

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT
AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY METRO WEST PROJECT

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Friday 13 October 2023

The Committee met at 9:15.

PRESENT

Ms Lynda Voltz (Chair)
Mr Nathan Hagarty (Deputy Chair)
Ms Judy Hannan
Mr Warren Kirby

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Mr Ray Williams

The CHAIR: Good morning. Before we start I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet here at Parliament. I also pay my respects to Elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are either present or are viewing the proceedings on the web stream. Welcome to the public inquiry of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure into the Sydney Metro West project. We thank the witnesses who are appearing before the Committee today and the many stakeholders who have made written submissions. We appreciate your input into this inquiry. I declare the hearing open.

Mr TOM FORREST, Chief Executive Officer, Urban Taskforce, affirmed and examined

Mr STEVE MANN, Chief Executive Officer, Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW, sworn and examined

Mr JUSTIN SIMON, Chair, Sydney YIMBY, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our first witnesses. Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure today to give evidence. Can you please confirm that you have been issued with the Committee's terms of reference and information about the standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

STEVE MANN: Yes, thank you, Chair.

TOM FORREST: We have.

JUSTIN SIMON: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions about that information?

STEVE MANN: No.

TOM FORREST: No.

JUSTIN SIMON: No.

The CHAIR: Tom is an experienced hand anyway. Does anyone have a very short statement that they wish to give? If you could, keep it very brief, because obviously we want to ask questions.

STEVE MANN: Thank you, Madam Chair and Committee. I am very pleased to be presenting to you about Sydney Metro West. I'll focus on our areas of expertise, which are in city shaping and development. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW members—more than 450 companies working in this city. I would put to you this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to continue the building of Metro West. If it's built as a city-shaping project, this could be the most important project of this Government and for many generations.

I am sure there's one thing we can agree on, and that is that we're facing a deep housing supply and affordability crisis—in fact, the worst affordability in 30 years. Decades of historic undersupply of new homes has meant that this Government and the private sector need to work closely together with the massive challenge that is set out by the housing accord that this Government is committed to and also governments across the country are committed to. There's never been a time when the phrase "density done well" was more important than it is now, so the delivery of rail is infrastructure that can be city shaping. It can deliver high-quality, high-density living close to public transport.

In UDIA's response, we've focused on our NextGen West campaign, which was launched in February 2023. It recognises the need for accessible, affordable and reliable transport options, particularly in Sydney and to the regions. Western Sydney contributes much to the growth of Sydney; in fact, it is the main mover of growth. We have key three recommendations from that work that are very important for this inquiry. First, the need to start planning for rail lines to better connect the west with the west and the west with our main Sydney CBD. Secondly, a change to government's approach to rail business cases to put accessibility at the heart of each business case, not just travel times. This means integrating urban planning and transport planning. Thirdly, putting in place policies to increase housing around new stations by requiring councils to provide more diverse housing by type, tenure and number at new metro stations.

We welcome the New South Wales Government's recent announcement of several important policies to build momentum for new housing in Sydney. There is a focus on transit-orientated design—you'll hear us say that a lot today—and that's developing around stations. We need to make sure that happens, importantly, with our new metro stations. I put to you that that's not happening. There are nine stations planned for Metro West. Of those nine stations, six of them do not have any urban master plan, three have concept plans and only one of those includes any residential. So there's a big missed opportunity for Metro West, and this is the opportunity to embrace it.

TOD cities deliver key outcomes we need for future cities, like lower carbon footprint, walkable places and better work-life balance. It's a big opportunity to introduce affordable housing. Metro West is a crucial spine linking the cities of Sydney. In fact, probably in time it'll link all three cities and maybe our two airports. It alone could build 160,000 homes if it was focused as a city-shaping project. Our research shows that metros in New York, Tokyo and London have between 1.1 kilometres and two kilometres at the highest, on average, between metro stations. Metro West has three kilometres between its stations.

There's an obvious first target, and that's the seven kilometres between Parramatta and Homebush, to introduce a new station. That new station could obviously be at Camellia, where there's already a town centre planned, and that opportunity is still available to this Government to change the alignment of the rail to meet Camellia. It could deliver well above 17,000 homes and 10,000 jobs in office buildings. In summary, delivering city-shaping transport for the residents of Sydney is an urgent need. There's much at stake for the economy and our communities alike. Success in delivering great places and outcomes for New South Wales requires the Government to work with industry. We need to work more closely together, and UDIA stands ready to do that with our members. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Mr Forrest or Mr Simon, do either of you wish to make an opening statement?

TOM FORREST: I will jump in. I will be quick. I thank the Committee for inviting Urban Taskforce along today. I trust that you've read our submission so I won't repeat the information contained in that, other than to emphasise a couple of key points. I fully agree that the opportunity between Parramatta and Olympic Park is the most obvious and first priority for a need. This is something that we, and the Property Council as well, met with the former Government about—Rob Stokes and Jim Betts at the time.

We plead for there to be a re-look from the metro authority at the opportunity for a station at Camellia, Rosehill, Silverwater or the speedway. Any of those options were things where we saw an opportunity for housing density and housing growth, I think particularly in Camellia, which is a place which is essentially a contaminated dump yet it sits on the water opposite a university and right next to a racecourse. You would have thought there was an opportunity to put a metro there and then develop up some really high-density commercial and residential development at a place where there are no "sensitive receivers", is what we call them in the planning system, that is, no people who would object. Indeed, it was strongly supported by the local business community as well as the local council. How often do you get that? You don't get it very often.

It was an opportunity missed, in our view. Rob Stokes simply said, "It's up to Andrew Constance and he doesn't want to damage the amount of time it will take to get from Parramatta to the CBD of Sydney." I said, "What are you trying to set, a world record for metro development in terms of speed? Who cares?" A metro is a massive investment of public funds that should support the development of the city. The more stops you have, the better. I say look at all of those options. Look at the options from The Bays Precinct through to Five Dock. Look at options to extend the metro beyond stopping underneath the botanical gardens. Really? Why? Why isn't it chucking a right turn and heading up towards Zetland and maybe opening up an opportunity for the revitalisation to the cities in the south-west?

In fact, these were the very options that the Iemma Government, way back in March 2008, published when they published the Metro Link strategy. In March 2008 it published an opportunity for the first to be the north-west metro, the second to be the west metro, the third to be the south-east metro and then, ultimately, consideration of a north-east metro. It seems bizarre that you'd be stopping a metro underneath the botanical gardens when there is an opportunity. At least plan for an extension at some stage in the future and have a view to linking the urban growth of Sydney with the transport task that faces us.

JUSTIN SIMON: Thanks for the opportunity to address the Committee today. I am chair of Sydney YIMBY, a grassroots pro-housing-density group. We've made a submission because transport policy is housing policy. Our city is being hollowed out by unaffordable housing and there is a shortfall of hundreds of thousands of homes over the next decade. Metro West provides a very attractive answer for where to put them. It's important to us that there are big density increases around all stations on the new corridor and that they extend to the edge of the walking distance. We note the Burwood North strategy has been released. It looks like a great collection of tall buildings and green space but it only extends to 400 metres from the station. The next circle out to 800 metres provides three times as much area for housing as that inner circle, if you recall your high school maths, and should be prioritised for mid-rise housing diversity in all cases around all stations instead of \$2.7 million houses that nobody can afford without significant inherited wealth.

The metro itself is only part of the housing puzzle. With its completion, we have an unprecedented amount of capacity for new housing across the network as bottlenecks are removed. We should be looking to apply significant up-zoning to each and every station that receives more services or has passengers taken off that station and put onto the metro. We should also be looking to be really ambitious in our public and social housing builds on government land near the station. In doing so, we cannot only address the needs of the very low income members of our community but we can also throw down the gauntlet for private developers by showing them what high-quality high rise looks like, especially in the same precinct. Finally, the Productivity Commission's recent report found it cost \$75,000 more per dwelling to provide the infrastructure for dwellings on the urban fringe instead of infill. Do not cancel or delay this project, or you will find yourselves spending many more billions on the urban fringe.

The CHAIR: Thank you for your opening statements. I will open it up to questions. I will start with one first off, to Mr Mann. Six stations have no urban plans, master plans. One does have one with residential; I assume that's Sydney Olympic Park. Is that correct?

STEVE MANN: No, it's not been planned for that new one. It is in fact—let me just think that through.

TOM FORREST: Pyrmont.

STEVE MANN: It's Pyrmont, yes.

The CHAIR: But you say you're not including Sydney Olympic Park as a residential—

STEVE MANN: Well, not as a TOD-planned residential outcome. There's been no further planning around the railway station.

The CHAIR: Okay.

STEVE MANN: Chair, walkable TOD is probably the key, and I think you just heard that from YIMBY as well. That's the idea of creating place. "Walkable" doesn't mean you're walking to your job, but you're walking to rail that gets you to your job, or walking to rail that gets you to the beach or to the services you want. In the end, that's what cities are about. It's all about access. It's all about people.

The CHAIR: How does the evidence you've given marry up with the figures that have been provided in the business case summary in regards to housing and jobs? Mr Forrest, perhaps you may have a view on that as well?

STEVE MANN: Look, I'm just telling you the planning work that's been done. This is the big challenge that we're all articulating. There's not enough thought about the city. To be a true city-shaping project you've got to know the city that you're building—and we don't, for most of our rail projects. We do little bits and pieces where the pressure points are but we're not fully planning it. In the end, we're putting the station in the right place where the city could be maximised. The business case is largely driven by travel time and it's largely driven by transport people, not city-shaping people. We must solve that. You need to create some kind of precinct body that ensures we are delivering for the people that we represent. Accessibility is actually the key to all of it. We've worked at length with Professor David Levinson from Sydney Uni to create the thinking around cities should be made for access. We've compared Sydney globally in terms of its governance to do that and it's poor. We've compared it to the metros, as I said. We're building far fewer stations—these are 100-year decisions.

The CHAIR: No, I understand that. I'm wondering about the marrying up. Mr Forrest?

TOM FORREST: Thank you. We've addressed this in our submission. A greater concern initially was the north-west metro, which started off with a business case that anticipated significant growth above all of the new metro stations. Then once it went to the planning system and community protest or concern was expressed, one by one those densities were reduced by typically one-third. In St Leonards, Crows Nest and North Sydney they typically were dumbed down by one-third. What that meant was that the benefits that justified the public investment into those projects were not realised. There was no benefit realisation analysis after the thing was built to see whether we did actually get the benefits that were anticipated in the business case.

One of the things that I've discussed with Geoff Roberts, former chair of the GCC, on many occasions was the need to lock in those—to have a discussion openly at the very beginning between the planning department and the transport department, maybe coordinated through the Premier's department or Cabinet Office, which ensures that what's projected in the business case is a reasonable expectation of city growth. Then once that's determined as being part of the justification for the expenditure of public funding in the project, you must ensure that those benefits are realised. That doesn't mean that every single project has to go up by a certain height, but overall within a kilometre of that precinct you will get the benefits that were anticipated. That seems to me a sensible approach to planning and infrastructure development within Sydney, and linking the two so that you can get the benefits of both and not just a travel time focus, as Mr Mann suggested.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: As somebody who is at the end of the north-west line and has seen that growth happening out there, I can tell you it's an unmitigated disaster. When we talk about being walkable, in the north-west area two-thirds of the population have two cars or more. People don't just go from their unit onto a metro to their job and back home. People also go to sporting fields. They have other things in their life other than work. When we talk about that level of density around metro stations along the line, what consideration is being given towards walkability and liveability? From my experience, as someone from an area that has gone from zero to hundreds and thousands of people, that is just not playing out.

STEVE MANN: I would strongly recommend that the Committee work with Professor David Levinson from Sydney University. His model studies accessibility for all those sorts of reasons. The city needs the ability

to manage peaks. It needs the ability to manage weekends. It needs the ability to manage travel. Accessibility in all sorts of different directions is absolutely crucial to that thinking. The workable piece, I think, is about the cost of living. It's about sustainability. It's about affordability. Those things can be achieved. You heard from YIMBY around some of those ideas. That is where we can provide place and services.

In fact, perhaps the word "density" is not that helpful, because they are actually less dense on the ground plane, where you are providing the place with the parks, with the coffee shops and with the places to meet. We need to do this very well, if we are going to be successful as a global city. You are probably right: There are examples we should learn from with the north-west metro where we haven't got it right, and, I think, as Tom was just saying, most of this is happening after the railway station is already there—about half-half—and it's being pushed down. So the community is saying, "Well, I've got my railway station. I don't want the density anymore." They don't understand the funding challenges and the balance of getting housing where we need it, which is at transport. To fight the cost of living and the big, broader challenge—housing and the cost of living—this is a brilliant solution. It must be embraced.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: I don't disagree with the need for density around stations, but, at the end of the line, where that density is being realised, the infrastructure is not there to support it.

The CHAIR: I will just go to Mr Williams, who has had his hand up for a while to ask a question.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief. My first question is to Mr Forrest from Urban Taskforce. In your opening comments you mentioned the bold vision of the Iemma Government in 2008 for the north-west metro, the south-west metro and inner west city metro that we are talking about at the moment. Could you name any one of those projects that had funding committed to it in their budgets and that had commenced construction at the end of that term?

TOM FORREST: Obviously, history is history, Mr Williams, and—

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: It is a simple question. You can name one or you can name two.

TOM FORREST: If I could answer the question—history is history. The Iemma Government plan depended upon the sale of electricity. It was unable to achieve that and therefore they weren't funded, but at least the plans were done and the thinking was done. It was an important beginning point, and it's an important thing to focus on. This is not just a Liberal initiative or Labor initiative; it is a bipartisan initiative. Moving towards a metro system and then getting the maximum city development out of that is something that should be supported by all sides. That was simply my point. It was not to make a political point.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: It is easy to print a glossy brochure and to make bold statements.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: There are phrases like "transit-oriented development" and "city shaping", and we have conceptual ideas about what they mean, but I think this is about business cases and governance. I ask you guys, in a perfect world, if we were to do this again, what would a business case be based on and what kind of governance improvements would we want to see? Because we have got Transport off in one direction and Planning off in another direction, but we have examples here and around the world where it has been done well and they have got those benefits.

JUSTIN SIMON: Things that we would like to see looked at a bit differently from here are, firstly, we think there has been a timidity in selection of the station sites, in particular with the absence of one at Leichhardt North where it would connect with the L1 light rail, because the assumption was that there would be a lot of local backlash to significant development around that site. The L1 light rail is quite difficult, if you are navigating directly into the city, because it takes about half an hour from Leichhardt or Dulwich Hill to get in, because you are going around the Pyrmont loop. So, we think prioritising connectivity between different modes is something that should be looked at.

We also think that a commitment to upzoning the whole precinct out to the edge of the walkable area—and we think that this is something that, in particular, needs to apply to places like Five Dock and Burwood North, where there's going to be resistance as well. Also, provision of more housing diversity, because there can be a lot of high-rise and then a bunch of detached dwellings which cost heaps and heaps of money that nobody can afford, but there needs to be something in between as well. And we need to do that to maximise the value for money.

STEVE MANN: We believe you should put together a precinct authority. You have got two opportunities. One is to put together planners and transport planners and put them somewhere, and maybe a precinct authority would drive that piece of work and that's where you weigh up travel time versus city shaping, and if you have those two objectives, you can find the optimal outcome because you're planning the city as you plan the transport. We don't think that necessarily means a big delay, because there is a lot of work that has been

done. For example, that community town centre was already planned as a light rail station and could easily be positioned larger.

As for landowners, they would all contribute to a metro station, and one of them is the Government with the Rosehill racecourse. What you need is then to integrate the approvals with the railway line—and we see a huge opportunity for a couple more stations on that west metro—and then to complete the planning that should be done on those remaining stations. I guess—to shake off whatever this is that we don't see residential belonging—if you, in fact, look at all of our metros, there is less than a third of them that have plans for residential at those stations at the moment. Why are we doing that? Globally, residential is the focus. Certainly, mixed use and, of course, affordable housing—a big opportunity to get it where people won't need cars.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: My question is to all of you. We are looking at Sydney Metro West and you are talking about residential, affordable housing. Why do you think this needs to be a priority with funding when we have got affordable housing being built, for example, in the south-west areas of Oran Park and places like that? Why would you not see planning for the new residential areas out there as a priority versus through this spine where we already have residents?

JUSTIN SIMON: The State Government is quite budget constrained at this point. The NSW Productivity Commission recently put out a report which shows it is \$75,000 cheaper to build the infrastructure for housing as infill rather than sprawl. So, we think that it is quite prudent for the Government to focus on investment in those areas, because they can largely re-use existing infrastructure. There is some extra stuff that needs to get built, but by being able to re-use it, rather than having to build new roads, new schools and new hospitals, maybe you can fill out an existing school or an existing hospital and you only need to build one or the other.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: Maybe that decision should have been made before we sprawled out there and left people without the infrastructure.

JUSTIN SIMON: Agreed.

TOM FORREST: The fact of the matter is we need both, and that is difficult. That is a conundrum for government to have to deal with, but the housing supply situation, at the moment, is quite dire. Last year there were 47,000 houses completed in the whole of New South Wales. In order to meet the housing accord commitments, we need 75,000. So far, in the last 12 months, we have only had 48,000 approvals and, I'll tell you, one thing is for sure: If you've got 48,000 approvals, you're not going to build 75,000 houses. There is a major challenge ahead. The challenge is large, there is no doubt. We'll need to take advantage of greenfield opportunities, particularly in the short term, because it's the greenfields houses that can go up relatively quickly. It takes much longer to get the planning approval and all of the infrastructure associated with building large-density, high-rise developments. So that might come through in years four and five of the housing accord, but, right now, we need both. The sensible delivery of transport infrastructure is going to be critical to the attainment of those goals, and we've just got to take advantage, sensibly and strategically, of all of the options available to us.

I would like to address something that Mr Hagarty raised. He talked about the business case. What I would like to see is a greater coordination of planning with transport, as Mr Mann mentioned, but involving Treasury and Premier and Cabinet right up-front so there is a whole-of-government approach to all of these things. That could be a precinct authority, although I am loath to set up yet another bureaucratic body. I would just like to see the relevant key decision-makers in the room at a senior level from the start. I think former Premier Gladys Berejiklian attempted to do that and wanted to do that, but I think a combination of bushfires and floods and then COVID distracted the GCC and the central government attention that's needed to make these things really work. But I think that's the sort of approach that the new Government should be looking to, to try and ensure that there's a whole-of-government approach to all of these decision-making processes so that we get the decisions made up-front. But I would like to see it done as quickly as possible.

STEVE MANN: Madam Chair, can I add to that?

The CHAIR: Sorry, we are running out of time. Mr Hagarty wants to ask a question.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I am mindful of time. Whether it's a precinct authority or whatever it looks like, has it been done anywhere in the world practically well and has it taken the local community on that journey to go, "Yes, we are happy for density"—

STEVE MANN: Japan.

TOM FORREST: London, associated with the Olympic precinct and the Crossrail precinct—

STEVE MANN: A lot of places.

TOM FORREST: —and the opening up of the old industrial lands and the port centres. New York. There are lots of examples of places we can learn from. None of them will be directly translatable. It's not right to say that we're going to turn Sydney into—

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Have we done it well in Australia anywhere?

STEVE MANN: There are certainly good outcomes, but we need these next-generation cities that are changing in a post-COVID world. They are cities within cities that are very much based on place. That thinking is good, but they've got their own economy going on so they will be very much mixed use. There will be office and residential working closely with lots of community opportunity as well.

TOM FORREST: Mr Hagarty, the planning for the delivery of and the experience of the Sydney Olympic Games was an example of government coming together, taking bold decisions and delivering against a time frame and a budget. That is something slightly self-serving that I was lucky enough to be a part of. I think that's an example of where, when there is a focus and a determination and a common purpose from government—including public servants and both sides of politics, in fact—you can achieve great outcomes.

The CHAIR: Great outcomes that include good planning models and environmental outcomes. Unfortunately, we have run out of time. That was illuminating. Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email you any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions from the Committee. We kindly ask that you return these answers within 14 days. Thank you very much.

TOM FORREST: I don't know if I seek leave or if I just ask your permission, but can I table the Metro Link document from March 2008 that I spoke to earlier in this hearing?

The CHAIR: If you provide it to us, we will consider whether we will make it a public document.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr MATHEW HOUNSELL, Researcher, Transport Research Centre, University of Technology Sydney, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our next witness. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we begin questions?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Yes, Chair. I would like to address some of the questions raised by the Committee from the previous session, hopefully to expedite matters. There are quite a lot of issues that are around transport, especially around governance and outcomes. The primary issue with all of this planning is about what is the Parliament, as representatives of the people, trying to achieve with this investment. It is my understanding that the primary objective for the business case was not to increase speed to Parramatta but to ensure 30-minute travel time to the Badgerys Creek airport.

It was my understanding that the full-service airlines—for example, Qatar, Qantas and all of the major airlines—were not interested in moving to Badgerys Creek airport or moving significant services to Badgerys Creek airport without a 30-minute travel time to the city because the high-margin customers and the high-margin flyers want to be able to get to the city quickly. The majority of people who fly out of Kingsford Smith Airport live in the North Shore and the northern beaches and some of them down in the east in Sutherland. Badgerys Creek airport is not a particularly attractive location for the high-margin customers if it is a particularly long journey. So, 20 minutes to Parramatta is the primary objective to get another 10 minutes on to Badgerys Creek.

I would just like to refer the Committee to the public transport advisory council. This is a statutory body of the New South Wales government. In 1997 they published a light rail strategic plan for New South Wales. That committee hasn't really been meeting over the last 12 years. There has not been a lot of discussions with the general wider community, and the department is kind of a silo. It's not really engaging as strongly as it should. The Department of Planning and the department of transport aren't particularly in sync and there's significant conflict within the system. For example, we were asked by a developer in Rhodes to investigate whether it would be possible to increase the density in Rhodes to support their claims for a higher apartment complex. We looked at the transport plans and everything and came up with an answer and said, "Yes, it is possible to support that, especially if the Metro West is built." The Department of Planning came back and said, "There's no funding commitment for the Metro West. Therefore, we will not support an upzoning. We will only support upzonings out in the north-west."

