

THE LEGISLATURE

OVERVIEW

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Budget 2002-03 \$m</i>	<i>Budget 2003-04 \$m</i>	<i>Variation %</i>
The Legislature			
Total Expenses	97.7	101.7	4.1
Asset Acquisitions	3.2	2.7	-16.3

The Legislature comprises two Houses, the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. Both Houses are directly elected by the people of New South Wales and together form one arm of the system of responsible government.

The functions of Parliament are wide ranging and include the making of laws, control of State finances, oversight and scrutiny of Executive Government operations and the provision of a forum to discuss matters of concern or importance to the public.

The Legislative Council, Legislative Assembly and Joint House Departments provide procedural, administrative and support services to assist Members in the performance of their parliamentary and constituency duties, both at Parliament House and in the 94 Legislative Assembly electorate offices (Murray Darling has 2 offices) throughout the State.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Legislature's expenditure over the last five years has increased as a consequence of a number of factors including changes to Members' entitlements and provision of a wide area computer network to each of the 94 Legislative Assembly electorate offices throughout the state. The need for increased security at Parliament House and Legislative Assembly electorate offices has also impacted on expenditure trends.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Consistent with recent years, the Parliament's focus remains on improving services and facilities for Members to assist them in performing their parliamentary duties. This strategy is being implemented through improved information technology costing \$1.3 million in 2003-04. Members are provided access to online services and databases from the Parliament House, electorate and home offices.

Improved public access to parliamentary proceedings and sittings is also being targeted through internet webcasts, broadcast quality filming of parliamentary proceedings and enhancements to the Parliament's website.

The upgrading of security remains a high priority for the Parliament with the commissioning of new surveillance equipment and additional personnel on sitting days.

2003-04 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Estimated total expenses for the Legislature in 2003-04 are \$101.7 million, an increase of 4.1 percent over the 2002-03 budget. This increase reflects the full year effect of public sector pay increases granted in 2002-03 together with increases scheduled for July 2003. Staff reductions are proposed for the support and service areas of the Parliament in 2003-04 to remain within the budget.

Base funding to meet the cost of servicing Members' offices and paying Members' entitlements has also been adjusted to reflect actual costs while funding for election year expenses has been withdrawn resulting in a net reduction in Members' other operating costs of \$0.8m before adjustment for price increase escalations.

Asset Acquisitions

Total asset acquisitions in 2003-04 are estimated at \$2.7 million, a reduction of \$0.5 million from the 2002-03 budget. The bulk of the funding will go towards improving Parliament's information technology systems (\$1.3 million) and minor works include the fit-out of electorate offices for Members of the Legislative Assembly (\$0.8million).