. I think that is quite positive.

**MS PORTER:** In relation to the issue of its being interactive or not interactive, with your desire to see more people visiting the Assembly and understanding what we are on about in this place and what facilities are here for people to use, couldn't an interactive platform be an opportunity for people to say what they see this place as—what is it for them, what do they understand about this parliament and how accessible it is? Or is there another way that we can engage people in that conversation?

**Mrs Dunne:** I think that we are open to as many ways as possible to engage people in that conversation. Part of the problem for social media is, as David has said, that we as a parliament do not get involved in the policy issues. This is where the policy issues are debated, but it is not for the parliament to engage directly in that. The language and traditions of parliament are, in some ways, a bit po-faced for modern media, in a way. There is a bit of cognitive dissonance between being really hip and engaged and maintaining the traditions and structures of the parliament. It is a hard one to do.

**Mr Skinner:** Could I just make a follow-up remark? I guess one of the challenges for people working in the office, and for the Speaker and the Clerk in particular, is the authorial voice of any editorial—picking winners, what areas do you focus on, what line do you take on a particular policy issue as it moves through? We have always been very conscious of trying to focus on process, which may be regarded as a bit boring in places but that is our business—parliament is a process: that is the thing that we do; we do process—rather than emphasising perhaps the more topical or newsworthy things or things that excite interest, which are the policy outcomes. So balancing that line between what you emphasise one day versus what you emphasise another day in making editorial choices can be a pretty fraught business.

**Mrs Dunne:** For instance, on a sitting day, the Twitter feed might say—I noticed one the other day—“If you’re interested in light rail, there’s a debate coming up.” It looks like that sort of thing. The Assembly cannot engage in the policy.

**Mr Duncan:** If I can add to the other comments made, I am keen to get this building as accessible as possible and get constituents in here, but we need to be a bit careful. The building is here to help members do their job, and facilities like the reception room and the exhibition room are there first and foremost for members to use—if they want to have a meeting with their constituents, they have got the facility to do that. We have to balance that need for members to do their jobs with the need for community groups who might want to use this. Whilst I am not disputing the fact that we want to make this building as accessible as possible, we have to remember that there are 17 members, and, of course, the ministers on the second floor use these rooms quite frequently. We need to make sure we keep those rooms available for that purpose.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that you might notice, in terms of our interactions on our website, that there is a wonderful video on our website of Madam Speaker welcoming people to the website. There is going to be a video completed of me explaining my role.

**Mrs Dunne:** It has been on the cutting room floor for a long time.

**Mr Duncan:** It has been, Madam Speaker, but you finally managed to pin me down, and I am being filmed next week. I have had preliminary discussions with David and Fiona about whether we can expand that to committees. We have recently been alerted to an example in the Victorian parliament where, before the report is tabled, committee chairs film a short video about what the report contains. It is a two-minute video basically saying: “The report we’ve tabled today contains 12 recommendations. It recommends ...”—whatever. That is placed on the Assembly’s website. That can be viewed by anyone, but it also can be used by the media. The media do not necessarily pick up on committee reports as much as they could, and they could use that information.

We have got limited resources. We have a part-time public affairs officer. But they are the sorts of directions that I am focusing the interaction with the community on to promote the work of the Assembly. We are hoping to do more work on that front and that page.

**Mr Skinner:** Just linking that train of thought to my previous remarks, I think with any moves in that direction we would need to be very careful about the types of committee report that would be the subject of that sort of material. For instance, I think it would be difficult where there was a high level of disagreement amongst committee members about what appeared in the report—if there were dissenting remarks and so on—to charge somebody within the office to present a video package that withstood any claims of skewing the editorial direction one way or the other. Probably what I would be advocating in the first instance is to look at where there is a unanimous position on the part of the committee; that would be a much easier process to put into a video format than where there is a high degree of contention.

**Mrs Dunne:** But even when there is a high degree of contention, it is not insurmountable. The standing orders say that the chairman speaks on behalf of the committee, so it seems to me that there would be no problem in saying, “The committee met; it recommended these things, but not everyone agreed and there are some dissenting comments from members X, Y, Z that cover A, B, C.”