This is a long-running issue about the fact that the long-term plans for the city aren't developed with the public and they are not socialised with the public. What happens is there is this short-term issue where, government to government, things change and the Department of Planning never knows what's going to actually be built, and things are built without necessarily any consideration for the future. This is a long-term issue. It's throughout all of the governments in Australia and it, unfortunately, is bipartisan. That is the primary focus of it. That leads to various issues.

The other substantial issue is the forecast in the public transport model and the strategic travel model that Transport for NSW uses to inform its planning and passenger forecasts. The assumptions of that model are substantially flawed, and they do tend to lead to substantial underestimates for public transport and overestimates for roads. For example, in the 2018-19 financial year, there was over \$100 million underestimated for the public transport patronage in the long-term master plan. That's a staggering amount. If this financial year continues as the first quarter has, then the patronage will be \$4 million over forecast. That's with all of the work from home, all of the pandemic and other issues and changes in travel. A lot of the planning for this lacks community input. It is using questionable numbers and it means that there is always an issue with people feeling confident in supporting it. Now, whether or not to build something is ultimately a decision for the Parliament, and it is important that we feed into that and make sure that you get the best advice. I do say to the Committee that I am available for the parliamentarians if you have any questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I go to the last part. We have in front of us the document that you provided—the number of rail and bus journeys in comparison to LTTMP. Those are the projections you are talking about in regards to—

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Yes.

The CHAIR: Looking at those, obviously there was the cliff in 2021-22, but the projections actually look very much higher on the graph than the LTTMP. Are you talking about where these natural projections would go?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Yes. The dotted, the dash line—the straight line is the LTTMP projections. The very high 2018 numbers are because patronage was much more above what was expected. The traffic for the vehicles was much lower than that. I didn't provide that.

The CHAIR: Would you expect the next rounds of figures that come out to go back to the trajectory of the 2018 figures?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: The Household Travel Survey—I did look at a lot of the data before attending the Committee. There has been a bit of a change in the pattern of movement. There are substantially less commuting and business trips in the 2022-23 financial year Household Travel Survey. That might be because there is a slowdown in the economy or it might be because there have been changes to the way people move and work. There is definitely a massive drop in patronage during public school holidays—that is clearly a result of people working from home and taking care of their kids rather than finding out-of-school care.

There is definitely an issue with people preferring to work from home. A lot of the office workers I have spoken to have said that it is more compulsion that is forcing them to come into the city. There is definitely an issue with the long-term structure there. But I would also note that, according to the Rail Opal Assignment Model, looking at the data over the last three weeks, there was a significant crowding in the morning peak on the western line—especially on the Cumberland line for people heading to Parramatta, indicating that that is a major destination now—and on the western line at the city, which indicates that patronage is coming back towards peak levels. But that is only in the morning peak and mainly for the services that are arriving just before nine o'clock.

The CHAIR: That Cumberland line—you are talking about the line that runs from Liverpool through Yennora and Guildford?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Yes. Clearly Parramatta is now functioning as a major destination for transport. If there was expansion of metros and light rail around that area, it would be consistent with what is happening with the growth in jobs and the growth in residences. I would also just say that Rhodes is also a major employment area.

The CHAIR: And Silverwater, one might add. We are building the metro between Sydney and Parramatta, but the actual congestion we are seeing on the rail service is between Liverpool and the Parramatta line at the moment?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: There is also congestion to the city. There is a lot of congestion on the other lines going to the city, but there is not as much congestion, of course, as before. But if you are building another east-west link, you are kind of duplicating the existing lines. The Western Express and CBD Relief idea of increasing capacity on that line may cover some of the existing demand, but it is a question about what are the long-term objectives for the State and whether the Parliament is investing in the three cities, seven cities—whichever concept you like—or whether we are focusing again on the CBD. Because, in my professional opinion, the missing links are north-south; they are not east-west.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I guess you are saying that we need more of a master plan between Planning and Transport, looking into the future before we are actually doing these things. All of the people seem to be travelling into Parramatta now for work. Should it be a Sydney-Parramatta link or should it be—and where are those people coming from? Are they coming from the city or are they coming from some of the areas that don't have rail in them, travelling to Parramatta for work?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: I haven't looked at the bus model. The buses to Parramatta are a major source of demand. In fact, most of the T-ways are based on this light rail plan. There are a lot of people travelling into Parramatta. There is a lot of cycling, as well, from Olympic Park and north of the river. There are a lot of people coming from the south in the Liverpool area on the Cumberland line. And a lot of people who come from the west of Sydney, they get off at Parramatta. There is an amount of people who stay on to the city, and there is still quite a demand—and there will always be a demand for Western Sydney to come to the CBD, but there are a lot more businesses now at Parramatta that are major destinations, and also more government departments. With the tramway to the university, if there is some more investment in that university at Rydalmere, then you would expect to see more concession card holders—more students—using the infrastructure around that area to transfer to the tram, which is something that we have seen with the CSC LR, which is really popular. With the north-west metro at the moment, it is a very high percentage of people who are students.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: In regards to those—I'll use the term "undercooked"—patronage numbers, why do you think that is the case? Why do you think those numbers are, in my term, undercooked, and what are the implications for this business case and business cases particularly around future transport projects?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: It is quite technical, but the basic thing is the business—the assumptions of the model are that people don't like to transfer. They also assume that people don't like to wait, and there is a significant undervaluing in the cost or the value of travel time for public transport, especially buses, so that means that the model tends to assume that people won't want to use public transport. When I did an analysis of Rhodes, I found people who were coming—I didn't complete the analysis I wanted to do for you, which is the origin to destination, but there are a lot of people who come from, for example, out in the Campbelltown area and even from down the Illawarra line, who go to Rhodes to work. Rhodes only has about 25,000 jobs. People will transfer to get to jobs. They will transfer to get to destinations.

Arts NSW—when I had a conversation with them, they said that part of the reason they couldn't build up the entertainment in the Western Sydney area as strongly was because there was not enough good public transport in the evening and not enough good lighting, so people didn't feel like they could get home. A lot of trips are now more—there's more recreational trips, so we are not seeing the business cases take that into account. They are focused on commuting. They always undercount because the model has tended to prefer roads. That is why you see 70 per cent of the investment has been in roads since 1986 in New South Wales, so you get the majority of people using cars. If you don't have investment in active transport and public transport, you're just not going to get people using it. Why would you use something that is slower and more inconvenient and a lower priority?

Mr WARREN KIRBY: You made the point that you thought there was a lack of north-south rather than east-west. In your opinion, would the Government be better to prioritise Tallawong to St Marys over the Sydney Metro West from the city to Parramatta?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: The question about which is a priority is a matter for the Parliament, because you are the ones who represent the values of the people.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Of course.

MATHEW HOUNSELL: My higher priority would be Strathfield down to Hurstville, because that's the missing space. Tallawong to St Marys, yes, that is a good link if you connect that with the existing—sorry, under construction to the airport, because then you create an orbital. Tallawong just to Schofields would be a worthy investment. That being said, the current plan for St Marys to Western Sydney airport is missing a station. All of the previous witnesses were correct; there are not enough stations on these metros. They are too suburban, so you don't end up with from St Marys, I have forgotten the name of the suburb next to it—

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Mount Druitt.

MATHEW HOUNSELL: If you were to put a station down near the Great Western Highway you would massively transform that area. But it's about maximising the speed out to the airport. The department does these designs. The Future Transport Strategy is not a bad idea, brought from the previous Government. There are a lot of plans, but there is no investigation with the community to say things like, "What about this station?" To be honest, I didn't even bother talking to the department about it because I knew they wouldn't listen.

I will also, on that matter, just say the Burwood North and Five Dock locations for this metro do indicate that they are using the previous plans from 2008, and all of those plans, all of the assessments about the upzoning and all the rest of it, they are still available. And the Parramatta Road urban renewal plan, which the Legislative Council asked for the papers for, I've reviewed those papers and there were quite a few interesting documents on the potential for increased housing in that corridor in those plans. That is available to the Committee. I think I can get you some copies, if you'd like.

But all of these plans have been done. So, a lot of this planning on the western corridor is available—the Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula, GPOP, planning is all done. The idea of the light rail through Parramatta to Olympic Park to serve increased density, that is all done. So, there is all of this planning that's been done and is available, but it's just not either public or assessed. It's just sitting on a shelf and it's not driving the questions that then allow the Parliament to answer the question, "Which one should we build?", because that's all hidden in the department, and then they hand you this option which says, "Option one, build this; option two, set fire to everything else."

The CHAIR: I have two questions. When you look at those urban planning and growth areas, and they have them in the strategic need and justification plan from the environmental impact statement—the State significant precincts, the collaborative planning areas, the Parramatta Road urban corridor—the majority of that housing is to the west of the actual line and the big bulk of it actually falls into the bit between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. Is that the kind of urban planning that you're talking about?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Yes. One of the big problems with the metro designs in New South Wales is they're not considering the ability to use light rail or buses to support the designs, to spread the load and to allow

people to do multi-modal transfers because, again, the model is focused on value of travel time savings, not on connectivity or accessibility, as Professor Levinson specialises in. So you end up with designs which are, basically, where can we put the housing? They're not focused on how we can create places that work together in a seamless mesh of high-capacity, high-speed metros in combination with street-running buses and trams that then move people to and from the metros.

The Camellia possibility is an option for increasing housing in the area if you put a station and if you combine it with the trams and the buses. Just a simple \$100 million bridge over Duck Creek would really allow you to increase the transport through that area. But that's not considered in the plans because the holistic planning is out of the department's scope. It goes around in circles, this whole problem where we've not got the strategic committees to do this with the community input, and so we end up with questions about where to put the houses. If you look at the western end of the metro, around Westmead, what are you going to do with that?

The CHAIR: There are a lot of questions about where exactly are we building housing uplift around Westmead, given that it has Parramatta Park almost around it, and the hospital precinct and the schools.

MATHEW HOUNSELL: It's also surprisingly high density around there. It's all walk-ups.

The CHAIR: Yes, the houses that are on the back of Mays Hill are five or six storeys. Yes, there are a lot of people questioning that. Going back to your point about Hurstville through to Sydney Olympic Park—and we have looked at this in committee inquiries before—essentially, once you get to the west of King Georges Road, traffic movement starts to be north-south rather than east-west, and you're saying that's the same impression you're getting from transport movements for employment as well?

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Yes. The issue we have is a lot of people in Western Sydney work in Western Sydney. What you see on the Bankstown line, the Yennora branch, is early in the morning all of the movements are actually westward. People go from the Bankstown line heading west into the industrial areas on the Sefton branch. All of the focus on moving professionals to the CBD was important, but it's not where the majority of the work is. And so, you get this question about "Well, are you spending money trying to solve the same old problem?" when what you could actually do to reduce congestion is just stop all of the companies and government departments starting at 9.00 a.m. If you staggered the start times for the government departments, you would probably find that the pressure on Town Hall and other stations alleviates quite a bit.

We don't know what's going to happen with the metro, because that will change how people's movements work, as people start to find that's a more convenient and less-crowded option. But, yes, the north-south is the big missing link. I worked in Macquarie Park for a long time. Everyone who came from the south of the river drove. Some of the people north of the river took the buses, and the rest just drove because there is just no good, fast, reliable—and reliability is a key matter in public transport choice that's not considered in the model—north-south trips.

The CHAIR: Silverwater industrial area was in my electorate and, of course, that congested Parramatta-Silverwater junction is considered one of the worst roads in Australia. I constantly get complaints from businesses about the ability for people to get in and out of that precinct, because they are not coming from the CBD to work in those areas in advanced manufacturing and manufacturing; they are coming from other suburbs.

MATHEW HOUNSELL: This is where bus T-ways are an important means of building short-term benefits. Bus traffic is probably the simplest, cheapest thing that could be done, but it has not been a priority for quite a long time. It's not sexy, so it's not a priority of the Government, the media, and thus it doesn't get done. And let me be clear about this: The department will do what the Minister asks. If the Minister says jump, they go and jump. I have watched them. You ask them, "Why did that happen?", and they say, "Because the Minister said so." So, if you say, "Do this", they will do it.

There's one other thing that you need to consider. Basically, what's happened this year is the global average temperature has exceeded five sigmas, six sigmas above the normal. What that means is—the Australian Powerball is one in 134 million, which is 5.6 sigmas. That's how rare a 5.6 sigma event is. It's like winning the Powerball. This year we have seen 4 to 7 July, 9 to 12 September, 23 and 24 September well above—more unusual than winning the Powerball. What that means is our models on climate change are now wrong. Our models on sea level rise are now wrong.

That raises a big problem for the engineering perspective—as a student of engineering—about sea level rises and whether the 100-year plan for this infrastructure is valid if all of the locations it's going to be in are one metre above sea level. The sea level rise will be at least two—possibly 15 metres, according to the IPCC, in 100 years. So that raises something the department hasn't thought about. But I would also just like to say that sometimes going with a bad plan or a questionable plan is better than stopping and starting again.

The CHAIR: We do have, I note, Parramatta council next on our witness list. I've noted that they've just released a new flood plan in that area. That may be a question we can certainly put to them.

MATHEW HOUNSELL: Their light rail plan is also very good.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions from the Committee. We kindly ask that you return those answers within 14 days if that's okay. If you're having a problem, please contact the Committee staff.

MATHEW HOUNSELL: If any of you have any direct questions about that kind of stuff, the Committee has my email.

The CHAIR: We will probably ask supplementary questions. If you can please provide those documents you talked about, we'll look at the Committee making them public as well.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr KIM WOODBURY, Chief Operating Officer, City of Sydney, affirmed and examined

Councillor CLOVER MOORE, AO, Lord Mayor, City of Sydney, sworn and examined

Ms GAIL CONNOLLY, PSM, Chief Executive Officer, City of Parramatta Council, affirmed and examined

Mr DANIEL CAVALLO, Director, Environment and Planning, Cumberland City Council, sworn and examined

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I welcome our next set of witnesses. Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure today to give evidence. Can you please confirm that you have been issued with the Committee's terms of reference and information about the standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

KIM WOODBURY: Yes.

CLOVER MOORE: Yes.

GAIL CONNOLLY: Yes.

DANIEL CAVALLO: Yes.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Do you have any questions about this information?

KIM WOODBURY: No.

CLOVER MOORE: No.

GAIL CONNOLLY: No.

DANIEL CAVALLO: No.

The CHAIR: Would anyone like to make a short opening statement before we begin questions?

CLOVER MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to provide input into the hearing. The City of Sydney strongly supports the Sydney Metro West. As our submission to this Committee and attachments outline, there are a range of benefits that contribute to a positive business case for the project. However, the city is seriously concerned about the piecemeal approach to planning of the metro since 2017 that has meant it has failed to fully understand the opportunities of metro between Sydney's city centre and Zetland, which has currently 30,000 people who have moved in. We're expecting another 30,000 before 2030—probably 40,000—and we're expecting 22,000 workers in this area. We're really looking at 60,000 to 70,000 people located in this area four kilometres from the CBD.

The Green Square development is 270 hectares. It's Australia's largest urban renewal project, with a development cost of \$22 billion at its completion. By 2036, as I've said, it will have approximately 63,000 to 70,000 residents and 22,000 workers. It's among the highest density in Australia for a renewal area of this size. Along with the master planning, the City of Sydney has been delivering a \$1.8 billion local infrastructure plan for services and facilities as well as funding more than half of the \$140 million 2.5-kilometre stormwater drain, which is primarily the responsibility of the Government. The city has already funded \$700 million to ensure local community infrastructure is in place as residents move in.

However, despite successive New South Wales governments since 1995, which is when it was announced by the former Labor Minister Craig Knowles, governments reaped billions in stamp duty windfall gains but successive governments since 1995 have been slow to meet the State infrastructure responsibilities. Investment in mass transit at a major growth centre in Zetland is long overdue, and it was on the map that Craig Knowles presented when he announced this in 1995. It would help reduce congestion and manage current capacity problems on the heavy rail line. The heavy rail line, of course, was put in by the Coalition Government as a way to get people from the airport to the city, and it excluded the local people initially.

It has since included the local people, but it's having really serious capacity problems, because it was never intended as a major project in the first place. The former Government considered extending the Sydney Metro West to Zetland by 2041 as part of initial plans for stage one of the Metro West. However, this connection to Zetland was shamefully dropped. It's now envisaged as an eastern extension under the New South Wales Government's south-east transport strategy 2022 to 2041. But it can't wait until then. As I said, over 60,000 people will be living in the area without adequate transport, leading to even further capacity problems on the rail line and congestion.

I made it clear to the previous Government that Sydney Metro West continued out to Zetland is essential and should be delivered as soon as possible. I've again raised the urgency of mass transit solutions to Green Square

in recent letters and meetings with the new Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Transport and Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. I welcome the New South Wales Government's independent review interim report into the Sydney Metro project, which recommends consideration of a further eastern extension to Sydney Metro West.

The city's long-term strategic plan, *Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050: Continuing the Vision*, responds to the New South Wales Government's South East Sydney Transport Strategy 2020 and envisages future stations in key locations to better connect current and future innovation, knowledge and employment centres, helping to foster innovation precincts and space for jobs in the future, for all those new industries. Infrastructure like the Sydney Harbour Bridge or Opera House were expensive at the time of construction, and people had their doubts. But leaders must look beyond what is hard in the moment and build what is needed for future communities—in the case of Green Square, for existing communities as well.

For years, the city's worked with developers to preserve Zetland Avenue as a transport corridor, which presents an excellent opportunity for a metro stop. Zetland Avenue is appropriately sized to fit a metro station, on an axis with a useful alignment eastwards to Randwick and beyond. In August the City of Sydney unanimously resolved to work with the New South Wales Government to identify appropriate land and construction area, including consideration of leases, stratum land sales and public domain upgrades to reduce the cost of delivering a metro station at Zetland for the New South Wales Government. I urge this Committee to address the significant transport infrastructure deficit at Green Square by recommending that Sydney Metro West is extended eastwards to Zetland as soon as possible. I thank you for the opportunity to address you.

The CHAIR: What date did you say you began consultations, with the Government on the Zetland—

CLOVER MOORE: For many years, actually, we've consulted with the Government.

The CHAIR: I thought you gave a more recent date.

CLOVER MOORE: We developed our policy, our strategy in line with the Government's strategy. You wanted the date of the council resolution? It was in August.

GAIL CONNOLLY: I will take it as read that you've all seen the council's submission, so just want to draw the Committee's attention, if I could, to the council's recommendations. There are three, and they are short and sharp. We are requesting that the New South Wales Government commit to and fund the delivery of the Sydney Metro West project as a central plank to facilitating increased housing supply in metropolitan Sydney. We also ask that the Government include in any revised business case a new station at Camellia and Newington—that is a council resolution—and, at a minimum, futureproof their provision.

Thirdly we request—this is a request for greater bureaucracy; I can't believe I'm saying it—to create a single authority or department to manage all aspects of planning and delivery of the metro network, from corridor identification and protection, land use planning, land acquisition, design and construction, property development along the corridor, and place making. That is in particular in response to the numerous agencies that have control or their fingers in the metro pie, which cover everything at the moment from land acquisition through to planning and construction and delivery. That's council's submission in a nutshell, and we'd urge the Committee to consider those recommendations from council and have regard to them in your final report.

DANIEL CAVALLO: Council's considered the matter and provided an endorsed submission to the Committee, and I know that's been presented to the Committee members. Cumberland Council's supportive of Metro West. It's an important aspect, not just to support planning around the housing supply at Westmead, of which council has landholding for the metro station, but it will also provide capacity relief over time on eastern parts of the LGA on the main west line, particularly around Lidcombe, Auburn and Granville. Having these two systems will help allow council to ensure that their residents can move now and in the future and also support movements of workers into and out of the area.

Around Westmead, council is undertaking advanced planning. We're responding to the place strategy that the State Government's adopted. We've done initial consultation with the community, last year, around how to increase housing around Westmead South, and we've got further consultation planned later this year, in providing that additional capacity. Council believes that that work is really important to support housing growth in Cumberland but also making sure that any housing is actually linked to good infrastructure, both what's there now and what's planned in the future.

The other aspect I want to raise from council's submission is the importance of having an integrated approach around metro lines, around housing, around place making and also around the transport network perspective. For example, Sydney Olympic Park, which is in Parramatta Council's LGA, in terms of the station, is in close proximity to the Cumberland boundary, and there's opportunities to strengthen the connections between

Lidcombe and Sydney Olympic Park to provide different ways of that community to move around and also take the pressure off those main east-west routes.

We've got Pippita Rail Trail. That's under planning. We've got Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2. That stops at Olympic Park, but council's resolved its interest in advocating for an extension to Lidcombe. There's also the importance of making sure there's sufficient commuter car parking and the like. We also see the opportunity of Silverwater being a potential station to be considered as part of Sydney Metro West. While we know that the alignment's outside of council's boundary, we think that that integrated network around walking and cycling, bus access, commuter car parking, looking at those missing north-south connections to get to Silverwater, will actually enable Cumberland residents to take further advantage of Sydney Metro West. We look forward to answering your questions of the Committee today. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much to all of you for attending today. In the City of Sydney's submission—this is probably a question to everybody—it says there was insufficient focus on stations, including the two to five kilometres of both Parramatta and the City of Sydney. Obviously, this is the issue, particularly from the Parramatta to Sydney Olympic Park stretch, where there are no stations. What has been the response of Government about why those stations haven't been provided? Obviously, Pymont is in now, it wasn't in initially.

KIM WOODBURY: In the city's submission, we actually outlined that, early on in the decision-making by the New South Wales Government there was a strong emphasis on speed at the expense of basic connectivity and access and patronage. We actually disagree with that. We believe you should be trying to maximise the patronage. In that way, you maximise the benefits from the project. While we accept that there's additional cost, you really need to maximise the benefits. As the Lord Mayor has just said, the Harbour Bridge, when it was built, wasn't catering for the population at that time; it was catering for future populations and the future economy. Particularly connecting Parramatta to the city centre and assisting with planning implementation, which has been mentioned by the other councils, to allow for more jobs and for more residential, to allow for our increasing population—boosting productivity is a key component of all centres, and heavy rail is key to that.

