Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee—Additional Estimates 2004-05 (February 2005)

Parliament Portfolio, Department of Parliamentary Services

Answers to Questions on Notice

Topic: Cost-cutting proposals and suggestions

Question P11

Senator Evans:

1 Has the Department considered, or is the Department currently considering, any proposals or suggestions for further cost-cutting measures in order to meet the under-achievement of the Podger Report's expected savings?

2 If so, what are these proposals or suggestions?

3 What is the source of those proposals or suggestions, either from within the Department or externally?

4 Where possible to quantify, how much would the expected cost savings be for each of these proposals/suggestions?

5 What would be the effect of each of those proposals on services to MPs or Senators?

Answer:

1 The Department has considered, and is considering, a wide range of proposals or suggestions for cutting costs to take account of various pressures on our budget. Even after the current pressures have been addressed, the Department would intend to maintain an ongoing search for efficiencies in all its activities.

2 See Table A, Column 1.

3 All proposals set out in the Table have been generated within the Department. Some are in different stages of implementation, some are being considered by the Department's senior management, and others are simply suggestions made by members of the Department in various circumstances.

4 See Table A, Column 2. Note that the amounts shown are savings in recurrent (operating) costs. The potential savings shown are very rough estimates, and some savings may turn out not to be sustainable over time.

5 See Table A, Column 3.

Table A—Proposals or suggestions for cutting DPS costs (some of these proposals or suggestions have been implemented and others may never be implemented)

	Column 1 Proposal or suggestion (Note comments in Answer 3)	Column 2 Potential costs savings (approximate figures pa)	Effect on services to members of Parliament
Part 1—Proposals implemented or being implemented			
1	Reduction in catering for internal DPS activities and DPS-sponsored or DPS-supported external activities (eg Joint Library Committee and Presiding Officers Information Technology Advisory Group meetings)	$45,000	Less food available for members of Parliament who are members of affected bodies
2	Reduction in use of consultants (by requiring use of consultants to be more rigorously justified)	$500,000	None to DPS's knowledge
3	New Master Roster for PSS staff	$200,000	None to DPS's knowledge
4	Replacement of two Human Resource Information Systems with a single system (PeopleSoft)	$150,000	None to DPS's knowledge
5	Reduction in periodic industrial cleaning (external cleaning)	$94,000	None to DPS's knowledge
6	Reduction in DPS-initiated periodic internal cleaning	$80,000	None to DPS's knowledge
7	End provision of audio tapes to visitors	$25,000	None to DPS's knowledge
8	Reductions in DPS participation in ACT tourism activities	$30,000	None to DPS's knowledge
9	Centralised purchasing of office paper	$8,000	None to DPS's knowledge

	Column 1 Proposal or suggestion (Note comments in Answer 3)	Column 2 Potential costs savings (approximate figures pa)	Effect on services to members of Parliament
Part 2—Proposals under consideration or that have been made (some of these proposals may never be implemented)			
10	Hansard printing reductions	Maximum $700,000	Reduction in provision of hard copy Hansard transcripts to members of Parliament (Hansard available on Senators' and Members' Services Portal to be printed on demand).
11	Reduce or eliminate staffing of Ministerial Wing car park entrance security post	$500,000	Ministers using self-drive vehicles would need to use swipe cards to enter the car park
12	Reduce provision of indoor plants	$100,000	Fewer indoor plants in the building
13	Changes to timing for "Public Escort Procedures" as described in Information Circular 2005/?	$43,000	None to DPS's knowledge
14	Ensuring proper recovery of security and other departmental costs of non-Parliamentary functions held in Parliament House	Unable to be quantified	Some functions sponsored by Senators or Members that are not parliamentary functions may cost more to hold in Parliament House
15	Reduce security staffing requirements for internal access points in Parliament House by installing, or activating, swipe-card access systems at some access points	Unable to be quantified	Members of Parliament would need to carry swipe cards
16	Reduction in frequency or quality of building maintenance, with resulting reduction in Building Condition Index	Unable to be quantified	Members of Parliament may notice reduced maintenance of some building finishes
17	Reduce production of other library research papers to level justified by use of "spare capacity", and target research topics more rigorously (note this does NOT cover commissioned research for MPs, Senators or committees)	Unable to be quantified	Fewer research papers available, but available papers might be more topical and useful
18	Review of library collection and acquisition policies	Unable to be quantified	Books and journals not held in the library would need to be sourced from other libraries if required
19	Reduce opening hours of some or all non-public entrances to Parliament House (Senate, House of Representatives, Ministerial Wing)	Unable to be quantified	Members of Parliament would need to use different entrances to Parliament House at certain times

	Column 1 Proposal or suggestion (Note comments in Answer 3)	Column 2 Potential costs savings (approximate figures pa)	Effect on services to members of Parliament
Part 2—Proposals under consideration or that have been made (some of these proposals may never be implemented)			
20	Fleet management of office machines including computer equipment	Unable to be quantified	None to DPS's knowledge
21	Restructure of parts of DPS providing information and communications technology services	Unable to be quantified	Improved client focus and client services
22	Broader restructure of DPS to take advantage of further efficiencies available in the amalgamated department	Unable to be quantified	Improved client focus and client services
23	Across-the-board cuts for all areas of DPS	Unable to be quantified	Would depend on how the cuts are applied in each part of the department