**MS PORTER:** Thank you for all of that. That is a lot more interactive, in a way, than I thought it was. It really was not around being interactive about policy. It was just about “Have you visited your Assembly lately?”, “What did you think of it when you came?” and “If you have not visited, do you know what we do?” It is that sort of stuff. Anyway, I have taken up enough time on that particular issue, but it was very interesting, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** I want to ask you about the office’s strategic planning processes for this year. I think the annual report says that strategic planning was postponed until late in 2014. Has it now taken place?

**Mr Duncan:** No, it has not yet. The work has progressed. We have assembled five or six teams within the staff of the office with team leaders. We have asked them to present a presentation, which is happening this Friday, to the management group to talk about what our strategic direction will be. The reason we delayed it is that we think a lot of the work of our next three, four or five years will revolve around the size of the Assembly and about how that affects the office and the way it delivers its services to members.

As I said, next week, hopefully, the working groups will be in a position to present a report to the Speaker and the Chief Minister. We hope to be able to have a decision about the accommodation of this building and how this building is going to be reconfigured. I think that will affect the strategic planning process to a large degree. That is the reason for the delay. We are certainly doing a lot of work in the background in the lead-up to that decision-making.

**MS LAWDER:** What is the period of time the strategic plan will be for? Is it for a year or three years?

**Mr Duncan:** It is usually for a five-year period. We have just finished the 2009-14 strategic plan; the next one will be from 2014 to 2019. That is the general way we



have done strategic plans. I think you will find—

**MS LAWDER:** Were there reviews during the period of the last one?

**Mr Duncan:** Once we have set a strategic plan, I have a performance and development agreement with each of the directors, and each of the directors has performance and development agreements with each of their staff. One of the things we do measure during the year is attainment against those strategic directions and plans. The annual report will chronicle that as well. We definitely do monitor those.

**MS LAWDER:** Did you say five or six groups that you have asked? What areas do they cover?

**Mr Skinner:** I believe there are seven different groups. The approach that we had adopted in the past with strategic planning was probably what you would describe as more of a top-down approach; engaging consultants and having discussions, with the management group making some decisions about what it thought was important, but engaging staff—usually in a plenary session. Feedback over the years has shown that not all office staff are comfortable participating in a big, open forum to contribute their ideas. One of the things around breaking into smaller groups was to provide perhaps more shy or diffident people the opportunity to contribute and to provide some advice from the trenches, if you like, about what they saw as the big strategic issues.

The management group will then assemble the information, look at the trends or themes emerging from it, look at the things that are on its agenda, look at the things it knows are going to be happening—obviously the enlargement of the Assembly is going to present a wide range of financial issues, procedural issues, accommodation issues and so forth—and then reflect back to staff, saying something like, “Are we all on the same page here?” It is a slightly different approach.

One of the other strengths of that approach is that we have the capacity to break down silos that can exist in an organisation. All of the groups are actually made up of staff from different areas working together in a new sort of configuration. You can break it down into groups and you can expose different staff to different ideas from different areas. We will wait and see what the fruits of those labours are.

**MS LAWDER:** Is it an unstructured thing or do you have key questions?

**Mr Skinner:** There were some key questions that the groups were asked to engage with. That provides a bit of structured framework around it. As I said, it will be interesting to see how all that pans out. We will learn a bit more on Friday.

**MS LAWDER:** The next one will be for, what, 2015 to 2020? What is your intention?

**Mr Duckworth:** One of the issues that the management group actually have to grapple with could be how long a strategic plan should be. Obviously in 2016, two years from now, we will have an Assembly that no-one yet knows how it is going to morph and how it is going to work. Certainly one suggestion from some staff I have

spoken to is around whether or not this strategic plan period needs to be shorter so that we actually have the opportunity to look at it. But, by the same token, we probably will not know until well into the next Assembly just how the Assembly is behaving.