The agglomeration benefits that you actually get from those higher densities, that provides further jobs and further activity, further business—and the capacity of the T2 line, the western line, basically, as you know, is beyond capacity prior to COVID, and it will get back to that. The alternates to not providing metro—the Government needs to look at what's your plan for that, because the alternate plans will be much more expensive, and you will have to amplify buses. You won't be able to amplify the existing heavy rail to any great extent. That's been looked at. Or you'll have to have some other transport solution. So I think you need to take it into account when you're actually considering the review of Metro West. In short, the city believes that more stations and more patronage will give you more benefits, and therefore we support those additional stations, as we lobbied to get Pymont onto the agenda, which was actually accepted by the previous Government.

CLOVER MOORE: And huge benefits for the community, for the people living in those areas that have access to the city and movement. It makes an enormous difference to their lives.

GAIL CONNOLLY: The City of Parramatta's position is that the original business case and modelling that was done for the original project didn't include stations between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta because, as Mr Woodbury has said, it was around speed, rather than anything else. A few things have changed since that original business case. It was pre-COVID. The way people move between Parramatta and the CBD has changed significantly. No-one's interested in the economic benefit of being able to go from Parramatta to the CBD in 20 minutes in the way that they were pre-COVID. So our thinking in the city at the moment and when we talk to our business stakeholders is that people are interested in connectivity within Parramatta. Yes, it's important to still be able to travel to the city quickly, but that whole emphasis on 20 minutes has now disappeared. The emphasis has shifted from speed to connectivity between stations and within communities, rather than between Parramatta and Sydney.

So, whilst it is still important, there needs to be a balance between creating communities around metro stations between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta. That has to have the larger focus, rather than the focus just on speed. It would be interesting to ask the Property Council—I haven't—what their view is on any potential loss of productivity due to a loss of speed in that travel time between the CBD and Parramatta and vice versa, and whether they think that it would be the same as what was estimated before COVID. The city hasn't done a lot of work in that area, but our preliminary work shows that the nature of travel between Parramatta and the city has changed, and greater benefits would now be obtained by providing more stations between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta to allow communities within Parramatta and between Olympic Park and Parramatta to connect, quickly, rather than the focus on shifting a workforce from Parramatta to the CBD. Because all of that has changed in the last two to three years.

The council's resolved position is a request for a station at Camellia and a station at Newington. But the larger position is that we feel that the Government is looking at housing supply centred around bubbles around these stations. Our view is that that is incorrect. We should be looking at the entire corridor from Sydney Olympic Park through to Parramatta, and, in particular, between Sydney Olympic Park and Camellia, and looking at that as the future housing corridor rather than just bubbles around the stations. That needs to be futureproofed now. Our submission talks about identifying the station locations, at least providing the station boxes, and then coming back if you have to in a few years' time to fit out those stations once you have that development along the entire corridor—not just development around Camellia station or a potential station at Newington, but along the entire corridor. We look at it as a peninsula, rather than a couple of stops.

The CHAIR: Obviously at Green Square, where there is tremendous pressure on the trains, particularly around the eight to nine o'clock time frame, and at Wollri Creek—both stations were billed as part of the airport line with large uplift. How does the uplift around Camellia and the Parramatta Road precinct compare with those? Have you actually analysed those kinds of precincts that had uplift, and that had stations built as part of that uplift?

GAIL CONNOLLY: The Department of Planning is working on a master plan at the moment around Camellia for one station and 10,000 dwellings. I would say it is not particularly evolved. At the moment it is a series of 50-storey towers along James Ruse Drive, which isn't the best solution. Once again, I think the department is looking at it incorrectly. They are looking at precincts around stations to uplift, similar to what was done at Wollri Creek, for example, rather than extending the growth along the entire corridor. So, yes, we have had a look at the uplift around Wollri Creek. In the old days it was done around Chatswood, for example, with the heavy rail. There is potential to look at each station as its own individual new town centre and just do the uplift around that, but our preference is that the entire corridor is looked at and zoned, and that density can be spread along the corridor with a concentration around stations.

The CHAIR: Which has already been identified as in need of an upgrade anyway.

GAIL CONNOLLY: Correct.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: You spoke about potentially having some authority to coordinate that area—Transport and Planning. Is it just for that corridor you are speaking about or along the entire metro line?

GAIL CONNOLLY: The entire metro line. Because at the moment, if a council or any other entity wants to talk about anything on or near a metro line, depending on what the issue is, you go to Transport, you go to Planning, you go to the metro authority, or you go to the land acquisition authority within Planning. We made a submission to Mr Mrdak's review and this was an issue that we raised there, that there are too many fingers in the pie. If you look at what other cities around the world do—let's say advanced cities when it comes to transport and integrated transport and land use planning—they have one authority that does it all. It is very hard to do business—and we are a council; we are used to bureaucracy.

I don't often feel sorry for developers, but I do when they have to deal with the metro authority because depending on what your issue is, whether it is a planning proposal or whether it just an infrastructure problem, you have to talk to several entities, and get a range of concurrences and a range of approvals and multiple touchpoints to go in. It is a delay in investment; it is a delay in planning approval et cetera. The creation of a single authority that has that whole range of powers and that survives successive terms of government—it should be a legislated authority that is around for future years, not just the current three- or four-year cycle, and its sole purpose is to design and protect corridors, plan the construction, plan the delivery and make sure that you do the place making at the end. That has to be part of the design as it is going, and you have to have authority and a responsibility to do the place making at the end of it, so you don't just get your uplift and walk away.

Who wants to deal with 10 entities? I have worked in local government and State government. I led the delivery of the original metropolitan plan in 2005, and just the production of that one document required consultation with 63 government agencies. Nobody wants to go through that again. We are advocating for a single source of truth in this, a single point of contact, and an authority under legislation that has all of those powers—planning powers, land acquisition powers, construction and delivery, tendering, whatever it needs to get on. It is a vital piece of transport infrastructure and we need to be looking at the next 100 years, not just the next five.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: That is consistent with the earlier evidence we got from the Urban Taskforce and the UDIA. When they gave that evidence, I had assumed that councils would be reluctant to give up some of their planning powers, so that is very courageous of you. I would like to hear from the other two councils about whether they have a view on that.

KIM WOODBURY: Yes. Certainly from the City of Sydney's point of view, we support part of that, but not all of it—certain bits you've pointed out. The planning—maybe it is a different situation we are in because we have already had extensive LEP reviews of Green Square over many years since it was first announced, as the

Lord Mayor said, in the nineties. We strongly believe that the City of Sydney should keep its planning powers because of the nature of Pyrmont, which we currently have, or most of Pyrmont, and Green Square. It is probably because it is a more mature kind of development, whereas the situation that Parramatta has is basically a total rezoning of lands and everything else. It is early days for the land use development there. But we do support having an authority that has carriage of all the other things required to actually develop up both transport and also the integration with all other government services.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: And Cumberland?

DANIEL CAVALLO: I think the integration is really important as an authority, similar to what Gail said. With Westmead, you have council boundaries as well as agency boundaries, and the experience we have had with Westmead and metro is that anything beyond the station box is Transport. Transport has a different pace and different rhythm in how they want to deal with the issues. I think in these key locations, having a centralised authority that can deal with it and can work with councils collaboratively is really important. I think around the planning powers, it depends on the stage of the cycle. For Westmead, we are fairly advanced in the planning.

City of Sydney has had their views and Parramatta has had their views, but I think there are lots of sites across Sydney where the planning hasn't happened and there is an opportunity for that to occur. But I think it is really important what council's role is and how they can work with that authority, because if there is not that clear delineation, it makes it difficult to get community support, and it makes it difficult to move forward on what you want to do. But I think a centralised authority to deliver the place, deliver the transport outcomes and look at how they can move planning forward is really important.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: I have a question, mostly for Ms Connolly. You made the point about the changing nature of people's travel and attributed that to COVID. Is it possible, because of the growth Parramatta has had over the past few years, particularly in a commercial sense, that it is gaining its own gravity—more than a change in people's behaviour from COVID? Is that something that is a contributing factor as well, in your opinion?

GAIL CONNOLLY: I think it is both. I think there is both a behavioural change that has come about as a result of COVID, and also the emergence of Parramatta as a global city. For many years a lot of State Government planning documents referred to Parramatta as the second CBD. We say that we're no longer the city's second CBD, we are Western Sydney's global city. That has attracted a lot of business and investor confidence in the CBD. We have a very strong commercial core which consists pretty much entirely of commercial office towers. They are mostly full. There is a desire by multinational companies to be located in Parramatta.

There is a strong local workforce that is emerging, and we are continuing to get everything from the ABC relocating to Parramatta to other multinational companies such as the Commonwealth Bank and people like that. It is a combination of the attractiveness of Parramatta as a global city located in Western Sydney and also the behavioural change that came about as a result of COVID. The point I was making was that the work that was done originally on stopping times, travel distance and economic benefits of it being 20 minutes from Parramatta to the CBD is, in my view, massively out of date and should be looked at again, because it is no longer about travel times to the city.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: I note that everybody is advocating for, and just about everybody on my list today has advocated today for, the need for more stations. There has been a lot of talk about residential around those stations. There has been little talk about stations that are facilitating people directly into workplaces. I think of places like Silverwater that have a high density of work and the changing nature that you've noticed through to Parramatta, with the increase in commercial developments and business. Is there a case to have other stations more closely aligned to business centres as well as residential?

GAIL CONNOLLY: Absolutely there is, and that would be the case for Silverwater, although the Government needs to be careful. Silverwater is an extremely important industrial space with employment lands, and you need to be careful that that primary purpose is protected from a town planning point of view. It's critical for employment. There's also the opportunity to provide other employment around the other stations. But let's be realistic: The main aim of that game will be housing supply rather than jobs—housing targets over job targets. But just because that's the main focus doesn't mean you won't have the ability to provide capacity for employment around those stations as well.

My view on the stations is that you're building a piece of infrastructure that has a life of around 120 years at least. Let's not look back in 100 years and say, "Jeez, we should have built those two stations at Camellia and Newington. If only we'd delayed it by two years and built two extra stations, we could have had all of this extra growth—jobs and housing." Nobody will be looking back in 100 years and saying, "It was a good thing we didn't build those stations." That's where we're at. Yes, there would be some delays and extra costs right now—maybe

a couple of billion dollars and two years. But in 120 years' time, no-one is going to be looking back and saying that was the wrong thing to do.

The CHAIR: I assume the City of Sydney council would have the same view about Zetland—that you don't want to look back and say you should have done it.

CLOVER MOORE: I agree with what Ms Connolly is saying. The transport should be about a service: moving people, both for work and for where they live. It's absolutely critical. It's what has been missing in Sydney. It's critical in Green Square, and it's long overdue. But I agree that those other stations should also be going in and providing a really good service right across the metropolitan area.

KIM WOODBURY: The question, as I mentioned earlier, is what's the alternative? If you don't put those in, you're going to have the growth and you're going to have to provide something else. And it's going to be a poor outcome. You can't just look at it as a cost saving because you have to look at the alternative.

CLOVER MOORE: You have to look long term and have some vision and courage.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: You might not be able to answer my question but, on the rail lines that are there at the moment, how much freight gets moved along those lines?

CLOVER MOORE: Who are you directing that question to?

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: Anybody. The reason that I asked is we were talking about how you couldn't amplify the rail that's there at the moment. I'm just curious as to how much freight goes on that line.

The CHAIR: That's the Western Line. There are people who I can see sitting up the back who might or Daniel might—

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I'll wait for it. That's what pushed me in that direction to ask how much is being used by freight at the moment.

DANIEL CAVALLO: On the main west line, there is an element that is shared by freight up to Strathfield, and that's co-located with a passenger service. But the corridor is pretty constrained, so in terms of adding tracks, it would be a lot of work, effort and planning to get it right and probably a fair bit of disruption if you needed to amplify or segregate. The understanding of Sydney Metro West was to provide that relief of the passenger service, which would mean over time you could still maintain your freight movements outside the peak but also make sure there's capacity for growth on those existing stations. I know that many of those stations already have mixed use development and already have fairly large buildings and more planned on there, so we need to make sure we're planning for the existing line but also for the new lines, for that growth.

The CHAIR: There is a separate freight line that runs out the back of Rookwood.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I just wondered whether the freight was removed.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: This question is to the City of Sydney. On your proposal to extend the line through the south-west to Zetland, we heard from previous witnesses that when you look at patronage on the network, the pressure is effectively around Western Sydney. Give me the elevator pitch as to why, with the limited amount of resources and money governments have, an extension to Zetland would trump maybe easing pressure in the western suburbs, where it appears the capacity constraints are.

CLOVER MOORE: Green Square was an area that was set aside by the former Labor Minister Craig Knowles. It was the major industrial area of Sydney at the time, and it was to become the major urban renewal area of Australia. That work has been happening now for the last two decades, and we already have 30,000 to 40,000 people moving in. We'll have, as I said, 60,000 to 70,000 there by 2036. We envisaged that there'll be 22,000 workers also there. It's four kilometres from the CBD, and you wouldn't even want to think about people using cars in terms of congestion and emissions and accelerating climate change. So people living and working in that area should only be using public transport. As I said, the rail line that went in as part of linking the airport to the city is at capacity now, and as there's more and more congestion in the area, and more and more people needing to have that movement, we will need that station there.

Also, looking at future economic activity around Tech Central, being able to link up Green Square, where all of those people are living, with those new industries that are going to be happening in coming decades, and then being able to link up with Sydney University and New South Wales university, all on transport, is what global cities need to do. It's not only about the present, but it's about the future. It's about not only amenity for people living at the highest densities in the country, but it's also about the economic future of the City of Sydney, which is worth 22 per cent of the State's economy and 9 per cent of the national economy—the activity that happens in the CBD.

The CHAIR: I want to ask Daniel a question on the Westmead uplift. Westmead station is very confined by Parramatta Park, Mays Hill—which is Parramatta Park—the hospital site and a school. People will put this question to me: When you're talking about uplift into Westmead, where is this uplift going? I can only think that it goes behinds Mays Hill on the residential lands there, which are not close to the station. They're further back. Would that be correct?

DANIEL CAVALLO: There are a couple of locations where the uplift is proposed. We have Hawkesbury Road, which traverses the Westmead South precinct. We have the metro station box at the moment, which will become a development site in the future.

The CHAIR: Sorry, that's the one that is co-located with Westmead station?

DANIEL CAVALLO: That's right, yes. Then to the west of Hawkesbury Road, between the school and the rail line, there's a section there where we're proposing growth as well, which is within walking distance of the metro but is currently low density and has the potential to have high density in there. Away from that immediate area, we are looking at whether there's scope for medium density development in some of that area, but we're also protecting some of the areas that are identified as local character, particularly around the history of public housing development and subdivisions. So, there are particular areas where we can do development; they're very focused. But we want to make sure that we get the balance right, because we don't want to impact on Parramatta Park but we want to make sure that any growth is located as close as possible to jobs, education, health and transport.

The CHAIR: Has the Government explained to you, for the metro that goes to Westmead—for example, Silverwater, where there is some residential and large industrial sites and it's very closely located also to the Parramatta urban redevelopment—why the argument is put forward that you couldn't do uplift at Silverwater but you could at Westmead?

DANIEL CAVALLO: Our understanding of the work with Parramatta Road is that the section of Parramatta Road around Auburn and Silverwater was really about maintaining that employment and any industrial activity. The intent of the corridor was to get the mix of housing and jobs, and the identification of Parramatta Road was really about the jobs component. The intent of government with its strategies was to make sure that that land was retained. As Gail has mentioned, there's always a risk from a town planning perspective that if you do put stations, there can be pressure for residential development at the expense of employment or industrial development.

The CHAIR: I am just saying that there is residential there that is not unlike the residential you're talking about in Westmead.

DANIEL CAVALLO: Yes.

The CHAIR: It falls in Parramatta council areas more so.

DANIEL CAVALLO: That's right.

The CHAIR: But there are significant blocks of residential there.

DANIEL CAVALLO: Yes. I think it goes down to what the other speakers have said about the original business case. It was really about speed and about having that 20-minute time between Parramatta and the CBD. In the work of government at the time in that business case, they have made that decision about speed, and that's limited the number of locations that are there.

GAIL CONNOLLY: Madam Chair, if I could add to Daniel's evidence, we are working closely the Department of Planning now on the North Parramatta area, which has significant uplift and is being planned for a significant number of dwellings. That is not very far away from the Westmead precinct and also connected by the light rail. I am sure the Department of Planning will be able to give evidence on this, but they are about to—we understand in February next year—put on exhibition the master plan, the precinct plan, for all of North Parramatta.

The CHAIR: Are you talking about the Cumberland Hospital Precinct?

GAIL CONNOLLY: Correct—which feeds directly into Westmead via a couple of light rail stops, so you could easily travel from North Parramatta to the Westmead metro stop within a matter of minutes and do a trip change there and connect if you had to. In terms of identifying where immediate uplift around the Westmead station could go, yes, there is some possibility in the Cumberland area and also in Parramatta, but the North Parramatta area, directly north of Westmead, is about to be upzoned significantly.

The CHAIR: I will not go into the freight issues of the Cumberland Hospital site, but the hospital has been in the process of closing down and has the light rail site going straight through the middle of the precinct.

GAIL CONNOLLY: I think it would be helpful to the Committee to obtain some evidence from Planning about the dwelling numbers there, because they are significant, and they will affect the business case for the Westmead station. They are significant.

The CHAIR: But they rely on getting a light rail to the station, yes?

GAIL CONNOLLY: Yes, and the light rail route and the stations are already built in that part of the world.

The CHAIR: Similar to Carter Street, perhaps, which has 15,000 on half a square kilometre precinct.

GAIL CONNOLLY: Correct.

The CHAIR: The other question I wanted to ask is Parramatta Road and Silverwater Road has been voted the worst road and the most congested in Australia. Certainly, I get complaints from businesses like Tooheys brewery, which has a \$1 billion turnover every year, on the impossibility of getting their trucks in there. I get the same complaints about Silverwater of getting staff in there. What has been the foreshadowing by the councils to government on these issues around when road congestion was considered, supposedly, as part of the business case? What has been the response on that congestion, in particular that part of the road? They talk about bus congestion further up on Victoria and Parramatta Road, but was the issue of Silverwater and Parramatta Road and how important that is to business actually considered? Do you know?

DANIEL CAVALLO: My understanding is that they've looked at the traffic capacity on Parramatta Road and the ability for growth in the context of what's there now and what could happen in the future. We all know it's a constrained area and we all know that it provides major north-south and east-west connectivity, which is why it's very well used. But a lot of the work that State government has done is around their own traffic modelling to understand what could be accommodated, and from that that's informed what councils may consider through the Parramatta Road strategy. So, there has been some consideration, but it's probably something for the State to answer about the specifics of that.

The CHAIR: But you didn't ask them whether they considered that as part of the Metro West? Obviously their own reports, when they put the tolls back onto the M4, showed that Parramatta Road in that area was already at capacity and that there would be a 20 per cent increase on a road that was already at capacity because of the tolling. We all know the problems with the Church Street exit from the M4. So you don't know whether that was considered?

DANIEL CAVALLO: I'm not aware.

GAIL CONNOLLY: In terms of the City of Parramatta, prior to Parramatta I was the CEO at Georges River and we worked collaboratively with Parramatta to produce a document that we called *River Rail*. The previous speaker who gave evidence talked about that north-south connection. One of the things that would alleviate congestion on those roads, in particular that north-south transport corridor—and King Georges Road is one of the most congested in the city—is the construction of what we characterise as the "river rail", which is the railway line that connects Kogarah, Hurstville and then north-south to Parramatta. Whilst we say it should not replace the metro, it should be—

The CHAIR: It should complement it.

GAIL CONNOLLY: It should complement it. And without that metro route connecting those significant strategic centres of Kogarah and Hurstville and then Parramatta, the roads will continue to be at a level of service of failure. I would urge the Committee to obtain a copy of the *River Rail* report. I think Georges River Council published it in, I am going to say, around 2021. It is a document that is endorsed by both councils. It identifies a future route for metro. It connects the strategic centres of Kogarah and Hurstville and Parramatta together. It obviously has flow-on benefits arising from Kogarah's proximity to Sydney Airport. It does take, potentially, a load off the Kogarah passenger route, which is also a combined rail freight route down to the South Coast. That is a shared passenger and freight railway line, and all that freight coming out of the airport pops straight onto the Kogarah line. If you can alleviate that congestion by supplementing it with a metro, that would have a knock-on effect of benefits to the suburban rail system as well as the freight system.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: This question is to Mr Cavallo. When you talk about significant uplift at Westmead, what number are you talking about? Is that 50,000 people?

DANIEL CAVALLO: It's much smaller than that. We are talking low thousands, but we're finalising the planning work to confirm what that looks like because we have to balance the capacity of the transport network in terms of the road network and Great Western Highway as well as the available land. We will confirm that in

due course and that information will be shared with the community later this year. But it's in the low thousands; it's not to the scale that you're talking about.

The CHAIR: It's not Green Square.

DANIEL CAVALLO: No, it's not.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Or Tallawong.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions from the Committee. We kindly ask that you return those answers within 14 days. Obviously, if you have any problems, please contact the Committee staff.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

Mr RICK GRAF, CLA representative, Camellia Landowners Alliance, affirmed and examined

Mr ROYDON NG, Restore Inner West Line, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure today to give evidence. Can you confirm that you have been issued with the Committee's terms of reference and information about standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

ROYDON NG: Yes.

RICK GRAF: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions about this information?

RICK GRAF: No.

ROYDON NG: No.

The CHAIR: Would anyone like to start with an opening statement?

