



Labor blasts Parliament bar upgrade

■ Daniel Mercer

The State Opposition has accused the Liberal Party of being “horribly” out of touch after it emerged upgrades to a bar at Parliament had cost \$80,000.

Shadow treasurer Ben Wyatt said yesterday that work being carried out to Parliament’s Strangers Bar was an abuse of taxpayers’ money amid an economic downturn in which workers were losing their jobs.

As part of the renovations, sliding doors are being added to a wall of the bar along with a gazebo in Parliament’s courtyard.

The upgrade was approved by a committee made up of senior parliamentary officials, plus the Speaker of the Lower House, Michael Sutherland, and the President of the Upper House, Barry House.

Mr House and Mr Sutherland are both Liberals.

Mr Sutherland rejected suggestions it was the Government or the Liberal Party that was behind the work, arguing Parliament was an independent institution with its own capital works budget.

He also said the upgrade would

save money in the long run by avoiding the need to hire marquees for events during inclement weather—a practice which he said cost \$40,000 a year.

“It will pay for itself in the relatively short term,” Mr Sutherland said. “This is not a bar for parliamentarians.

“We have about 40,000 people come into Parliament every year, including about 14,000 school children, and we are constantly upgrading the facilities here.

“We have very few special historical buildings in Perth and this is one of them. It should be maintained to a high standard.”

But Mr Wyatt said the work was unnecessary because it was not improving the practical function of Parliament.

He said it simply appeared to be aimed at making the bar “a much more pleasant place to drink”.

“This is an abuse of taxpayers’ funds,” Mr Wyatt said.

“This is the Parliament. Spending \$80,000 making the bar a nicer place to drink is not the way to spend taxpayers’ money.

“I don’t think any West Australian would think this is a wise use of taxpayers’ funds.”