**MS LAWDER:** So when is the date that you want to have the strategic plan finalised by?

**Mr Duncan:** I would have to have one by the end of this year.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you, chair. I had a question about the audiovisual changes that are going to be happening in the chamber and in these rooms as well. I note, Madam Speaker, that on occasion you cannot hear my voice in the chamber, so I conducted my own investigations. There is a pause between when I open my mouth and when the microphone comes on. I experimented with that and it has been reported back to me that if I paused for a moment and waited, the microphone would come on and you could hear my voice. When it goes to digital, will there still be the same issue with that pause in between?

**Mrs Dunne:** I think we had better ask Val. I do not know whether the acoustic is not great, but there are some people who have voices that carry and other people have voices that do not. You do not have a voice that carries in that room. Mr Doszpot does not either for the most part, and there are a couple of other people. Whereas other people are fine; they are fine in any environment. Val, do you want to answer?

**Ms Szychowska:** I must apologise; I have only been in this role for two days, so I am still coming up to speed with a lot of the finer detail. But I do know that we have a proposal from a vendor who implemented the original audio broadcasting infrastructure. We are putting in a bid for the next financial year to replace the audio equipment. Part of what I have been able to gather from the proposal was improved microphone equipment which will, hopefully, reduce the lag in somebody speaking and the mic turning on. The equipment will be digital, it will be more efficient, and it should address those concerns that you have.

**MS BERRY:** With the video of the chamber and the committee rooms, will members be able to link that onto their page and things, like the federal government does? Is that something that will be considered here?

**Ms Szychowska:** The new webstreaming system will be an upgraded version of the current system. It is being redeveloped on a more sustainable platform. It will have some new features. One of the new features, which I think was raised in a previous committee meeting by another member—Mr Coe I believe it was—was to be able to take excerpts or snippets of proceedings. That will be possible in the new system.

**MS BERRY:** When did you say that was going to be—

**Ms Szychowska:** Hopefully we will have it in place by the first sitting of next year, all things going well. At the moment we have a project for the audiovisual

broadcasting upgrade, which includes the upgrade of the webstreaming system and the cameras from analog to digital. That system will hopefully be in a testable phase early in the new year and we will be able to use the first two sittings to run the old visual system and the new system and see how it performs.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, and then Ms Lawder has something to ask.

**MS PORTER:** Madam Speaker, on page 9 it reports that it is not possible to migrate the Hansard content to the new website due to volume and capacity. While we are talking about these kinds of things, have we been able to address that or are we reviewing that at the moment? What is happening with that?

**Mrs Dunne:** I was hoping no-one would ask me that. That is why Val is here.

**Ms Szychowska:** We did a review earlier in the year to look at the options and costs to upgrade and/or replace the Hansard website. It is a rather difficult and complex process. We are not able to consolidate it with the Assembly website because of the fundamental differences between the two types of websites. The website will require some effort and some cost to upgrade in a more accessible, easy-to-search navigate. There are things we can do now, however, that will improve parts of those services, and we intend to explore that in the near future. As part of our strategic planning process, I understand we are going to be including the website as part of a larger refresh of legacy systems. The website will need to be looked at in future. We may be able to integrate it with another system that we are also looking at upgrading, which I think is the document production system. There are a few things happening. The strategic planning process will help us to identify how we stage that upgrade.

**MS LAWDER:** I have a supplementary question. Originally my question was whether you have considered including live captions on your audiovisual stream. It was also prompted by something I heard on the news this morning of a woman with a vision impairment suing Coles about their website. So my question is also about accessibility more generally and how accessible is the Assembly website as well to people with disability?

**Mrs Dunne:** I had the same thought as I heard that thing this morning. I was surprised that it had got to the stage where people had to litigate. It sent alarm bells. I honestly do not know how accessible we are.