RICK GRAF: I am the convenor of the Camellia Landowners Alliance, which is a collective of the major landowners covering the majority of the Camellia town centre. The alliance is passionately supportive of much-needed transport infrastructure for Sydney and recognises the overarching benefits. Metro West's strategic importance is as a once-in-a-century city-defining infrastructure project. We submit that the current alignment should be amended to include a metro station at Camellia to help contribute to the Government's housing and employment objectives. The Sydney Olympic Park to Parramatta corridor is a distance of over seven kilometres. The absence of metro stations along this corridor under the current alignment is a missed opportunity to make a positive economic contribution to accommodating growth within the central city.

The metro station at Camellia has been supported by detailed submissions at every step in the process to date. It enjoys strong support from the lord mayor and the City of Parramatta, the local State member, all industry associations and all major landowners within the precinct and the adjacent Western Sydney University campus. We are concerned that there has not been adequate, detailed or genuine collaboration with the stakeholders about the benefits of the Camellia station. The comprehensive and independent review into the Sydney Metro project announced by the Minns Government provides an opportunity to rectify this situation and realise the benefits for the growth of the Central River City.

The metro station located at, or in close proximity to, the town centre provides the catalyst for major urban renewal of an underutilised former industrial site. Importantly, the lack of adjacent residents limits the potential for objections to density. Consequently, it provides scope a rezoning and a significant uplift in employment and housing supply within the Camellia town centre to support future growth and deliver much-needed housing in the centre of metropolitan Sydney. From detailed investigation by alliance members' engineering consultants, it is estimated that a minimal 100 metres of additional tunnelling would enable the adjustment of the proposed Metro West route from the south under Rosehill racecourse to the north-west corner adjacent to the proposed town centre.

This minor realignment would enable a station at Camellia, providing an economic catalyst for the landowners' remediation of contaminated land and deliver benefits that are consistent with Government objectives, including transport connectivity and placemaking; residential development for up to 50,000 people in the centre of global Sydney; mixed-use development with education and high-value jobs; potential expansion of the Western Sydney University campus in the town centre to allow an additional 5,000 students; significant employment of up to 25,000 jobs; and, importantly, allow the long-term expansion of the Parramatta CBD land footprint as Sydney's second global CBD, allowing Westmead-Parramatta CBD and Camellia to be interconnected with metro, creating a three-minute central city superhub for economic growth.

The alliance members also propose to contribute to the cost of the station box and other much-needed access infrastructure. In light of the above, we submit that further detailed consultation is required with industry stakeholders prior to the final route alignment being confirmed. In summary, Sydney has one chance to get this right. The current alignment will give no opportunity for a future Camellia station in a logical location. The alliance remains committed to working with government, to providing significant capital investment and to enabling infrastructure to support this once in a lifetime project.

ROYDON NG: Good morning, Chair, Ms Voltz, and fellow Committee members. It is interesting to read the Sydney Metro West Environmental Impact Statement's Responses to Submissions indicates Silverwater or Newington being unsuitable for a metro station, largely citing the existing residential density and industrial zonings. From my understanding of the local residents in the area, including the Newington Neighbourhood

Association—I will table one of their web pages—they are strongly in favour of an additional metro station, yet have been denied this in the current project. On the other hand, the Sydenham to Bankstown community opposes Metro Southwest on the basis that it will impact existing densities and zonings but are having that project imposed on them, despite the 2019 parliamentary inquiry—which I will table—finding that the Sydenham to Bankstown metro lacks merit.

In 2019, then Transport Minister Andrew Constance said that there was no need for a Silverwater metro station, claiming that it would only service a jail. It's quite disappointing that families who have chosen to call Silverwater or Newington home, and that are eager for public transport as an alternative to toll roads, have been labelled as criminals. A Metro West station at Silverwater will significantly reduce travel times for local residents commuting to Sydney and also reduce the number of people driving to Lidcombe station, thus reducing traffic impact on the Cumberland council area as well. Rezoning of some of the industrial areas around Silverwater for transit-oriented development for Metro West is consistent with conventional urban planning practices. I table a 2017 paper from Patrick Fensham, principal and partner at SGS Economics and Planning, titled *Ensuring a liveability dividend from growth: A new Urban Renewal Compact*.

I draw the attention of the Committee to a letter to Transport for NSW by four former Sydney rail executives, including Ron Christie, who ran the transport for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. The other authors are Bob O'Loughlin, Dick Day and John Brew. They highlight that metro is best when it supplements existing Sydney Trains heavy rail. It also notes that the Sydenham to Bankstown Metro reduces reliability and flexibility, including the Western Line, and disadvantages 19,000 commuters west of Bankstown. Ultimately, were some of the funding for Sydney Metro Southwest invested in Sydney Trains and a western metro to supplement the T1 Western Line, much better outcomes for the long-term future could be achieved. I table that letter to the inquiry as well.

In regard to the Sydney Metro Review, the Metro West tunnel-boring machines haven't been paused and have continued their way through the previously approved trajectory through to Five Dock and whatnot, thus removing any opportunity for consideration of a Leichardt or Lilyfield metro station to interchange with the Inner West Light Rail. The process to approve a modification to a major project inherited by a government is quite slow and this needs to change. A change that makes sense in terms of engineering, that has public support and that is relatively simple for contractors to execute with some additional funding could take the form of an executive order with approval of Cabinet and Treasury to implement it. We need some of these reforms otherwise there is a real question mark on how effective even a final report in favour of new stations would be from this inquiry if the tunnelling just keeps going, going and going.

Reform is also needed to manage scope creep in major projects to make it more efficient to enable more stations such as at Silverwater. But we also need some reform, perhaps of the Transport Administration Act, to stop excessive scope creep such as Sydney Metro previously having made plans to close the Olympic Park line and stations west of Bankstown—I table this document to the Committee—which are outside of approved metro corridors. I hope I haven't offended Transport for NSW for asking for more stations as I did get an unkind letter restricting my engagement with Transport for NSW for asking for more stations previously. Ultimately, let's ensure our money brings new rail connections to those communities who need them and doesn't lead to the downgrading of rail services elsewhere.

The CHAIR: Rick, I know you've spoken about the capacity to move the alignment by 100 metres or so to get another station, but looking at the current alignment of the tunnelling from Parramatta to Sydney Olympic Park, from the way I look at it, it runs to the south of the Hassall Street—I forget what the avenue is called on the other side—and James Ruse Drive and comes out at the Australian Turf Club in front of the Rosehill racecourse. If the tunnel continues underneath the racecourse, based on your submission, which land does it come at out on the other side? Is it the Transport for NSW land or the trust company on the other side of the racecourse?

RICK GRAF: The alignment at the moment runs under the grandstand at Rosehill racecourse. A very minor, slow deviation—a minor curve—would create an additional 100 metres of tunnelling and no more than that, but it would bring it up in the north-west corner of the Rosehill racecourse car park adjacent to Grand Avenue, which is where the town centre would be.

The CHAIR: That's if we realign. I'm asking where it comes out currently on the eastern side of the racecourse under the current alignment.

RICK GRAF: On the eastern side of the racecourse, it doesn't come out. It goes under the grandstand and heads to Silverwater and Sydney Olympic Park.

The CHAIR: Yes, I understand that. But there are properties on the other side to the east that are owned by the trust company and Shell, James Hardie and Transport for NSW. You don't know whose land it is underneath on the other side?

RICK GRAF: I can give you a diagram, which shows all of the landownership for the entire 350 hectares of Camellia.

The CHAIR: Yes, which we've got in your submission. If I draw a line from where it goes under the grandstand and follow that imaginary line, whose land would it be going under on the eastern side? Would it be Transport for NSW, the trust company or James Hardie?

RICK GRAF: Yes, it'd run under the Transport for NSW land and the Shell-Viva Energy land.

The CHAIR: So, it basically comes out kind of—it must go in a very straight line then, once it goes under the grandstand.

RICK GRAF: Yes, it's very much continuing that corridor.

The CHAIR: So, there would be an option if you wanted to use the existing corridor to put a station either on the western side of the racecourse where it crosses James Ruse Drive—

RICK GRAF: Yes

The CHAIR: —or on the Transport for NSW land on the eastern side of the racecourse?

RICK GRAF: It really wouldn't be possible there. That's the light rail stabling yard. That's Transport's land and that would not be in the town centre. That would be in part of the industrial land, the employment lands. In the town centre that's been designated under the place strategy that the Department of Planning has been developing over the last seven or eight years, it's in the north-west corner of the Camellia lands. It's an area of about 35 to 38 hectares of the 350 hectares so it preserves all of the industrial employment lands towards the Viva Energy site, which will continue to require a blast zone of exclusion around it for residential purposes because it will continue to store flammables for many decades to come. So, the positioning of the town centre towards the north-west corner allows it to intersect with the Parramatta Light Rail stage one line and the Parramatta Light Rail stage two line and provide that interchange pretty close to the university, and feed the turf club for mass events as well.

The CHAIR: If we did the diversion you're talking about, would it be on the—I'm looking at your diagram—Tuck Hing Ho land or the land further to the north of that, the Abacus Property?

RICK GRAF: No, it would be in the corner of the turf club car park land.

The CHAIR: Right, so it would still be—

RICK GRAF: On the southern side of Grand Avenue and adjacent to Grand Avenue. It would have a pedestrian tunnel linking across under Grand Avenue.

The CHAIR: But it does cross James Ruse Drive to that southern corner anyway on the current alignment, doesn't it?

RICK GRAF: It cuts under James Ruse Drive another 120 or 130 metres to the south.

The CHAIR: In front of the grandstand? So just down near the Might and Power entrance further down?

RICK GRAF: Yes. It literally goes under the middle of the grandstand and is slowly curving to the north as it crosses James Ruse Drive.

The CHAIR: So, it comes round and then it goes—so your preference would be the southern corner of the racecourse?

RICK GRAF: Yes, and we have made previous unsolicited proposals to that effect and—

The CHAIR: Had they come back with a costing on what it would be to do that diversion?

RICK GRAF: The diversion itself would be a marginal cost of about \$20 million because it's really not—there's no additional infrastructure. It's a minor increase in the length of the tunnel. The major cost would be about half a billion dollars for the underground station as it is for most of the others. The Camellia landowners have all committed to contributing at least one-quarter of a billion dollars to that cost. They would be the only landowners in the whole Metro West corridor who actually are contributing to the cost of the infrastructure.

The CHAIR: When I asked the question about this land, the response I get is "contamination".

RICK GRAF: The two reasons that Transport pushed back on the Camellia station were contamination and flooding. They are, with respect, specious arguments because the flooding at Camellia is, in fact, no worse—in fact, a lot better—than Parramatta Square running down to the Powerhouse where the metro station is going in. The flooding models for there all involve rebuilding the infrastructure at road level anyway. The contamination is on predominantly private land and it remains the responsibility of the private landowners to deal with the contamination. From a public sector point of view, it's our cost, not your cost, to deal with the contamination.

The difficulty is that without sufficient density in the town centre, the economics of being able to remediate the land and redevelop to provide housing, jobs and education about 1½ kilometres from Parramatta Square—the economics don't work unless you get enough density. All of Camellia is a blight on society because we've contaminated the land over the years—not we; we bought afterwards. The previous industrial owners have contaminated the land, and it's sitting in the middle of global Sydney without a remediation plan. Sydney Olympic Park was cleaned up by an event and paid for by the Government; this will be paid for by the landowners, but they need the station to create the density to fund that remediation and redevelopment.

The CHAIR: What is the proposed density for those development sites around that town centre, as a whole?

RICK GRAF: As a whole, at the moment the place strategy without the metro envisages 10,000 new homes and 8,000 new jobs. With the metro, the 10,000 runs to 20,000 new homes and about 25,000 jobs.

The CHAIR: If there's an issue about flooding for a station, how does that impact on the actual developments themselves?

RICK GRAF: There isn't an issue for flooding. The traditional means of dealing with stations in moderately flood-prone areas, like Parramatta Square—it's the same provisions that you make with bund walls and raising levels for entries to the station. It's not a significant issue. It's less of an issue than it is in Parramatta Square.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I note that the ATC is a member of the alliance. There were media reports earlier this month that, if I understood the article correctly, they had proposed using the old bowling club site as a potential station. Obviously, realigning is option A. But does the wider landowners alliance support that as an option B or an option C?

RICK GRAF: The turf club's first proposal is to put it in the corner of the car park so that customers coming to events wouldn't have to cross James Ruse Drive to get to the—

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: But that would require a realignment?

RICK GRAF: The bowling club would require a realignment and the one in the corner of the car park. The turf club has said, "We don't want to lose any land area in the racing area and the events area." But having the station under the north-west corner of their car park doesn't interrupt their operations, and it allows customers to come out of the metro straight into Rosehill and, via a pedestrian link under Grand Avenue, into the rest of the town centre. The town centre would have shopping and community centres and libraries, housing, jobs, and university towers for Western Sydney University.

The CHAIR: What would be the limitation on putting it in front of the grandstand in that part of the racecourse?

RICK GRAF: In the grandstand part?

The CHAIR: Where the alignment is now, yes.

RICK GRAF: It would completely conflict with all of the pedestrian movements in and around the grandstands and the event space. It needs to be 100 metres or so away from the grandstand, at least, to be able to manage pedestrian movements in high-density locations.

The CHAIR: So, it's too close to the grandstands?

RICK GRAF: Too close to the grandstand, and the minor swerve is not a financial burden. Constructing the station is the cost, not the swerve.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: In your view—or in the alliance's view—under the current alignment there really is no feasible place in Camellia to put a station; it's going to require a realignment to satisfy the alliance?

RICK GRAF: The corridor that it is currently planned on doesn't allow a pop-up station anywhere along its alignment. But making that minor modification to the alignment is not a major contractual issue of time or money.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Why is that?

RICK GRAF: Because it's a very modest amendment. It's not as if it's—there was a proposal put forward by the Greater Sydney Commission and Western Sydney University to deviate the line across to Rydalmere, north of Victoria Road, and Metro West spent three years investigating that before rejecting it as a \$3 billion deviation, which made a major swerve and went under Victoria Road twice and under the Parramatta River twice. It was pretty much a nuts proposal in the first place. But all of that investigative time went on when the Camellia station, which had been part of the Metro West plan from day one, was overlooked because it was going to Rydalmere. When that was rejected, it was too late to come back and put Camellia into the original contracts. Now that the Government has said, "Let's pause and have a look at where we should put new stations," we should put them where they were planning to put them in the first place, which is Camellia, before that diversion to Rydalmere took it off the table.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I'm interested in the remediation. What would the time frame for remediation be and then, after that, the time frame for your proposal to go through the processes it would? If we say, "Maybe we'll do this deviation," what guarantee is there that the remediation will happen in a time frame suitable and that your proposals for your new town there or your development there will happen?

RICK GRAF: There is no remediation required for the corridor of the metro. It is at a depth where there's no pollution, no contamination. Where the station arises at the corner of Grand Avenue and the turf club, yes, there's some moderate remediation required there, and that would be done by the landowners at the time that the station box was being done. Across the road, where the James Hardie factory was for many years and where a lot of the contamination has come from, we own 10 hectares of that land. That's our responsibility. But using it for industrial purposes, as we do at the moment, we don't need to remediate that land because it's sufficiently capped to be able to use safely for industrial purposes. To use it for a town centre and residential uses, it would need to be decontaminated, but once the appropriate zoning was done and the commitment to the metro station, we would immediately commence the excavation and remediation of our site. It's about \$120 million. But it's not worth us spending that money at the moment if all we're doing is to continue industrial uses. Without a densification of the town centre, that's what we'll be continuing.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I guess my concern is if the deviation occurs and the money gets spent on that and the process of remediation or building the residential component gets stopped somewhere along the line, the deviation has cost money that may not be recouped.

RICK GRAF: I can assure you that we are long-term owners and investors and developers of award-winning town centres. At Rhodes and Wentworth Point—and Rhodes was more contaminated than Camellia—having built Bennelong Bridge when we started that process in 2010, we delivered that in 2016 before the population arrived. In Rhodes and Wentworth Point that bridge has catalysed \$7 billion in residential and commercial development, and that's now providing houses for 25,000 people. So we have already done that and received national recognition with a number of national awards for master-planned communities in high-density areas where there was serious contamination. What we have proposed with Camellia is to do exactly the same thing, and we don't want to see that land fail to deliver on its potential, being walking distance to Parramatta Square but still being a polluted former industrial site that ought to be a vibrant town centre, and it needs the Metro West station to do that.

The CHAIR: Roydon, could you provide those documents that you mentioned to the Committee later on?

ROYDON NG: Yes.

The CHAIR: Earlier today we heard evidence from a number of people that at a certain point the movements are actually north-south and congestion, in particular, at the moment is on what we know as the Sefton line in terms of movements. Another suggestion has been Hurstville through to—was it Lidcombe?

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Strathfield.

The CHAIR: Hurstville through to Strathfield line, because that's where the congestion is occurring. I know you look at a lot of data. Is this replicated in the data that you're seeing?

ROYDON NG: Yes, north-south connections are quite important as well. I was here earlier when I believe Ms Connolly spoke about the River Rail proposal linking major centres north-south—not exactly Hurstville to Strathfield, but also Parramatta to Bankstown. That passes through bits of the Auburn electorate as well. North-south connections are important. We need a radial network not simply always focused in the city but also, speaking to Metro West, a western corridor. It is important to improve the overall east-west and north-south. They're not mutually exclusive.

The CHAIR: No. Obviously, the intention of the Metro West is to take pressure off the western line and build higher density, but there are always going to be ongoing pressures the other way once you move past King Georges Road.

ROYDON NG: Yes. A north-south line is, I think, of merit. Not this Committee, but the inquiry into current and future transport in Western Sydney should consider north-south links as well.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Roydon, in your submission you say:

The claim introduced by the NSW Government in 2014 that single deck Metro could carry more passengers and travel quicker than double-deck Sydney Trains was proven to be doubtful.

Could you expand on that for me, please?

ROYDON NG: Yes. The source of that is an ABC Fact Check from when the North West Rail Link was first announced, when it was decided that the north-west rail would be a single-deck metro instead of a double-decker. I refer you to the cited article from the ABC Fact Check—the news article from that.

The CHAIR: Mr Graf, a number of the councils have raised the complexity of dealing with different government departments. I assume when you're developers and you're looking at that—and it was actually raised by one of the councils in regard to developers around metro areas. Are you finding it difficult to find your way through the process as a consortium? I think the obvious answer would be yes, but I'd just like you to elucidate on it.

RICK GRAF: Well, we are in New South Wales, and it does have a world-leading planning system at the wrong end of the numbers rather than the right end of the numbers. We get there. It's tortuous. For example, developing Bennelong Bridge as a public-private project, we built it to RMS standards and delivered it at no cost to governments or local government. But along the way, over four years of approvals, we had to deal with 26 government agencies, so it ain't easy in New South Wales. The density around stations is a complex calculation to get town centre planning right, and not all councils have the same skill set to be able to manage the development and planning of town centre nodes around stations.

Whether it requires a standalone planning authority to be able to do that, either as part of Metro or otherwise, if it proves successful in streamlining the process and producing better outcomes, that wouldn't be a bad outcome. But we do have so many new metro stations that don't have town centres and high density planned around them, which was always the plan—to get a value sharing with landowners so that you would have high-density nodes. As the Premier keeps saying, we've got to densify around our transport. We can't keep spreading west.

The CHAIR: Sorry, I'll have to stop you there because we're running out of time. Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript for corrections. The Committee staff will email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions. We kindly ask you return these answers within 14 days. If you're having difficulties, please contact the Committee staff.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr SHAUN CARTER, LFRAIA, Principal, Carter Williamson Architects, before the Committee via videoconference, affirmed and examined

Mr JAMES SCOTT, General Manager, Harvey Norman Property Department, sworn and examined

Mr MARK GRAYSON, Director, Knight Frank Town Planning, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure today to give evidence. Can you please confirm that you have been issued with the Committee's terms of reference information about standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

MARK GRAYSON: I confirm.

JAMES SCOTT: I confirm.

SHAUN CARTER: I confirm.

The CHAIR: Would anyone like to make an opening statement?

JAMES SCOTT: Madam Chair and the Committee, thank you for taking the opportunity to consider our submission and, furthermore, to allow my colleague and I to come here and answer any questions that you may have. I'm the head of real estate for Harvey Norman Holdings. Harvey Norman Holdings is the owner of land—the subject matter for this discussion—in Silverwater. Mark Grayson represented Harvey Norman, the owner of the property, in undertaking and providing the submission that's before you.

If I may take the opportunity to outline the key points of our submission, as I have just informed you, Harvey Norman is the owner of the property. We've owned it for many decades. The metro line is actually running underneath the land that we own. As we know, the metro line between the proposed Parramatta station and Sydney Olympic Park is some 7.5 kilometres in length—an extraordinary distance, given its proximity within the urban metro area, to not have any additional stations. It's quite unique in that a length of that distance ought to have at least one, if not more, stations in what can be a dense location.

It so happens that the land we own is equidistant along that 7.5 kilometre line, between both the proposed Parramatta station and Sydney Olympic Park. The land that I'm referring to is four hectares in size. From a context perspective, that's 10 times the size of the Five Dock metro station proposed, four times the size of Crows Nest and three times the size of Burwood. So it's a very significant, large landholding that is owned by one owner. The surrounding context of the land is a mix of low-density residential immediately opposite the property and some employment and old warehousing in other surrounding areas. What we are putting forward is an opportunity for government to consider an additional train station along this line, in or around the land that we own.

The benefit to government is that there would be only one owner. If government decides to include an additional train station on this land, there would be only one owner to deal with, which would make it less complex. In the context of timing of the tunnel-boring machine, which I understand has already commenced work from Five Dock heading west, there are time constraints, I would envisage, if there is a decision to insert an additional station. So dealing with one owner in a constructive manner may enable the continuation of boring activities with less disruption. The parcel of land, given its size, lends an opportunity to government and the community to create a significant urban renewal precinct in its own right. Given its size and scale, that can be created, whether it be through a combination of additional residential affordable housing, employment et cetera. I put that forward in context of the significant housing affordability problem that we have in Australia, to give context there.

In sum, I suspect there's consideration around Camellia as well, and a potential transit-orientated hub there. There is already approval for some 10,000 dwellings to be created in Camellia, as opposed to Silverwater, where there are zero new dwellings that are approved to be created. So, when we think of net benefit in the context of additional affordable housing, it's difficult to conclude that Camellia would be the right spot for an additional station when you've already got housing approved there. There would be a net benefit in creating a transit-orientated hub on our site, commensurate with the large urban precinct that can be created.

In sum, we have a train line that is 7.5 kilometres long with no station in between. The line goes directly underneath what is a very substantial parcel of land, being four hectares in size. We have a property owner that would be willing to participate and cooperate with government to deliver the needs of the Government. We would be also contributing towards the housing crisis that we have in Sydney, and you're only dealing with one owner. I'd like to thank you for considering our submission and listening to myself just now, and I welcome any questions you might have.

SHAUN CARTER: Madam Chair and Committee, thank you for having me today. I'm stepping in at the last minute to speak on behalf of Ben Hendriks of Mecone. I'm speaking to Mecone's submission. I'm also the urban design expert representing Traders in Purple, who have been engaged for the urban renewal project. They are the site immediately to the north of the Five Dock metro. From the outset, as an urban design expert working in Sydney and in and around councils and the court, we believe that we can have a better Sydney as well as a bigger Sydney.

Five Dock has been long identified for growth and is ideally located, being just to the north of and adjacent to the metro station. It's ideally located for density. We also know that it can help solve the housing crisis that we see talked about in the media. But it's not only talked about, it's also real—not only real in terms of the market housing response but also in terms of a social and key worker housing response. As per Mecone's submission, having density at the Five Dock site does allow us to put more people in contact with more jobs within that 30-minute travel timeline.

I guess density is critical to make good communities and help governments solve society's problems, such as the housing crisis. We know how to make good cities. We know how to make great streets. We know that heritage can anchor and locate new development in and around metro sites and increase density. Of course, it's our opinion that density done well in and around metro stations is a viable way for Government to get their value for that \$2 billion approximate cost per station, to help solve those necessary problems that society has.

The CHAIR: Mr Carter, you say in the submission that currently 4,300 is the population density around the Concord station. What would be the density under the current urban proposals for that metro station?

SHAUN CARTER: Our submission or the SJB?

The CHAIR: What is the current status, increased from the 4,252 dwellings that were identified in your submission? What would be the uplift?

SHAUN CARTER: The uplift under the current proposal would be—I think it's in the submission; bear with me. I don't think we include a number there. I believe the current submission would increase by about 20 per cent.

The CHAIR: So, you go from about 4,300 to about 5,500 dwellings.

SHAUN CARTER: That's correct.

The CHAIR: Mr Scott, I'm a very big supporter of having a station at Silverwater, but one of the important factors for me as the local member is jobs. Your property is currently a very important part of the industrial precinct. I assume you would be looking to an uplift for residential on that site?

JAMES SCOTT: Yes, residential. But in doing so, of course, there'd be a significant creation of jobs in achieving that. But furthermore, there would be other uses I would contemplate that would supplement those current employees that are working within that area.

The CHAIR: So, you'd look for a mixed-use building. Is that what you're saying?

JAMES SCOTT: Yes.

The CHAIR: Because it's currently warehousing, of which there is quite a bit around that part because it's where the north-south movements and the east-west movements meet with the M4 and Silverwater Road, of course.

JAMES SCOTT: Yes.

The CHAIR: Warehousing is a big part of that. What would you do with your current operations if they weren't—

JAMES SCOTT: We would be securing alternate warehousing in the area.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: Where would you be moving that sort of employment land? Would you be looking further west? Where would you be going with it?

JAMES SCOTT: Within the area. Yes, within the Auburn area.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: We spoke to the Camellia Landowners Alliance earlier. They're looking at some kind of co-funding, value capture arrangement. Is that something that you'd be willing to explore here? Obviously cost is a major factor if we're going to put additional stations on this line. As you said, you have a pretty good site there and it's in a good spot. But value capture is certainly part of a conversation you're willing to have?

JAMES SCOTT: Yes.

MARK GRAYSON: Madam Chair, if I can go back to your query before concerning a loss of employment lands, I guess it's important to note that, in and of itself, a combination of fairly unique circumstances, being the size of the holding, the single ownership and the actual easement—the route for the metro tunnel actually is underneath the site—makes it a fairly unique set of circumstances. It's not in and of itself possibly a wider reflection on the important role of Silverwater in terms of employment in urban services.

The CHAIR: No, I understand that. It does adjoin significant residential SR2 low rise.

MARK GRAYSON: Yes, it does.

The CHAIR: Which is a traditional—it is probably one of our last remaining fibro city kind of streets.

MARK GRAYSON: Yes, correct.

The CHAIR: I do understand that, but I'm very conscious of—and it's probably something you can comment on—this conflict where everything is about urban uplift and there is not a lot of focus on actual employment precincts and the movements of people around our city to where our jobs are, which is why the arguments around Silverwater I feel personally are strong because of the congestion on Parramatta and Silverwater roads and the amount of employment we have in that region. When you talk about the economic benefits of the Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park region, a lot of that is coming out of Silverwater and the large companies we have working there. Harvey Norman, I understand you've got possibly three sites in that area, which is indicative of the type of area and jobs that come out of that region. You have two on Parramatta Road, is my understanding?

JAMES SCOTT: We do, yes. In fact, we have four separate sites.

The CHAIR: Just like there are three jails there as well. When the former Minister spoke about why you would build a line to a jail, it's not one jail; there's actually three jails down at Silverwater. It's a significant employment precinct. Sorry, I'm probably hogging the questioning. Obviously, Parramatta Road has been part of an urban uplift. It has been identified as a corridor for development as well, and residential development. Silverwater straddles the M4 and there are parts where Auburn North and Silverwater are co-located with one of the main roads through. Have there been any approaches also about those other sites on Parramatta Road?

JAMES SCOTT: With respect to an additional metro station, no.

The CHAIR: Well, more in terms of the Government's plan for uplifting of residential properties along Parramatta Road.

JAMES SCOTT: Yes, we have made a submission on one of those holdings over previous years. The outcome is that the subject property has been considered as a location for more density, but there are certain catalyst events that need to occur from government's perspective—more infrastructure, particularly road solutions—prior to the ability for us to then go to the next step of re-approaching government around an uplift with residential.

The CHAIR: That's interesting. Mr Carter, Mecone in the past has been involved in the Cherrybrook station development, I understand, with some of the developments down there. What does the uplift in Concord look like in comparison to the Cherrybrook proposals?

SHAUN CARTER: To be perfectly honest with you, I haven't been involved with Mecone's work at Cherrybrook. I have seen the urban form. I think the uplift is to go from two to seven storeys.

The CHAIR: That's for Cherrybrook, is it?

SHAUN CARTER: For Cherrybrook. I'm not familiar with Concord and what they're proposing in terms of height—

The CHAIR: Sorry, I meant the proposal down in—is it Canada Bay?

SHAUN CARTER: Five Dock.

The CHAIR: Five Dock, sorry. I meant Five Dock.

SHAUN CARTER: What is our thinking around the possible uplift around the Five Dock metro?

The CHAIR: Yes.

SHAUN CARTER: I think the average around metro stations, looking more broadly across Sydney, is probably 24 storeys. We know we can do wonderful housing between 20 and 30 storeys and have a wonderful commercial retail activation around the street for two and three storeys.

The CHAIR: I understand that Mecone has done work and prepared a paper in conjunction with Cabinet, Treasury and others in relation to the value that arises from up-zoning land along infrastructure assets. I'm assuming you're not aware of that paper?

SHAUN CARTER: No, I'm not aware of that paper.

The CHAIR: If it's possible, maybe we could get a copy of that at some stage, if you could take that on notice?

SHAUN CARTER: Sure, I'll take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much. I have just seen Mr Williams waving his hand via Webex. You're on mute at the moment, Ray, I think.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I think he was just telling us he's back.

The CHAIR: No, he was asking a question. He had his hand up. You're on mute, Ray. Ray, do you want to try your mute button on your—

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I have. You can't hear me now?

The CHAIR: We've got you now.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: No, I wasn't seeking the call, Madam Chair, but thank you anyway.

The CHAIR: No worries, thank you.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: We've had a couple of people make the point they would like to see a department that—not necessarily an entirely new department of government but something that better aligns Planning and Transport. With your perspective as landowners and potential developers or developers, would that be an advantage? Are you finding difficulties with the current system of approvals for developments?

JAMES SCOTT: Often, for large-scale developments, one needs to go with the other. I mentioned earlier that we have another landholding that, from a planning viewpoint, is appropriate for greater density, but that cannot be achieved until such time as there's a transport solution put in place, which will then be the catalyst to unlock the release of more density or housing to Sydney. One needs to go with the other. Of course, I would conclude that—I'm not suggesting that both departments become one, but there needs to be consultation between the two. I won't suggest that there is not consultation. I would expect that they both would be consulting with each other in some manner or form.

SHAUN CARTER: To my colleague who just spoke, planning is actually a connected-up, joined-up thing. It needs everything considered all at once. There is also probably the known understanding that planning in Sydney is a contested space. Planning can be messy. But we're also talking about a city that, in relative terms, is changing pretty quickly. In a broader view, my sense that a contested city, where we all discuss—for want of a better word—how that city grows and changes is not a bad thing. But, more generally, around the point that I made at the start of my submission, I think cities need to be designed, first and foremost. It can't just be a transport solution. It can't just be a planning and zoning solution. It has to be something that we consider a design.

Then you almost need a boundary span kind of expertise to be able to get all the different departments in the room, to join them up so that—I mean, of course, the metro only works because of transport, but, from a planning point of view, what is the uplift we need to have to solve the housing? And what's the design that goes with that that also can make that housing viable and the amenity in that housing—through our excellent design covered for apartment buildings into SEPP No. 65, which is, actually, Australia's only design legislation. In summary, a joined-up thinking, design-led and someone sitting over the top—whether that's the Government Architect or through the department of planning—that allows all the different departments to easily talk together and consider the issues.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately, we have run out of time, although I do just want to say that I like the sign behind Mr Carter's left shoulder. Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. Committee staff will email any questions taken on notice and any supplementary questions. We kindly ask that you return these answers within 14 days.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Professor MARK SCOTT, Vice-Chancellor and President, The University of Sydney, affirmed and examined

Mr GREG ROBINSON, Chief Infrastructure Officer, The University of Sydney, sworn and examined

Mr TOM NANCE, Policy and Strategy Lead, The Centre for Western Sydney, affirmed and examined

Mr PHILLIP HEADS, General Manager – Communications, Heritage and Community, Venues NSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I now welcome our next witnesses. I know that some of you have given extensive written submissions, but would anyone like to make an opening statement?

MARK SCOTT: As you know, I am the Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Sydney, and I am appearing before the Committee today, with Mr Robinson, to stress to you the university's longstanding and continued commitment to exploring, with the New South Wales Government, any mass transport investment options for the Camperdown economic growth area. Acknowledging the significant investment made to date for the Sydney Metro West project, it is, however, an unassailable fact that the previous Government did not take into consideration the Camperdown economic growth area in decisions regarding the project and the opportunity for future mass transport investment. Camperdown is the State's primary research, education and health collaboration area, comprising two of Australia's leading universities, the globally renowned Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and an array of medical research institutes and other research bodies. There is already over \$2 billion of committed capital currently being delivered into Camperdown, clearly demonstrating public and private interest in the future opportunities.

The Camperdown area represents more than 70,000 jobs, services more than 600,000 people per year and generates over \$13.3 billion in annual economic output. A Camperdown station would play a key role in delivering the New South Wales Government objective of shifting to a knowledge-based economy in order to drive the State's future economic growth. A Camperdown station option could be developed in line with existing commitments and would achieve many benefits including improved access to key health and education infrastructure for essential workers, students, patients and researchers; direct and indirect economic benefits from improved access to multiple large-scale institutions estimated to exceed \$6.8 billion by 2036; leveraging large-scale investment in the area and complementing other government investments including Tech Central; innovation uplift through the improved connection between innovation hubs; and overcoming current public transport access challenges in the area.

The University is eager to continue exploring mass transport options with the current Government to address the Camperdown need and capture the value presented in the area. To this end, the university has already secured broad support from the Sydney Local Health District, Inner West Council and the University of Technology Sydney as the other anchor institutions in the Camperdown-Ultimo district who support the need for a metro connection in this area. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these important issues with the Committee.

TOM NANCE: I am here today representing the Centre for Western Sydney that combines world-class research expertise with frank and fearless advocacy on issues of importance to Western Sydney. While we are part of Western Sydney University, we are, unashamedly, for the region and its people, and we look forward to working with the Government to maximise the impact of the Sydney Metro West for residents as a clear priority. At a minimum, the Metro West must address the chronic congestion in Western Sydney, but there is the opportunity to do so much more. It must also unlock economic and social opportunity for residents. There is no doubt that the Sydney Metro West will be a transformative piece of infrastructure.

However, the stakeholders we talk to in Western Sydney are concerned about where impact will be delivered given that the majority of the planned stations are located east of Sydney Olympic Park. The clue is in the project title. The Sydney Metro West must be an infrastructure project that prioritises delivering lasting value for the people in the west, rather than just simply existing to ferry them further east. There is the opportunity to leverage this generational project to deliver a broader impact in the form of driving the development of additional dwellings along the transport corridor. We should utilise this chance to explore how density can be done well, particularly given the willingness of developers to contribute to the cost of additional metro stations that have been reported publicly.

I note that other submissions have suggested that the Sydney Metro West could be extended to increase its impact, and we agree. While it is not in our original submission, we have previously advocated for the extension of the line to connect it with the airport, and this will create a rapid transit link that connects the three cities, making it easier to do business in Western Sydney and driving economic growth and prosperity. This extension would open up the potential in the future for crosscutting rail developments, a significant missing ingredient in

the region's public transport system. Linkages to the north-west metro via Schofields and to the south through Leppington would be a critical step to the participation of residents in economic, educational and social activities, and the Sydney Metro West development could be a significant catalyst in driving these additional projects. The centre is pleased to be able to provide a contribution to the discussion today, and I look forward to answering any questions the panel may have.

PHILLIP HEADS: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee today on behalf of Venues NSW. We continue the legacy of the trustees of the Sydney Cricket Ground, first appointed in 1876. We have the privilege of caring for five distinct sports and entertainment precincts, six stadiums and two entertainment centres across the State. I appear today to reiterate Venues NSW's advocacy for a metro station that would service Centennial Park, Moore Park and the broader SCG precinct. Such a station would make the area more accessible to Greater Sydney, not just for sporting and entertainment events but for the many thousands of daily visitors to the broader area.

A metro station would be well used by the several thousand staff and students from the Sydney boys and Sydney girls high schools, staff and students at the University of Technology Sydney Moore Park campus, the headquarters of the National Rugby League, Rugby Australia and the Sydney Swans, as well as staff and visitors to EQ and Disney Studios. Importantly, we think a metro station offers an important connection to the parklands, EQ, entertainment facilities and stadiums for the growing area of Green Square.

Our support for a metro stop in the area is not new. In 2018 our former chairman, Tony Shepherd, called on the former Government to extend the Metro West line to Moore Park. Mr Shepherd continues that support today as the chairman of EQ. Venues NSW and its parent bodies have long advocated for the best possible transport to and from its precincts all across New South Wales. At Moore Park, we've been doing that for well over 100 years. This includes the first use of integrated ticketing or free public transport to events in December 1898. Thankfully, this feature continues today thanks to our partnership with Transport for NSW and the association of Moore Park sports.

Trustees of the Sydney Cricket Ground repeatedly lobbied for heavy rail connections to the broader Moore Park precinct, first in the early 1900s. In the SCG museum, which I have the privilege of looking after, we have a 1952 planning map on display that shows a proposed heavy rail station on Moore Park Road, which would have served the high schools and the Oxford Street retail and dining area, as well as the Sydney Cricket Ground, the former sports ground and the show ground. This support has always been founded on the reality that the grounds particularly are for people from all across Sydney.

In 2016 a survey based on 10,000 Sydney sports fans revealed that more people from Western Sydney attended sporting events at the former Allianz Stadium than they did at Accor Stadium in Sydney Olympic Park, and the numbers were very similar between attendees from the east and west. Currently, for some areas of Sydney, public transport is not the best and easiest way to get to Moore Park. We believe a metro station would also complement the New South Wales Government's significant investment in the sporting, entertainment, educational and cultural facilities at Moore Park, and the increasing amount of events that are attracting big crowds more often.

The CHAIR: I will start with questions maybe to the vice-chancellor first. You are looking at asking for a realignment of the line from The Bays Precinct via Sydney university into the city. That is my reading of it.

MARK SCOTT: I think Mr Robinson will speak to the detail.

GREG ROBINSON: Chair, the proposal is that you would have a line which goes from Central Station to Camperdown and then to Five Dock, and you might have another station in between. Effectively, every second train would go via the university and the other train would go via White Bay Power Station. Effectively, you've got a split or duplicate line until Five Dock from Central.

The CHAIR: So, you are actually talking about a diversion of the line so that it realigns and you can go either way to the city.

MARK SCOTT: Yes, that's right.

GREG ROBINSON: Yes. You would alternate trains between the two lines until you get to Five Dock and then every service from Five Dock on would be consistent with the line.

The CHAIR: Have you put this proposal to the City of Sydney council in line with their considerations of Zetland—which would possibly flow through to Moore Park as well—and what they are considering?

GREG ROBINSON: Yes, we have. Our proposal is any mass transit solution for Camperdown. It's not a specific ask for just that particular solution; that's one solution. Another solution is a light rail proposal that

would go and service the Green Square areas, which is the City of Sydney's preferred—the City of Sydney is supportive of any mass transport solution for Camperdown, but they also are supportive of Green Square being serviced as well.

The CHAIR: Yes, because obviously that's one of the big capacity issues. Western Sydney University are talking about an extension to make the outer airport—perhaps I better leave this question to you, Mr Hagarty. But have you looked at the conflict between where the Metro West is and what's happening around our growth areas around Leppington and west and south-west Sydney?

TOM NANCE: For me I would say that it's not looking at an either/or. We're very interested in looking at how the Metro West can be extended to the airport. The extension from the airport through to Leppington and through to south-west Sydney is, I would say, a different issue that we are definitely also supportive of looking at, in terms of supporting not only the population growth but also the needs of the current population who are experiencing significant transport disadvantage.

The CHAIR: Earlier we had the Camellia Landowners Alliance before the Committee and they were talking about having the north-western corner of the Rosehill racecourse as a potential site for a metro station by a realignment there of about 120 metres. What is the university's view on that proposal?

TOM NANCE: We, in terms of a university, welcome any opportunity to look at ways that we can support uplift. I know there's a strong push from the Camellia Landowners Alliance. I think as well, from a university perspective, it would definitely align with supporting more students to access our Rydalmere campus. However, that wouldn't be the sole consideration that we would be advocating for. It's more about looking at how any reconfiguration of the line broadly supports growth and density done well in Western Sydney.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: This question is probably to the University of Sydney. Some of the earlier evidence we heard today questioned the drivers around the business case. Perhaps there was too much focus on this 20-minute time. I want to get your thoughts on that and what other considerations, if we had our time over again, should have gone into it and how that would have affected your proposal for a Camperdown stop.

MARK SCOTT: Let me start and then Mr Robinson might be able to add to it. I think it's very interesting. I have now worked at the University of Sydney—my previous role was at the ABC right at the heart near Central at the end of Harris Street. The transformation of that end of Broadway has been absolutely remarkable in the last 15 years, including medium-high density housing, close proximity to the city and great transport links. If you look at the development along Broadway from that time, it's interesting. It extends further down Broadway to about Victoria Park and the University of Sydney and then, once you get to the other side of the university and push further along Parramatta Road, that is surely an area that's ripe for significant further investment and development. Tremendous housing opportunities could be developed there with close proximity to the city.

But it's more than just a dormitory suburb. As we say, this is an epicentre of investment around medical research. We're making enormous investments in medical research. So is the hospital, but we're attracting in a big medical research centre on the back of all that and on the back of the biomedical accelerator that we're building. It's going to be a place for jobs but it's also ripe for the kind of investment to help address the housing issues that are being identified, with extraordinary proximity to the city. In order to unlock that, mass transit options will be absolutely imperative. You are not going to be able to service the demand and untapped potential by just trundling more buses up and down Broadway. That's the opportunity we see as significantly unlocking, in a sense, Parramatta Road west from the Camperdown RPA university junction. That is where the half-hour walk to Central or the logjam of buses will not service the potential opportunity that exists at this point.

GREG ROBINSON: I would just comment about the process which was run. We've had the experience of two failed bids—let's call them—for a metro station to service the university. The first one was where we were put into a competitive process vis-a-vis Waterloo. Transport for NSW and Infrastructure NSW ran a process in which it was very transparent. There were effectively technical debates between our consultant teams and the government's consultant teams. There were economic benefit analyses which were done and which were provided, and it came down to which of the two options was the better.

When it comes to the decision around White Bay versus Camperdown, there was no such process. We effectively made submissions, which felt like they were falling on deaf ears. Those submissions pointed out significant technical problems with the route that was being chosen to go to White Bay. It is in our submission. We've provided the technical reasons why going into a deep harbour crossing is very different to being able to put a tunnel-boring machine through light rock through the university's areas and out to Five Dock.

We believe that we had provided all of the material to allow the Government to make an informed decision about which of those two locations would provide the better economic benefit, and we stand by the fact

that the White Bay Power Station, as a location, has not got the credentials that a Camperdown station has in terms of jobs and benefits. If you just look at the land area that you are servicing, it is very restricted in the White Bay area, which was another one of the reasons which we pointed out in the report. And the ability to pick up anything additional between White Bay and Five Dock—there were less options in terms of that route to be able to add additional stations in the future, to what there was between Camperdown and Five Dock.