**Mr Skinner:** Ms Lawder, that is a very live issue for us. You might be aware of something called the website content accessibility guidelines version 2. The AAA compliance deadline is in December this year. We have been looking at our website, and I think there are some areas of noncompliance that I would like to see addressed. There are technical challenges in some of those areas. One of the main principles is that where you produce a document—and this has occurred across the ACT field—there is a general position that you publish in two accessible formats if it is not in an HTML format, which is the king of accessible formats that can be used by screen readers and so forth. That is still going to be a journey for us, and I think it is one that we do have to take very seriously, particularly being the parliament. If we are not

being accessible and leading on these issues then it is very difficult to make claims of others.

In terms of the captioning of that content, I believe that those issues have been investigated previously and the costs were quite astronomical—I think in terms of millions of dollars. Val, you might be able to confirm that.

**Ms Szychowska:** I can confirm that.

**Mr Skinner:** I believe that the Queensland parliament does that, and it was a very expensive exercise. One of the things that may overcome some of those barriers from an accessibility point of view is that if you have got somebody who is vision impaired—let me get this right. If you provide a transcript of the proceedings in addition to an audio-visual record, you have covered the bases in terms of the loss or partial loss of those two senses. What that does not allow, though, is a live service but you will be able to access the transcript shortly thereafter. That is not perfect but it probably meets the definition of broad access to those proceedings.

Of course, all of these issues hinge on that notion of reasonable adjustment. I think that is the standard that we need to reasonably adjust where we can and then look at those other issues in terms of the cost of actually covering off on those obligations. That was certainly one where I think the cost, when we investigated it, was very high.

**MS LAWDER:** From your answer you are obviously aware of it, but someone who was relying on the transcript for a work reason and could not access it until after someone else who could listen to it live is at a disadvantage.

**Mr Skinner:** That is absolutely right. And I think the other important point is that we would always as a matter of principle and policy, if there were special requirements to access any of our materials, default to a position of saying, “How can we make this accessible right now for you to meet your needs?” That is not the preferred approach in the accessibility community, but you undertake special instances of making something accessible. But where we have not been able to capture something or do something in a way that is accessible in the first instance, we will bend over backwards to make sure that is the case.

In a lot of the case law going back in some of the big accessibility cases—I think the SOCOG one was the most famous one—there seems to be an intransigence on the part of the people with the responsibility to provide the information to people with vision and hearing impairments. That is certainly not the case here. We would do everything we could to make something accessible to somebody that needed access to it.

**THE CHAIR:** We might call it a day there, or call it a morning there.

**Mrs Dunne:** Before you do, Mr Chairman, I have three issues to conclude on. One of the things that I did not mention in relation to the enlarged Assembly—and I think that people always think about the enlarged Assembly in terms of building—was that procedures and standing orders will, of necessity, need to be reviewed. I think that members should have in the back of their mind all the time as they are going about

their way: how will it be different and what sorts of changes do we need to make?

As you know, the Assembly has gone down the path of being increasingly paperless, but it is not entirely paperless. Can I just put on the record that to produce 60 printed copies of this report costs in the order of \$6,000. That is \$100 a copy. I think that it is useful—this is homework for the pack—for the pack to think about how we might minimise that cost.

Can I put on the record that Ray Blundell—he is not here today, but these are amongst the last proceedings that will be recorded under the supervision of Ray who is retiring at the end of the year—is a long-serving member of the Assembly. The corporate knowledge of every fault and issue with our audiovisual system and our technology rests with Ray. He is in the process of being replaced. We are also very mindful of the fact that a lot of the information about the operation of the Assembly rests in Ray's brain; so there are multiple brain transplants going on at the moment. But I want to use this opportunity to pay tribute to Ray and his contribution to technical services.

**MS PORTER:** Hear, hear!

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have run out of time—in fact, we have gone over time. Answers to questions taken on notice are due with the committee secretariat no later than close of business on 20 November. I think there was just the one. Written supplementaries from members following this hearing should be provided to the secretariat within three days of the proof transcript becoming available. And if the committee had any supplementary questions following on from the hearing, they will be forwarded with covering correspondence.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, Madam Speaker, and your staff for attending today. When the proof transcript is available, it will be forwarded for the opportunity to correct the transcript or suggest any corrections. With that, I declare the hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 10.36 am.**