We supported the Pymont station. We provided a lot of technical data as to how Pymont could work. We believe Pymont was important because Pymont was, again, an O&D station, similar to the university, where it provides patronage all day. The other stations were all pretty much dormitory stations. In terms of White Bay, it was arguing that it would also have some jobs production, but you were talking a six-hectare site versus 430 hectares which would be supported by, effectively, the university station.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Do the other two groups want to comment generally on the business case and perhaps why Camellia wasn't included or why the line wasn't extended? If you've got anything to add on the way the business case has been put together, go for it.

TOM NANCE: I think one thing that stood out in terms of the business case process was really this concept of the 20-minute trip being sacrosanct. That was the driving aim. Sometimes, I would say, and I think the evidence would support, that often undermined the potential impact of the Sydney Metro West when it came to choices around station locations—when it came to choices that could consider broader impact, whether it is about densification, whether it is about economic uplift or whether it is broadly about extension. I think, for me, if I was to reflect on the business case, it seemed that the 20-minute trip was pursued with a lot of vigour which may have meant that quite a few strategically placed stations—or conversations around stations, at the very least—were overlooked.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: My question is broadly for the vice-chancellor and also Mr Heads. If I'm interpreting it correctly, rather than a deviation of the line from Five Dock sort of through to Central and into Camperdown and then out through to Moore Park, you're suggesting an additional stop? And for Mr Heads, are you suggesting that it extends from Hunter Street around into Moore Park, or would it be a more sensible solution for that line to deviate through to Central and then from Central on to Moore Park?

PHILLIP HEADS: I think, from a Venues NSW perspective, there was talk about extending into Green Square/Zetland. I guess our intention was to be in the conversation there for a loop out to the sporting, education and entertainment precinct at Moore Park.

MARK SCOTT: We recognise there's sunk cost in construction made here. It's not uncommon, if you look at metro systems around the world—you can be standing on the same platform and one train is taking one route and the next train takes another route. There is still a high level of servicing. We're saying that if the ambitions are still held to generate the economic impact and the employment impact, particularly close to the city—particularly addressing business investment, growth industries, the power of precincts and extraordinary opportunities for housing solutions—there still remains an opportunity to do that by placing an alternate line that picks up that metro health-medical precinct, then loops into Five Dock, and the other benefits that accrue further west still come to bear. And it is an easier construction—it is much easier construction than what you've seen through the complexity that was identified by the university's original submission and has been accounted by the construction to date.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: We've been looking at Moore Park parking. If we have a metro station, do we still need the parking station to be built there?

PHILLIP HEADS: There is always going to be demand for parking at events. Parking in the precinct has been reduced from well over 10,000 spaces in the 1990s down to several thousand now. I think there are two discussions there. One is about on-grass parking and Venues NSW is kind of leading the charge in removing it from the grass by building a structured car park on its own lands adjacent to Allianz Stadium. I think you need a suite of transport solutions for big events.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: There is the alternate route that Mr Kirby was talking about. Is there an opportunity, if we're looking at this overall, to have a staged provision of Metro West where it is built in a situation that is perhaps planned, in some shape or form, but at the same time have a planning of a stage two that then goes through the university or, in fact, the loop out to Moore Park? Is there a possibility of staging?

MARK SCOTT: Of course, we're impatient, but a plan and a strategy and a stage, I think, would be welcomed if that was the best alternative we can get. A decade from now, you're going to have the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator developed and you're going to have \$1 billion-plus worth of investment in that health/medical/university precinct complete. You're talking about car parking issues at Moore Park—car parking issues at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital medical precinct are absolutely diabolical. As members of the

Committee might know, my hair was grey before I started at the University of Sydney; it would have turned grey around car parking issues at the university if it wasn't for that. There is a chronic car parking issue that is available there.

Of course, many of the people who need to go to RPA have medical conditions and mobility questions, and therefore high-quality, highly effective mass transport is far preferable to many other options that we have. Yes, if we were to get a staged solution, a commitment that says there's a timing and a sequencing that comes here—something that we could plan around and make investment around the sense that it is coming, with a sense of a clear timetable around that—then, of course, we would be happy to engage in that conversation.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: Obviously, you'd have the opportunity to argue which stage you would be in.

MARK SCOTT: Yes, indeed.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: And Western Sydney could argue for a stage—it would be really nice to see a plan that gave everybody a plan of where they were all going to go.

MARK SCOTT: Yes, indeed.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Mr Nance, do you have anything to add about parking at the Rydalmere campus?

TOM NANCE: Are you speaking from experience, Mr Hagarty?

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I am.

TOM NANCE: I'm all good.

The CHAIR: That's cheeky.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: If we are talking about taking on the stage and taking on an alternate route—and I think I know what the answer to this would be—would your preference be to continue with the existing plan to go from Five Dock, The Bays and Pyrmont through to Hunter Street, or for that to be Five Dock through Camperdown, Central, Zetland and Moore Park? What would be the best return on investment, in your opinion?

GREG ROBINSON: The best return on investment was before the infrastructure that has now been sunk. The concern we have is that tunnel-boring machines are in the ground. There is a lot of work that has been done—we've heard anywhere in the vicinity of \$5 billion worth of already existing work undertaken on the route from White Bay. It would now not make sense in terms of switching across to do a route through Camperdown as the stage one priority. It would naturally fall to be stage two.

The CHAIR: Obviously, you're looking at Five Dock and the existing lines. But if you were looking at a spur per se—obviously there is the North Strathfield. I think David Richmond originally had a proposal, back in about 2003 or 2004, that really followed the Parramatta Road corridor from Burwood down through to the university precinct into Central. I know you're looking at the plan as it is at the moment, but if you were looking at a spur would it be more sensible to—

MARK SCOTT: I mean, the very reason this Committee is here is you're dealing with the pragmatic reality of cost, current constraints, commitments that have already been undertaken. Part of the challenge, I think, is not to let the best be the enemy of the good but to be able to work with what you've got now. I heard the questions with the previous witnesses: How do you unlock the value of Parramatta Road—the value of Parramatta Road for employment, the value of Parramatta Road for residential opportunities? Clearly, quality mass transit opportunities there, in addition to buses and other infrastructure that exists now, are key to unlocking that value, and there is enormous value that exists latently in that area. I spoke with people who worked on metro developments in and around Camperdown. They think you've just got to draw the circle and look at the potential of the value that draws within.

I think we're pragmatic here. To be frank, we don't want to wait until 2060, and so it very much depends on your staging and your timetable. And if, in fact, it was a more immediate option to get the connection back through to Five Dock rather than running the longer, more extensive and inevitably more expensive route, then you've got to think through what the real timetable is of pragmatically delivering that, because I don't think we have three decades to wait for this solution.

The CHAIR: Thank you, everyone, for coming in and for the extensive work some of you have put into your submissions. Thank you for appearing. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions. We kindly ask that you return answers within 14 days. If you have any problems, you can contact the Committee. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

Ms ALLISON TAYLOR, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Olympic Park Business Association Inc., affirmed and examined

Mr DAVID BORGER, Executive Director, Business Western Sydney, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our next witnesses. Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure today to give evidence. Can you please confirm that you have both been issued with the Committee's terms of reference and information about standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

DAVID BORGER: Yes, we have.

ALLISON TAYLOR: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions about this information?

ALLISON TAYLOR: No, it's all very clear.

The CHAIR: That's good—I'd be surprised if David did. Would each of you like to make a short opening statement before we begin questions?

ALLISON TAYLOR: Yes. I'll just start by saying that the Sydney Metro West project is the most game-changing infrastructure project that can happen for Sydney Olympic Park in terms of the development potential and the investment in the area that has been critically lacking since the Olympics, essentially.

DAVID BORGER: Our organisation has about 135 members. They tend to be large companies, some government, some sporting teams. They try to represent the region—the major organisations in Western Sydney. They're all very supportive of Metro West. They're looking forward to the opportunities to provide more housing for our city, to provide more investment, more jobs and to renew some of those station precincts and to connect, in particular, Olympic Park much better than it has been in the past. They have many views about how we could have procured it differently—but I'm sure we'll get a chance to say that later.

The CHAIR: David, in response to your opening statement, between Sydney Olympic Park and the Westmead station, what is the actual uplift in housing under this metro proposal?

DAVID BORGER: Between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta there is no uplift, other than in Olympic Park and Parramatta. It's a very long section of the metro line that has no train stations and no opportunities for uplift because it's not connecting people with public transport. There will be some opportunities at Camellia with the light rail stop, but we presume they will be much less. One of the challenges with Camellia is the contamination of the site and the fact that that has to be paid for somehow, presumably through the development process.

The CHAIR: Sorry, I did say from Westmead to Sydney Olympic Park.

DAVID BORGER: Sure. Obviously, Parramatta CBD itself will have a significant station. Although, most of the Parramatta CBD has a business-only zoning at the moment, so unless that changed, the residential uplift in Parramatta itself would probably be marginal. There is certainly some land that's zoned B4 that can accommodate mixed-use housing, but the LEP has already been set to the south of the river. So I don't think it will lead to significant uplift in the Parramatta CBD, and between Westmead and Olympic Park that's the only opportunity at the moment.

The CHAIR: So, essentially, no uplift in housing?

DAVID BORGER: Correct.

The CHAIR: Allison, I know you have done analysis for your organisation before on the economic contribution Sydney Olympic Park and Silverwater combined make to the local economy. Could you give a bit of a breakdown on that?

ALLISON TAYLOR: For specifics, I will have to take that on notice, and I'll get back to you. But just as an example, the economic uplift of the Sydney Royal Easter Show is just short of \$1 billion each year. For the stadium, I'll have to get back to you on that one. So, combined, I'm not sure. It's changed a little bit in the last little while.

The CHAIR: What about the breakdown between Silverwater and Sydney Olympic Park? I know that at some time you had a combined analysis, but that was a few years ago?

ALLISON TAYLOR: Yes, it was done a few years ago and it was pre-COVID, too.

The CHAIR: Yes, everything has changed under COVID.

ALLISON TAYLOR: Yes. I'll see what I can find out and get back to you with some figures.

The CHAIR: Obviously, this Committee is looking at the stops that are there and additional stops. There has been quite a bit of evidence today about stops, particularly around the Silverwater-Newington region and the Camellia precinct. In your submission you raise the cost blowouts and the timeline blowouts. There are a lot of submissions that are talking about getting it right and whether it needs extra time. What would be the Sydney Olympic Park Business Association's view on that?

ALLISON TAYLOR: I think the most important thing from our and our members' perspective is getting it right, because it is such a major investment and if you're spending that much money you've got to get it right and look at where the most uplift is going to be for housing and the economic uplift for the State. So, from the business association's perspective, it would be preferred if the planning is absolutely right, and time blows out a little bit. It has been on the cards since 2016 and you'd think there would be enough planning documents that have happened over that time—it has been seven years. Hopefully, there is enough information there that it's not going to extend too much.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Take some time and get it right seems to be the suggestion here. I infer that would mean exploring additional stops at places like Camellia or Silverwater. Clearly, the original business case said that they didn't stack up. I'd like to get both your thoughts on the original business case. Was there too much emphasis placed on certain criterion instead of others? And in terms of this project and future projects, what are some of the things that the Government and the department could consider in terms of business cases that they aren't now—or, I guess, reweighting the criteria?

ALLISON TAYLOR: I think sometimes there was a little bit too much emphasis put on the time to get from one place to the other. In the scheme of things, particularly compared with how things are at the moment, I don't think two or three or four minutes by having another stop is going to change people's perspective too much. I don't think it is as important as perhaps it was made out to be in the original business case. I don't know what you think, David?

DAVID BORGER: One of the things we said in our submission was that we think that the business case was deficient in its consultation with local communities along the route and there should have been a lot more really detailed, deep discussion with communities about the opportunities for stations. There was an economic argument, I suspect, that if you can get between Sydney and Parramatta in less than 20 minutes it will somehow induce this massive commercial office job uplift, particularly in Parramatta. I don't think the economic details around that were ever discussed widely in the community, and I don't think we were able to have a public debate about that. I think one of the challenges with these big projects is a lot of the information is secret and so when we have a public discussion about public transport, we don't have all the knowledge or all the facts. I think there should have been a more rigorous process in talking to local communities.

If there was an economic justification behind sub-20 minutes, then the public had a right to know what the arguments were. Was it just the Transport Minister was going on a folly or was this really going to change things? Because most metros globally have many more stations than we have and the distance between Olympic Park and Parramatta would be one of the longest distances anywhere in the world on any metro system. I mean, you go to Paris and there's a metro station on every corner. That's the way the whole city functions. I just don't think the justification for having such a different system here was well understood or well argued, and we didn't have the opportunity to get access to that information.

ALLISON TAYLOR: It also seems that the time was based on Parramatta to CBD mostly when it was spoken about, rather than the stops in between. So not everyone's going to be going from Westmead into the city or Parramatta into the city or Sydney Olympic Park into the city. They might be going from Sydney Olympic Park to Parramatta or to Westmead. Then you're looking at three minutes, four minutes—not 20 minutes. That whole 20-minute thing was just based on everyone coming in here or everyone going out there.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: Two things—one is the different authorities and organisations you have to deal with. To get this in place, what are your thoughts on how many different authorities you have to deal with? Would it be better if it was under one authority just doing the whole thing, with Planning and Transport all working together?

DAVID BORGER: I think there are strong arguments to say that there are too many government land-based developers. I mean, if we're going to maximise the return for the community and get the uplift around these station sites, then we could learn from Victoria. Their compulsory acquisition powers are very different to Sydney. That's my understanding. There are opportunities for far wider capture for the community. We've got a number of authorities. We've got Property NSW that undertakes property development on behalf of government.

We've got the Sydney Olympic Park Authority that might undertake its development as Placemaking NSW. There's Landcom—used to be called UrbanGrowth. There are many of these different groups around on behalf of government that undertake development for the community as a whole. We're not sure if we've really maximised, I guess, the development or the housing and job uplift outcomes as a result of metro. So I'd agree with you there. I think that could be done in a much sharper way.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: If I gave you a blank sheet of paper with Sydney on it and you had this much money to spend on a metro or some transport, what would you run and where would you put your stations?

DAVID BORGER: Obviously, we support Sydney Metro West. We think it's a game-changing transport project. The high-density population corridor in Sydney is between Sydney CBD and Parramatta/Westmead. That's where most of the growth is going. Prior to COVID, the western line really was running out of spaces and slots. I've been on that train. We were on the train today. I came in from Parramatta and I texted the Chair to say, "We may be late because the train is late." When the metro west line got so busy, it was coming close to failing in a sense that, if you can't get people loaded and unloaded within a reasonable time, the whole system falls down.

In terms of extensions, we think that there are many opportunities. I would sort of argue that Western Sydney should be the focus, because Western Sydney historically has been under-provided in terms of public transport generally. I know there's a strong argument from our sister chamber to say, "Go to Zetland. Go to the east." I would argue that creating the outer rail orbital should be a priority, so connecting Tallawong and then going further south should be a priority. And then there are many other opportunities. I know that the metro from Parramatta CBD to Badgerys Creek airport is not on the horizon. I accept that there's a limit to government's ability to fund these things and working too far in advance might give unrealistic expectations that something is going to be actually done, but eventually I do think that could be an opportunity as well. If we want the Western Sydney airport to work effectively, then having a short trip back to a major centre would help.

ALLISON TAYLOR: My priority is obviously Sydney Olympic Park, because it hasn't had anything for so long. Mass transit there is incredibly important for major events. But as the development occurs there—and government has the levers to pull to make development happen there and provide housing—the transport is going to be really important. When we talk about housing, we talk about retrofitting infrastructure, whereas this is an opportunity to put it in now when there are about 5,000 residents when there's going to be about 23,500 to 30,000. The other section I think is going to be really important in the future—I don't know whether it's on the radar yet—is north-south. It connects us from Georges River Council to—

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: We have heard some discussion about that today.

ALLISON TAYLOR: I just think that brings people in so it's not just east-west. Back to your question about the various government authorities, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority is a member of the business association, so we work closely together. I think Planning and Transport obviously have to work really close together on these things, particularly when there's master-planning happening around Sydney Olympic Park, which is reliant on—the projections for that master plan are reliant on Metro West coming through. If Metro West doesn't come through, the master plan has to be looked at completely differently.

But it's also very interesting scanning the submissions and seeing government agencies putting in submissions to the Government. I find that really interesting—organisations like Venues NSW, who are advocating for a stop at Moore Park when it's Sydney Metro West. But Venues NSW is an organisation that has seven venues, two in the east, two in the west—being CommBank Stadium and Accor Stadium—and then two in the Hunter and two in Newcastle. But they're advocating just for—they didn't kind of mention Sydney Olympic Park, so I don't know whether their venue is Moore Park or whether they really are Venues NSW. I find those kinds of things a little bit unbalanced.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Both of you have noted the need for greater community consultation or perhaps more targeted or consultative representation with the community. There's always a concern about too much community consultation turns a racehorse into a camel. Could you explain a little further about what you feel is lacking in that part of the process—or was lacking?

DAVID BORGER: I think part of it is—I don't think we were clear as a community on what the objectives of this particular project were. I think trying to understand the problem that we're trying to solve with the infrastructure project up-front and having that widely understood and discussed and debated would be useful. I also think in the case of that area between Parramatta and Olympic Park, there was a proposal to have another stop at North Parramatta—Rydalmere, North Parramatta. Government owns a lot of land—there was an old institutional care site on Victoria Road. Western Sydney University owns another very large parcel—a campus

on the southern side. So, the focus for quite a while was to have this additional station between Parramatta and Olympic Park that would've created value and created uplift and maximised the use of government land.

The problem was that there was no other alternative considered. My understanding is that when that option was finally extinguished—because the view was it would be too expensive to have another two river crossings; it would add time to the line and cost to the length of the line, so the view was taken that that was no longer ideal—it was then too late to properly consider other options. This was the problem. I think government went off on a tangent to investigate one particular route and spent two years doing that and there was no other consideration of any other stations and by then the feedback we received was, "Well, it's just too late. We have to go ahead and deliver this thing now." That's a good example of poor consultation, poor assessment and poor understanding of the objectives of the project.

ALLISON TAYLOR: In terms of consultation, from my perspective, our members are constantly being asked to attend workshops, sometimes over significant periods of time. Every couple of months you go in, you spend half a day, you put sticky notes on things, people write it up, yadda yadda yadda. But after years of doing that with master plans and various things, you just get a little bit exhausted when things don't progress. I'm not an expert in consultation and I know that there are companies that specialise in that and there are formats to do it, but I sometimes wonder whether, to avoid getting a camel, it would be easier to—whether that's kind of more individual, rather than those group things. Because sometimes people in group consultation situations are swayed by the general opinion coming out whereas, if you're talking to them one on one, I just sometimes think it might be a little bit more efficient even though it sounds like it wouldn't be—if that makes sense.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Perfectly.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Changing tack, in your submission, Allison, there was commentary around use of consultants. I would just like you to expand on that one, obviously especially around cost and perhaps whether that's the most efficient use of taxpayer money.

ALLISON TAYLOR: Again, I'm not an expert in this, but it seems, just from reading a little bit and coming across some various articles from time to time, that, with consultants and procurement, it's limited to a small number of people that can actually deliver. I guess there are two things. Consultants is one side, and procurement—you're limited to big companies that are able to sign these contracts that are worth billions and billions of dollars, which, I think, probably takes the competition out of it. So I just think it'd be interesting to look at a different model, where it's broken up into smaller chunks. I'm not entirely sure how it works yet, at the moment, if there are incentives or people don't get their full payment or whatever until something's delivered in the time frame that it was said to be. In terms of consultants, I just think it has to pass the pub test. You can't have people on thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars a day, which completely blows out projects. I know human resources are hard and people who are experienced and able to deliver are probably expensive. But, just in terms of letting taxpayers know where their money goes, it just doesn't make sense to the average Joe or Joanne.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I think it comes down to value for money, right?

ALLISON TAYLOR: Yes, absolutely.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I don't know if you want to comment on this, but do you think we are getting value for money by paying these consultants thousands of dollars a day?

ALLISON TAYLOR: No, I'm not sure that we are. But, again, there's not enough evidence to show whether you are or not. Would you be better having public servants doing it? I think there probably needs to be a combination. There has to be. It has to be delivered with the private sector, but it is hard to know. Perhaps if the general public did know they were getting value for money, that would be helpful.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: We got the Audit Office in next, so maybe we'll throw that one at them.

The CHAIR: Going back to the Sydney Olympic Park precinct, in terms of the urban uplift it is only 3,000. But obviously there's the Carter Street precinct—that's sitting concurrently. It goes back to Dave's original point about the Parramatta Road corridor picking up most of the uplift in development. Significantly, if you look at the figures in the Metro West submission, that growth goes from, roughly, about Sydney Olympic Park, down Parramatta Road to Parramatta. Yet that's the section that has no stops on it. What's been the Government response when you've raised this with them? I assume you have raised with them where that significance development is meant to happen—that corridor with no stops.

DAVID BORGER: I don't think there has been a response, Chair. I do think that one of the opportunities with WestConnex was the opportunity to reinvent Parramatta Road. This was the plan, the Parramatta Road—WestConnex was actually a—

The CHAIR: They reinvented it. They put 20 per cent more traffic on it.

DAVID BORGER: Yes. It was meant to be a revitalisation process for Parramatta Road, and I think people were interested in light rail and other sort of public transport options, but I think RMS ultimately took the view that the carriageway was needed for redundancy in the traffic system and actually none of that could happen. So I think that was the only realistic option, other than a Metro West stop, and it looks like there is no real focus on doing that.

ALLISON TAYLOR: In terms of Sydney Olympic Park, yes, there can be housing uplift there and economic uplift, but it's also, as you said, for those communities nearby: Newington, Wentworth Point, over the river, Melrose Park and Carter Street, Lidcombe. That's where Parramatta Light Rail stage two comes in because it basically feeds into the metro and connects those communities, which are currently quite isolated.

DAVID BORGER: Chair, is it possible to make one comment, just about the station box development? I think one other thing that's interesting is at Parramatta the Metro team has compulsorily acquired almost an entire city block between Macquarie Street, George Street, almost to Smith Street and Church Street. It's a very large area. They're building a—

The CHAIR: That's where the council car park was?

DAVID BORGER: Correct—that's where the council car park was. The Roxy cinema is still there. The reference design, I think, produced by Transport for NSW envisaged about 200,000 square metres of gross floor area, which is a very large amount of space, equivalent, effectively, to Parramatta Square's massive development. The reference design has two very large footprint commercial office buildings. I think that it's time to reconsider what Parramatta actually needs out of that site and post-COVID whether there'll be that much demand for massive, commercial, fat-footprint offices and whether we can do something to actually save the Roxy and create an entertainment precinct there. I think there should be a process of intentionally working out the design with the community. Now's the chance to pause and to get the right development outcome. At Westmead, we've got heavy rail, light rail and metro rail all coming together in a very tight knuckle around Westmead station. So the urban design challenges of making that a really great space, a place of arrival, I think, are significant. It'd be important to ensure that we actually do achieve those great design place outcomes because it's such a complicated, congested precinct.

The CHAIR: Just going back to that, what are the vacancy rates across the CBD and Parramatta CBD?

DAVID BORGER: The A-grade vacancy rates are very low. B-grade vacancy rates are huge. I haven't got the precise figure—the latest Property Council document would show it—but it's enormous. There's been a flight from the B-grade to the A-grade. They've moved up to higher quality space. So there's a challenge now of what do you do with the empty B-grade offices, which are dotted all around the place, both here and Parramatta. It's not an easy answer to that. Some could be converted to residential, but the bigger footprints don't really work. We're not really sure what happens to those vacant B-grade spaces.

The CHAIR: Allison, earlier today Parramatta council said, "We're getting Commonwealth Bank moving back into Parramatta CBD." They were at Sydney Olympic Park?

ALLISON TAYLOR: Yes

The CHAIR: Then they were subsidised by the Government to go to—

ALLISON TAYLOR: Eveleigh.

The CHAIR: Now they're, within how many years, moving to the Parramatta CBD?

ALLISON TAYLOR: That's happened very quickly. They moved out in about 2016. They'd been at Sydney Olympic Park for less than 10 years, and they actually moved there on the promise that there would be direct transport. For quite a few years, there wasn't any direct transport, so the Commonwealth Bank actually put on their own buses across Sydney, but that hid the figures. There was no way to feed those figures into the transport system, so those 5,000 people that were travelling every day on subsidised buses just wasn't recognised. No, I didn't know that the City of Parramatta announced that today.

The CHAIR: I just thought you might know the story. I just thought that was an interesting.

ALLISON TAYLOR: No, I don't. But I'll see what I can find out.

DAVID BORGER: I think the Commonwealth Bank moved to Parramatta now, the recent one, is much less than the scale they had at Olympic Park. It's not a sort of thousand staff or anything.

ALLISON TAYLOR: We had 5,000 at Sydney Olympic Park, but when you see the scale of their development at Redfern—it's huge. It seemed like a huge waste of money.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. You'll be provided with a copy of the transcripts from today's proceedings, for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions. We kindly ask you to return these answers within 14 days. If you have any problems, please just contact the Committee's staff.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Ms MARGARET CRAWFORD, PSM, Auditor-General of New South Wales, Audit Office of New South Wales, affirmed and examined

Mr IAN GOODWIN, Deputy Auditor-General of New South Wales, Audit Office of New South Wales, sworn and examined

Ms CLAUDIO MIGOTTO, Assistant Auditor-General of New South Wales, Audit Office of New South Wales, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our next witnesses. Would you like to make a short statement?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: Thank you for the invitation to appear before this inquiry. We will try, as we always do, to be as helpful as possible. While we have flagged a planned performance audit of the Sydney Metro program in our recently published annual work program, to date we have not completed an audit that is directly relevant to the terms of reference of your Committee, and of course we can only speak to matters related to completed audits. That said, as we wrote in our submission, we have completed a performance audit of government acquisition of private property for the Sydney Metro project, which we tabled in February of this year. This audit assessed Sydney Metro's effectiveness in carrying out its obligations in relation to property acquisitions.

The audit found that Sydney Metro mostly complied with key legislative and policy requirements and kept accurate records, but did not complete detailed negotiation strategies for high-risk and high-value acquisitions, and did not comply with the legislative requirement to provide a formal compensation notice to the affected party within 45 days of a compulsory acquisition in any of the eight relevant acquisitions in our sample. This was because Sydney Metro must wait for the Valuer-General to complete a compensation determination before they can send the compensation notice, and the Valuer-General did not do this within 45 days. As I said, my office intends to commence a further performance audit that will consider the Government's identification, allocation and management of risk in relation to the Sydney Metro project, with a focus on the project initiation, planning and development, procurement and delivery stages. Advice to government, and probity will be key considerations in this audit, which is listed to commence between 2024 and 2026. Naturally, we will have close regard to the findings of this inquiry and look forward to engaging with your report in due course.

The CHAIR: In regards to your submission and the failure to comply with the legislative time line for compulsory acquisitions as a result of the Valuer-General, is that a common problem that you find—the 45 days?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: In the audit report it states that that has been a common issue with the Valuer-General, and other inquiries have pointed to that failure. We haven't done anything recently to either affirm or challenge that assumption.

The CHAIR: I ask the obvious question: Is it an inability for the Valuer-General with his resources to get it done in that time frame, or is it that the time frame is inappropriate?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: The audit work that we did didn't comment on resourcing, I don't think, for the Valuer-General. Claudia?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: No, we didn't comment on the Valuer-General's ability within that DPE staff mix to meet that timeline. However, given that that timeline has never been met as an average timeline in the five-year period we were looking at for this performance audit, one of our recommendations was that in the legislative review process, which is currently due for the just terms Act, that it actually be looked at—whether the 45 days is an appropriate time line.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Good timing. One of the terms of reference is around the cause of blowouts in project costs and timelines. We heard from the Sydney Olympic Park Business Association, who in their submission flagged the use of consultants as potentially being a contributing factor to cost blowouts. Have you done any audits on the use of consultants and whether the people of New South Wales are getting good bang for buck?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: To answer your question, we have done work in relation to agencies' use of consultants. That was more general work; it wasn't specifically in respect of Sydney Metro. I don't think that that audit commented directly on value for money, but it did point to poor management of consultants, and I guess you can take from that that the best value was not necessarily being achieved from the use of consultants across the sector.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: What projects did it look at? You mentioned that it didn't specifically look at this project. Did it look at Metro? Did it look at major transport projects?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: It was looking more generally across the sector. Claudia? I can't recall the specific agencies we looked at.

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: It wasn't looking necessarily at a project basis. The auditees were 10 government agencies. Shall I list those for you?

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Go for it.

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: Sydney Metro was one. Treasury, Communities and Justice, Customer Service, Education, Planning and Environment, Premier and Cabinet, Infrastructure NSW and Transport for New South Wales. They were the auditees.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I have two questions. One is—and I know you said you haven't completed audits across everything—what sort of things would you be looking at in the planned audits ahead?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: In relation to Sydney Metro? We haven't actually done a detailed scope. The matters that I read out in my opening statement are how we have described what we may look at. We will probably kick that audit off mid-next year at the earliest, I suspect, and at that time we would do a far more detailed scope so that we could be much more clear about what particular aspect—I mean, it is obviously a massive project, so we will have to confine our scope in some way. We haven't done that yet. We are trying to keep it open at the moment, and the work of your Committee and your report will help us, I am sure, in the framing of the scope for that audit.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I know there are variations talked about at the moment. Would you be able to comment on what a good business case would look like as an outcome?

IAN GOODWIN: Sure. Perhaps if I could respond to that in broad principle and just go to your earlier question about what we might look at in terms of the performance audit. The principles would be around accountability and transparency to ensure that decision-makers are being provided with evidence-based advice and are also taking into account stakeholder and community requirements. Public reporting at both the system and project level is often core to ensuring accountability and transparency. Moreover—and it goes to the question of value for money in business cases—nesting into business cases is a benefit realisation plan.

Those sorts of plans should have a clear accountability and resourcing set out, baselines and targets for measuring the benefits, the review of benefits during the course of delivery and an evaluation of cost-benefits related post-delivery. They are probably the broad principles. You could take more principles as to what you would expect to see in a business case, but business cases will need to be targeted to the scenario that they are looking at.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: Presumably, there'll be some figures that they'll have to add up to, to be able to recommend it as auditors?

IAN GOODWIN: Yes. As I said, it should all be evidence based.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Something of a common theme, particularly with the metro projects, has been cost blowouts. We're not talking about a couple of bucks; we're talking about billions. In your opinion, what has caused the initial estimate to be so far out of step with the reality, and what measures can be put in place to ensure that the estimates more accurately reflect the expected cost?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: I don't think we're in a position to be able to answer that question, because we haven't undertaken an audit of the original business case, of any variations to that or of, in your words, cost blowouts. We haven't done work in that space and, as the Auditor-General, I cannot comment or give a general opinion. I have to have done the audit to speak to that.

The CHAIR: When you do your audit, you'll obviously be provided with the original business case and any subsequent business case?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: That's a normal process? You've looked at these in relation to a number of other projects like WestConnex?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: Correct.

The CHAIR: Have you learnt any lessons from looking at those business cases and the outcomes?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: There are probably many lessons. Claudia, I don't mean to put you on the spot, but perhaps you could speak to the WestConnex one?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: The key takeaways from the WestConnex performance audit in particular was to ensure that all the estimated costs that are reasonably expected to meet consent conditions for a project are included as part of the overall project costs in the business case. What we found with WestConnex in particular was there was a budget announced. It was announced quite early and that proceeded. Then a range of enabling works that were required for the WestConnex project to meet various consent conditions, adding up to about \$4 billion-plus in total, were not included within that reported initial \$16 billion-plus budget.

The CHAIR: Are they things like moving cables?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: For WestConnex, it was more ancillary works—on-ramps, off-ramps, surface works and all works that would not necessarily have been done had WestConnex not been undertaken. They were required to fulfil consent conditions but weren't included as part of the main budget reporting for that work. That was one of the key takeaways from that project in particular. Some of our other, earlier performance audits on, for example, the Sydney Light Rail go to not announcing the budget too early and not being overly optimistic in early budget assessments and perceptions.

The CHAIR: When was the last time you had a project come in on budget?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: With performance audits we tend to—

The CHAIR: But when have you done an audit where there has been a project come in on budget?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: We tend to go to risks. We're naturally looking for performance audit topics where there are high levels of risk. There may be an inherent bias in the sample there. We tend not to find that things have gone to budget because we're looking to see what the root cause of that might be.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Moving from costs on to benefits, there was some discussion earlier about the Metro Northwest in particular. The benefits of that were originally around uplift around the stations, which didn't eventuate because the local community, in effect, didn't want that level of development around their area. Have you done audits on benefits realisation on some of these big infrastructure projects, and what have been the lessons learnt there?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: If I'm giving an example of an audit where we attempted to look at benefits realisation, that was in relation to the Sydney Light Rail project. There were a number of stated benefits there in relation to travel times and the impacts on bus routes in the area. The takeaway from that audit in particular would be that there was a lack of genuine transparency around the reporting of the value of those benefits achieved. That was one of the main comments of our follow-up report that we did on the light rail.

MARGARET CRAWFORD: As a general statement, one of the weaknesses that we find in many of the performance audits that we do is the lack of monitoring and measuring of benefits. We've called that out as a key issue for government. There tends to be the excitement about building the project but not necessarily going back to measure the benefits. That is, perhaps, a weakness across many projects.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I think what we're hearing is that there has been a pattern over the last decade or so of an underestimation of costs and an overestimation of benefits with these large-scale projects. What's the cost-benefit ratio on this one?

The CHAIR: It is 1.04.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: It just makes the cut. Do you have any commentary on that?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: I'll ask my deputy Ian Goodwin to speak to that.

IAN GOODWIN: Perhaps there might be an audit that might be useful for the Committee to consider that the Auditor-General tabled, which is the Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program, because the issue of benefits realisation was one of the factors that was considered in that audit. In that audit, the Auditor-General usefully made some recommendations for future infrastructure programs, including that New South Wales government agencies should support economical decision-making on projects by ensuring the point you just made—that the advice is balanced, and evidence based, and the benefits and risks are identified up-front. To the point of benefits realisation, it's about developing and implementing a benefits management approach from the beginning of the program, to ensure that responsibility for defining benefits and measuring the achievement is clear, rather than towards the end of the program. Part of that would be consultation with a wide range of stakeholders before those major decisions to engage in a major project are made, announced and reported publicly.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: That's twice now we've heard about the need for an increase of stakeholder engagement in the business case. Does that imply that there has been a lack of stakeholder engagement prior to a business case or evidenced in business cases that you've been across?

IAN GOODWIN: No, I wouldn't necessarily draw that out. To Claudia's earlier point, one of the challenges always referenced in the Auditor-General's report is you take a risk-based approach. We will look for whether there's a performance gap. Naturally, by looking at a performance gap, you're going to identify the issues. When you consider that we look at a handful of projects—we do look at the big ones, but a handful of projects—it would be drawing a long bow to make that conclusion for all of the projects.

The CHAIR: Given that you will do an assessment on the business case at some point in the future—2024 I think you said?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: Potentially. We haven't scoped it yet, but you would imagine that the business case is the starting point. So, we would definitely examine the business case, but what we comment on would depend on the scope of the audit. Yes, hopefully sometime next year we would kick that audit off.

The CHAIR: That will be sometime after billions and billions of dollars have already been spent in regard to the parameters that form the return on investment and the basis that they put forward for what your return on investment is. Is there an efficacy in doing that earlier in the process when a business case isn't transparently in the public domain?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: I'm not quite sure what your question is. Are you saying should we do it earlier?

The CHAIR: Given the business case isn't in the public domain—there is a summary but there is not a huge amount of justification of where the figures come from to justify how they arrived at this point, and therefore it's difficult to ascertain whether they're meeting the parameters of what the justification is for spending billions and billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Is there an earlier point coming in where you could look at the data they're putting forward to justify and say, "Is this actually true?"

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: Perhaps at this point it may be valuable to draw in the important role of independent assurance in major projects such as these. We have conducted performance audits on that particular topic in the past, including most recently, I think, in 2014. That role, to some extent, fulfills some of the roles that you're setting out in terms of monitoring, budget, gateway review, ensuring compliance with the business case and ensuring that any variations are appropriate and well-studied. Performance audits are limited in our ability to audit that live process at times. We need to come in at a particular point in time and look at what has happened and provide some comments and recommendations about whether that was appropriate and what can be done better.

The CHAIR: So you're saying where they've put forward a business case and they've used figures for total car trips on the road—network will decrease by 83,000—and they will enable an additional 820,000 jobs and 780,000 people, those figures are part of the independent assessment process, and we will go over those figures and say they're correct based on the data they've provided us. Is that what you're saying?

CLAUDIA MIGOTTO: If you're talking about the specifics of the assurance process, that may be a question best directed to Infrastructure NSW, who I understand is appearing later. My comment goes more to the role of agencies in ensuring that projects are on track, which is broadly a role for INSW, and performance audits have a particular role in lessons learnt and looking at what has happened.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: One of the themes that has come through today is the idea of having an authority or an agency that coordinates both Planning and Transport. Has that been something that's come out in any of your recommendations, especially around these metro projects?

MARGARET CRAWFORD: Not specifically. How the government of the day chooses to structure itself or administer things may be something that we would raise in an audit if we felt that it wasn't effective, but we don't have a role in advising how government should arrange itself.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: I think that recommendation is more around—

MARGARET CRAWFORD: The connection between Planning.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Yes, the inefficiencies and the lack of stakeholder consultation. If you had one agency that coordinated some of that, the delays and the cost blowouts and—

MARGARET CRAWFORD: I'm racking my brain over all the audits we've done. I'm not sure that we've called out anything specific in relation to that. Just as a long-term public servant, that question of integration

across agencies for planning purposes has long been a topic for consideration. But I don't think our work has referenced that specifically. Do you think?

IAN GOODWIN: Not specifically in terms of projects.

MARGARET CRAWFORD: What we would always be saying is just make sure that the accountabilities are clear and make sure that everyone is well aware of who is accountable for what and deliver to that.

The CHAIR: We have expended all of our questions by the looks of things. Thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice today and any supplementary questions from the Committee. We kindly ask that you return those answers within 14 days. If you have any problems, please contact the Committee staff.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

Mr DAVID GAINSFORD, Deputy Secretary, Development Assessment and Systems, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, affirmed and examined

Ms ERICA van den HONERT, Executive Director, Infrastructure Assessments, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, affirmed and examined

Ms JANINE LONERGAN, Acting Chief Executive, Infrastructure NSW, affirmed and examined

Mr RENE BURKART, Head of Assurance, Infrastructure NSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our next witnesses. Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure today to give evidence. Can you confirm that you have been issued with the Committee's terms of reference and information about the standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

RENE BURKART: Yes.

JANINE LONERGAN: Yes.

ERICA van den HONERT: Yes.

DAVID GAINSFORD: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions about that information? Obviously not; you're all very experienced. Would anyone like to make a short opening statement before we begin questions?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Yes, I would. I thank you for the department's invite to appear as a witness. I lead a diverse team of professionals assessing State significant projects across the State. This includes the assessment of project applications for State significant infrastructure, such as Metro West, where the proponents are public authorities. These assessments are undertaken in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The assessment of State significant infrastructure is focused on a review of the environmental impacts of a project, as presented in the project application and the environmental impact assessment documentation—that is, the department assesses the project as it is presented to us by the proponent.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the determining authority for State significant infrastructure projects. The then Minister for planning declared Metro West as critical State significant infrastructure in September 2020, as it was considered an essential project for the State. Sydney Metro progressed a staged application and assessment approach for Metro West. The stages included concept, Sydney Metro West project at a concept level, approved 11 March 2021; stage one, civil construction between Westmead and The Bays, approved also on 11 March 2021; stage two, civil construction between The Bays and the Sydney CBD, approved 24 August 2022; and stage three, tunnel fit-out, metro station building and operation, approved 21 January 2023.

The Department undertook a comprehensive assessment of each application, which included consultation with New South Wales government agencies, councils and the community. Each application was subject to an extended exhibition period. Any change to the project that is not consistent with the project approval would require a modification, and should the change fall outside the scope of the project description a new project application may be required. Consistent with a project of this complexity, to date there have been seven modifications determined that have been largely administrative in nature or that have responded to detailed design or construction methodology changes.

As the project has transitioned into construction and delivery, the department's focus is now on managing post-approval matters and regulating compliance. The Sydney Metro post-approval management plans establish a framework for construction environmental management. The department promotes an adaptive management approach and the conditions of approval for the project require implementation of a suite of documents that are updated over time. Critically, the approval includes a community communication strategy, by which Sydney Metro commits to the processes and requirements it will follow to engage with the community affected by its projects. The department's post-approval and compliance teams have dedicated staff for the review and management of amenity impacts at significant construction sites across the project, including at Five Dock, Burwood North and Westmead.

This includes proactive inspections and investigation of community complaints. Prior to the submission of the State significant infrastructure applications and the environmental impact statements, the department was a participant in the Sydney Metro West project strategic station options working group that was led by Sydney Metro as part of the identification of station locations. Ultimately, the New South Wales Government of the time

made the final decision on station locations as well as the alignment and the department assessed the submitted application.

The department has also supported various strategic land use outcomes around the Sydney Metro West stations. This has included providing grants to relevant councils in the Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation Strategy area, an area that captures many of the metro stations. These grants supported the progression of strategic planning work to enable rezoning around each of the stations. Currently, the department is working with Placemaking NSW and NSW Ports to master plan the remainder of The Bays Precinct after stage one was rezoned late last year. Thank you. I am happy to assist with any questions you may have.

The CHAIR: Do you want to make a short statement?

JANINE LONERGAN: Yes, thank you, Chair. Regarding the terms of reference for this inquiry, Infrastructure NSW's role in relation to Sydney Metro and its business case has principally been through our investor assurance function as outlined in the Infrastructure Investor Assurance Framework [IIAF]. The final business case for the Sydney Metro West project was developed by Sydney Metro and submitted to government for an investment decision in late 2019. In accordance with the IIAF, projects such as this are independently monitored and assured by Infrastructure NSW through their development stages, including business cases and delivery. To provide transparency to the public on government investment decisions on major projects, Infrastructure NSW publishes summaries of the final business cases for tier one and tier two projects. Under this process, Infrastructure NSW prepared and published a business case summary for Sydney Metro West based on key information contained in the business case and information collected through assurance processes.

The business case summary was published on the Infrastructure NSW website in July 2020. Through our investor assurance role, which includes ongoing monitoring and reporting on the State's infrastructure program, Infrastructure NSW also provides independent advice on projects to delivery agencies, including Sydney Metro, and reports directly to Cabinet, the Premier and the Treasurer. This advice is Cabinet in confidence. I would like to reiterate at the outset that we will be unable to respond to questions from the Committee regarding any advice we have provided on the project or any views we have, and our ability to provide evidence is limited to the information in the IIAF, publicly available Infrastructure NSW assurance resources and the published business case summary. We are happy to provide further detail on how these processes work if it would assist the Committee.

The CHAIR: Just on that, our ministerial terms of reference require us to examine the original business case. Can you provide the Committee with the original business case?

JANINE LONERGAN: Unfortunately, Chair, we can't. The business case is owned by Sydney Metro. Sydney Metro developed the business case. Infrastructure NSW does not have a copy of the business case and, in the event that we did have a copy of it, it's Cabinet in confidence and we wouldn't be authorised to provide that to you.

The CHAIR: Thank you for stating your position. The Committee will consider the matter further at a later date. Planning, could I ask the same question? As you are aware, our ministerial terms of reference require us to examine the original business case. Can you provide the Committee with the original business case?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Thank you, Chair. To the best of my knowledge, we don't have a copy of the business case. That wouldn't have formed part of the Environmental Impact Statement assessment that I mentioned before. We don't have a copy of the business case.

The CHAIR: Are you taking that on notice to ascertain if you do have a copy of the business case, or you are just saying you don't have a copy of the business case?

DAVID GAINSFORD: My understanding is we wouldn't have been furnished a copy of the business case. It's not something that's required as part of the environmental impact statement process.

The CHAIR: Thank you for stating your position. The Committee will consider the matter further. Going forward with both your roles in Planning and the business case itself, in terms of the assurance function of the department around the business case I am trying to ascertain the information that was provided to meet the return of investment, the 1.04 and the 1.34. The data behind that—does Industry check the information and data provided in the business case to ascertain that what is put forward as the return on investment is correct?

JANINE LONERGAN: I will refer to my colleague, Mr Burkart, Head of Assurance, to respond to the assurance process in relation to assurance of business cases.

RENE BURKART: Chair, neither of us were with Infrastructure NSW at the time that the summary was prepared. However, I do point the Committee to page 20 of the summary, which indicates that Infrastructure

NSW has undertaken all assurance reviews required under the IIAF. Maybe I can take just a couple of minutes to explain the process which we go through, if that would be helpful. Infrastructure NSW's assurance function undertakes four types of assurance on projects and this is a risk-based assurance process that we undertake. Each of our projects that are registered with Infrastructure NSW we put into tiering. Tier one are big projects—Sydney Metro West is considered a tier one—also sometimes referred to as high-profile, high-risk projects. With those projects we undertake assurance reviews at each of the gates. We have gate zero to gate six, so seven gates that we undertake assurance reviews on. We also undertake health checks during construction.

The CHAIR: I stop you there. You say you take assurance reviews. What do you take them on?

RENE BURKART: The assurance review that you were just referring to in terms of the business case is what we call a gate two assurance review. The business case and associated documents are provided to an independent assurance panel. We have over 200 independent experts that are on our panel that we draw from. We collate a team together of between two and four assurance reviewers. We look at the capabilities that each of those people brings to the table and they examine the documents, they undertake interviews with key stakeholders at the time that the documents were prepared and then they furnish a report that provides recommendations back to both the project team, but also to government, on improvements that could be made to ensure the project is delivered within cost and time.

The CHAIR: That wasn't my question. My question was, the figures that underpin the benefit-cost ratio, the 1.04, as part of your assurance do you guarantee that they are correct?

RENE BURKART: We do an assurance review. The team looks at those numbers and makes sure that they make sense, but we do not guarantee that they're correct.

The CHAIR: When they say they have got an uplift on housing of a certain figure as part of their justification for the benefit-cost ratio—

RENE BURKART: Again, the assurance reviewers would look at that and make sure that it makes sense, rather than making sure that every number to the last decimal is actually correct.

The CHAIR: When you say it "makes sense"—when they said, "We're going to have housing uplift around the stations", and that would be the justification for where stations were being placed, you would check there is uplift that is significant at those stations?

RENE BURKART: Yes. As part of the assurance team's deliberations and questioning with stakeholders, they would make sure that that is a view that the experts would be able to support with appropriate evidence.

The CHAIR: We've had councils in here this morning—and a significant number of planning people—that have told us that of the eight stations only one of them, Pyrmont Station, has a plan for an uplift.

RENE BURKART: Because Sydney Metro and their consultants were the ones who prepared the business case, those detailed questions might be better directed to Sydney Metro.

The CHAIR: Aren't you the people who are meant to assure us—because we don't have the business case—that that is correct?

RENE BURKART: Yes, we provide assurance and advice to government on how the projects are tracking in terms of their risks and mitigations.

The CHAIR: I'll go back to my original question. In terms of the benefit-cost ratio and the figures they provide to underpin their return on investment, can you assure us that they are correct?

RENE BURKART: Again, if I can just state that at the time when this assurance review was undertaken, I was not in the role, so I personally cannot give that guarantee. What I can tell you is that the assurance reviewers at the time looked at that and provided advice back to government in relation to those numbers, but I'm not able to provide you the details of that advice.

The CHAIR: You can see my dilemma. I don't have the business case, which is the fundamental document on \$23 billion of public spending, and I'm on a committee that has oversight to look at it and a reference from the Minister to look at it. My only assurance is that your department is giving the public an assurance on a document that nobody has access to, other than the Cabinet apparently, and I'm asking you whether you're committed to that assurance to the public that it is correct.

RENE BURKART: Our assurance is to government and Cabinet and we provide our advice directly to Cabinet and therefore, unfortunately, that information is Cabinet in confidence.

The CHAIR: Alright, so you're not there to assure the public that a government agency, which refuses to release a business case and be transparent—you're not there to reassure the public; you're there to reassure the Government that its government agency is giving you the right data?

JANINE LONERGAN: Chair, our role is to identify risks and provide advice to government in relation to those risks. The business case was prepared at a point in time. Neither my colleague nor I were involved in the preparation of the summary of the business case. We stand by the business case summary that is on our website. That summary went through an extensive approval process, including review by the Sydney Metro team, who were involved in preparing the business case—

The CHAIR: So, you're saying it was reviewed by the team that prepared it?

JANINE LONERGAN: The summary that we prepare of the business case, which includes the Infrastructure NSW independent view of the business case, and that view is informed by our assurance activities. The business case summary—

The CHAIR: I'm asking you whether you can assure this Committee that the data that was provided to get the cost-benefit ratio—the data on uplift, traffic movements, jobs—has been reviewed and stands up to scrutiny?

JANINE LONERGAN: That is the job of the assurance function and the assurance team. That was the job of the independent reviewers at that time back in 2019. Our assurance function is a very well-established function. We have the most experienced reviewers that we use from our assurance panel, so we certainly would stand by the robustness of the assurance process.

The CHAIR: How rigorous would that process be if, out of the eight stations, only one of them had a master plan for uplift?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I wonder whether I can help with that question with regard to the uplift at the various stations. I think I mentioned in my opening statement—again, my area of expertise is with regard to the environmental impact statement process that we followed, but other colleagues of mine in the department have been involved, and are continuing to be involved, in processes looking at rezonings around a number of those stations. I mentioned before the Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy work that we've been doing, which is largely trying to incentivise councils, to which some of these stations are in close proximity. I am aware that Burwood Council recently released some draft plans with regard to Burwood North.

The CHAIR: Sorry, can I stop you there? We've been provided with a map of Parramatta Road by the Metro and the significant urban uplift on Parramatta Road is all to the west, essentially, of Burwood. The biggest parts are to the west of Burwood. How did you get to a place where there was a stop at Parramatta and a stop at Sydney Olympic Park when the biggest uplift of housing, according to the maps provided by you and Metro West, is on Parramatta Road, if that is your justification?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I can't speak specifically to that work because it's not something that I'm actually involved with. The point that I was trying to raise is that a number of these rezoning processes—there's work we're doing in The Bays Precinct and there's obviously lots of work we've been doing with council with regard to Parramatta itself. There is a lot of work that's ongoing to look at opportunities for rezoning and uplift in housing associated with those stations. I can't speak to some of those specifics because I haven't been involved in those, but I was just trying to be helpful with regard to commentary around completed rezoning processes. There are other rezoning processes underway.

The CHAIR: Isn't there a fundamental problem here? We're tasked to look at and review the business case for the Metro that we don't have access to. The only summary we have of it is an assurance by Infrastructure NSW. Now we have the Department of Planning and Environment here as well and the big question has got to be, just on the billions and billions of dollars and the 7½ or eight kilometres of line that has nothing on it, where is the actual uplift in housing and development?

You have precincts like Camellia, the Parramatta Road urbanisation and the major Silverwater precinct on the Silverwater and Parramatta Road junctions that are considered the worst roads in Australia. We want to know that the assurance that justified billions and billions of dollars of public spending, with no stations along what is essentially Western Sydney—the bit that starts after Sydney Olympic Park, not the bit before Sydney Olympic Park—which why it's called Metro West. It has no stop on it until you get to Parramatta, the gateway to Western Sydney. We're asking, "Where is the rigour around these figures?" We'd like an assurance, given we don't have the business case of how we came to that.

DAVID GAINSFORD: Chair, I appreciate the question. I really can't talk to the decisions that the Government made with regard to the station locations and the station choices around Olympic Park and

Parramatta. You've got Sydney Metro that are on straight after us today and you can avail yourself of asking them questions. With regard to the Environmental Impact Statement, as I mentioned before, we ultimately are assessing the project that is put forward in front of us and that environmental impact assessment is not doing a detailed analysis of the business case. That is not part of the environmental impact statement process. We're looking at the merits of the project and how that stands up on the basis of what is presented to us.

The CHAIR: I understand what an environmental impact statement is. You did intervene when I was asking about the assurance on the business case.

DAVID GAINSFORD: I'm not best placed to answer assurance questions on the business case, sorry.

JANINE LONERGAN: Chair, the independent review team that was charged with doing the assurance on the final business case would most definitely have looked at the information and the data sitting behind the information contained in the business case.

The CHAIR: So, you would be happy that the figures that have been provided by Metro West and included in the strategic needs and justification are correct?

JANINE LONERGAN: I'm satisfied that we have a robust assurance function, and the framework is a framework that has been in place now for quite a number of years. It's a very well-established function. We have very experienced reviewers involved in our assurance reviews, and it is the job of those reviewers to interrogate the information that project teams provide them.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Just so I've got this clear, this is an inquiry into the Sydney Metro West project with reference to the original business case for the project. We've been refused access to that business case. Your agency provides assurance on that business case, but the advice on that assurance we also don't have access to.

JANINE LONERGAN: That's correct. I understand your frustration, but it is my duty as a public servant to abide by the Cabinet conventions and it is my duty to not disclose the deliberations of Cabinet or to talk about advice that is provided for the purposes of deliberation of Cabinet. I'm not permitted—I'm not authorised—to talk to you about advice or to provide you with documents that are Cabinet in confidence.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: That advice that your agency provided could say, "Things are going swimmingly. It's going fantastic. It's exceeding its business case." Or it could say the opposite: "The business case hasn't stacked up. It's terrible. This is a project that probably shouldn't have gone ahead." The range is quite wide in terms of that advice you may be providing.

JANINE LONERGAN: I'd refer you to our independent commentary, which is part of our summary of the business case that was published. The assurance reviews found that the overall case for the eight-station configuration was considered strong and presented a compelling case for investment and went on to note the strategic fit for the project.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Part of that is based on the assumptions that go into the original business case. Do you challenge the original assumptions that go into the business case? How rigorous are you? How much do you take for granted? How many do you take at face value? How much how do you challenge?

RENE BURKART: Because the BCR numbers are noted in our advice attached to the business case summary, I've got confidence that those numbers were interrogated and that those numbers were considered by the assurance review team as being good numbers at that point in time.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: One of the things that has come up in both the submissions and the evidence that has been given today is this issue around a 20-minute journey time from Parramatta to the CBD. From what I gather, the push for this primarily came from the Minister. We can have a chat with Sydney Metro about this later in the day. Would that be something that you would provide assurance on—whether that stacked up as a good idea, and whether that was feasible, and whether the benefits of that meant that other potential benefits, such as additional stations, were pushed to the wayside?

RENE BURKART: Certainly, our assurance team would have considered the expected outcomes of the business case and would have looked at ensuring that the risks to both cost and project timing—would have considered how to deliver the project appropriately to those. I think the key in this situation for the reviewers is really looking at the risk to government in being able to deliver the project on time and on budget.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: On that, it appears there have been significant cost blowouts. Are you able to comment on those and the reasons for those or things that we can learn from that—lessons learned for future projects?

JANINE LONERGAN: I might start, Chair, and then refer to my colleague. Certainly confidence in cost, scope and delivery time frames increases as a project progresses. I would refer the Committee to our published advice on information on infrastructure projects, which explains the stages of project development and the level of detail that may be confidently provided to the public at each stage. Our advice on cost and time forms part of the assurance process, so we're not going to be able to comment further on that. But in terms of the process, did you want to make any further comment?

RENE BURKART: No.

JANINE LONERGAN: No? Okay.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I have a couple of questions. I can ask those questions to the Department of Planning or Infrastructure NSW—whoever feels it's relevant. Given there has been significant commencement in regard to Metro West, are you aware of any aspects of construction that have been brought to a halt currently in relation to this project?

DAVID GAINSFORD: From my perspective, Mr Williams, no. I'm not aware of any parts of the project that have been brought to a halt.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: So, the project continues on regardless of the current inquiries that are being held and the posturing of the current Government with the on-again off-again support for this project?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I will just repeat my answer that I'm not aware that there's been any stopping of the work that was underway.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Are you aware of any delay in regard to this project? I think it had an end date, a completion date, somewhere around 2030. What do you think the completion date may be now?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Mr Williams, I'm definitely not best placed to answer that question. I think that's probably a question better for Sydney Metro.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I'm happy to ask that. I thought I might just run it by you guys as well. I did note that the Chair raised the point about the master planning around stations. As someone who has several of the Metro West stations in my backyard, it would be lovely to live in a perfect world and to think there was master planning done with those stations. I think the only one that has been master planned on this project is The Bays precinct. The Bays precinct, as you must be well aware, has been underway for well over a decade. I was certainly involved in it some time back in 2012. It has been underway, and I think that the Metro West was certainly an addition to that particular master plan.

The master planning may have come around The Bays precinct—I'm quite sure it did—before the Metro West was there. But your subsequent zoning around the stations would be relevant to the uplift in terms of what would be able to be developed there in the future, similar to the way it is around the Castle Hill Showground precinct and to the way we'll go forward, I imagine, around Bella Vista and Kellyville in the future. The point that I'm a little bit concerned about is that we have a government that continues to raise issue with the amount of housing stock that is currently available and how soon that housing stock is going to be able to be brought to bear. That's why I'm concerned about any subsequent delays that may be there not only in relation to stakeholders, landowners and developers but, ultimately, the people that will need those particular dwellings: the home owners, the future home owners and the renters, who would certainly like to see that sooner rather than later.

DAVID GAINSFORD: Mr Williams, you're right in identifying The Bays precinct. I'm aware that the first stage, stage 1A, of The Bays precinct has undergone a rezoning particularly, as you mentioned, focused around the station. As you would also be aware, the department is significantly involved in housing work at the moment and, in accordance with the Housing Accord, in looking at opportunities for further housing development right across the board. That's certainly something that I'm heavily involved in at the moment. To the extent that projects like Sydney Metro West and other transit-oriented development help support the uplift in housing numbers and affordable housing, that's something that the department obviously supports.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: In regard to what you've just said there, any subsequent delay in regard to this particular project is going to place constraints on delivering those dwellings in the future. Would you prefer this project to go through in its current status? If there are any subsequent changes made, what delays may that pose to the future development of dwellings in and around those precincts in the future?

DAVID GAINSFORD: From my perspective, I don't think it's appropriate for me to get involved in hypotheticals about what may or may not happen. Obviously, the department is engaged in assisting, in many cases, councils with the work that they're doing along the corridor and along Parramatta Road, and we'll continue

to be engaged in that. If government priorities change then we'll obviously need to change with those government priorities.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: You just talked about risk and hypotheticals. I guess that's what this Committee is dealing with, at this point in time, without seeing the business case. We're talking about an assurance. If I'm correct, you said that the last assurance was done in 2019—the original assurance—and you've got some gateway numbers. Where are they up to? What has been the process?

RENE BURKART: In terms of assurance reviews, we do a lot of assurance with Sydney Metro West because it is such a large-scale project. Certainly, those assurance reviews continue on, especially—we were just talking about construction activities. We do six-monthly health check reviews on those construction activities, so those activities are continuing. We do continue on with assurance reviews post the business case review that we were talking about before.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: So, the assurance is on the construction, not the costing? Or are they both things?

RENE BURKART: We continue to monitor cost and time impacts on the project throughout the project. The six-monthly construction health checks focus on how the project is tracking against where the expectation was in the planning phase; are they tracking against time and cost?

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I would have to tell you, just looking at this—the frustration, as you've explained, when we look at the gap between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park, and the discussions that we had earlier, and the fact that this has all been based on a time frame from Parramatta to the city, and we're not allowed to see the business case study. I'm not sure it would pass the pub test. We are here to assure not only the Government but also the public that this money is being well spent. I don't know how you would comment on that as far as our ability to assure our public that this is going to have a good outcome when there seems to be a lot of unknowns and hypothesis around it.

JANINE LONERGAN: I'd point the Committee to Sydney Metro's submission where it looks at the rationale for the station locations. I note that Sydney Metro are appearing at this inquiry today.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: I'd like to jump in here. You mentioned earlier about a fairly extensive community consultation. You're unable to provide the original business case. You're unable to provide assurance that the assurance is worthwhile, other than that you stand by the process. Through the course of today, of the 19 people who have given evidence, 17 of them have made the point that the 20-minute trip from Parramatta to the city took precedence over the connectivity issues with the metro. We've also heard evidence from councils that the uplift in Westmead is less than 10,000 residents; that the uplift in Parramatta is limited because of its proximity to the flood plain; and, from multiple stakeholders, that Camellia was a valid station because of the uplift that could occur there and at Silverwater and Newington. I'm just curious. As a government department, who is there to assure the Government of the veracity and the cost benefit of this? How is it that all of these other stakeholders have been able to raise these as issues and you have not?

JANINE LONERGAN: I'll refer back to what I said at the beginning. It is our role to provide advice to project teams, which we do, and also to government. That advice is Cabinet in confidence, so we can't comment further on your question. I appreciate the frustration of the Committee and that you're seeking answers, but we are also bound by our obligations.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Let me put it another way. In your opinion, would there have been a better benefit ratio than 1 to 1.04 if there was the inclusion of Camellia and perhaps Silverwater as stations along this line?

RENE BURKART: Can I ask the Committee, please, to take that question to Sydney Metro? Sydney Metro undertook the investigation of a whole number of stations. Surely that question can be better answered by them than by us.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: I intend on it. But in your opinion, as people who are assuring the Government of the value of the project and of the benefit of the project, I'm asking you now: Would the addition of those stations provide a greater cost benefit?

RENE BURKART: One of the challenges with adding additional stations is that obviously it increases the cost of the project at the same time. It's this fine balance between an increased cost but also an increase in benefit. Without having undertaken the work to identify that balance, it's very difficult to comment on what you're asking us to comment on.

The CHAIR: Can I just go back to Planning for a moment? In terms of planning, when you're looking at strategically where infrastructure is placed, I assume Planning does some work, as an overview of the city as a whole, in terms of infrastructure?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Yes.

The CHAIR: What is your view on movements of people, on where they work and how they travel to work once you hit the west of King Georges Road, in terms of placing infrastructure?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Chair, this is not my area of expertise, but what I would say is that obviously there's lots of planning work that is in the public realm from the Greater Cities Commission and also the strategic elements of our department, which look at all of those elements of infrastructure provision and housing provision and jobs across the city. I can't really answer your specific question with regard to west of King Georges Road.

The CHAIR: We've got a major infrastructure project here that is meant to underpin—it's meant to do a couple of things. It's meant to take some pressure off the western line, which everyone understands. It's meant to connect the CBD and Parramatta, yet it doesn't stop anywhere in the western suburbs between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta. I'm just wondering what kind of movements were envisioned by this. Was it being built to take people to the CBD or was it meant to be something that people were getting to work in Parramatta?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Chair, I think those questions are best asked of Sydney Metro. As I mentioned in my opening statement, from an environmental impact statement point of view, we are assessing the project that's put to us. We're not assessing alternative—

The CHAIR: So where does this sit in government? Where is this conflict? This is what we get from a lot of people. Where is this overview that says, "Here we are, in a city". From a political point of view, I know that the three seats with the largest populations in New South Wales are Parramatta, Auburn and Granville, and this does not stop in those electorates on its way through, between those two main points where the three largest populations in seats are. Where is this element that looks at a business case and says, "Well, hang on a second, here's where the biggest amount of housing is going"? Anyone who drives through Granville, Auburn, Carter Street—any of those precincts—and knows what's happening in Camellia would say, "This is where the cheaper high-rise housing is all going. It's all going here, along Woodville Road. Here is where the largest populations are. Here we've got universities, major entertainment precincts, a huge industrial estate and Parramatta Road," which is our urban uplift that we're expecting everyone to build high rise on. Who's standing there in Planning saying, "Well, is this appropriate"?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Thank you, Chair. Again, I'm unfortunately not best placed to answer that question. Clearly, decisions made about transport infrastructure are largely taken by Transport and the Government, but the answer that I gave before around the Greater Cities Commission and also the other parts of the Department of Planning that do look at strategic planning and look at the integration of transport and other infrastructure with those demands and housing—that is something that we've actually been doing. In terms of my being involved in the public sector and also in planning for over 20 years, I think that integration and the way we work with other infrastructure agencies, including Transport, is better in the past five years than it has been in the past. I'm certainly not going to suggest that it's perfect, but I draw your attention to those published documents and the strategic planning work that's been done there.

The CHAIR: I've got the published documents in front of me. "Reduce station crowding at some stations" is one of the things it's going to do. Other than Parramatta and the CBD, I can't imagine it's reducing crowding at stations. "Connect greater Parramatta and the Sydney CBD to support the vision of a metropolis of three cities." What does that mean?

DAVID GAINSFORD: Again, I'm certainly not best placed to talk about crowding of stations. That's probably a question better asked of Sydney Metro. But I do know that the documentation that was prepared for Sydney Metro talked about connecting—you mentioned the three cities before—the Central River City with the eastern city. That was obviously one of the objectives put forward as part of the proposal for Sydney Metro West.

The CHAIR: "Connect greater Parramatta and the Sydney CBD to support the vision of a metropolis of three cities"—is that the way people are travelling? Particularly given most of the population lives in Western Sydney and our major employment precincts, is that the way people are travelling?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I know that in the next session you've got the Chief Transport Planner from Transport for NSW. I would suggest that that's a great question for him.

The CHAIR: I just don't understand why Planning doesn't—we have this silo where we ask Transport. People would think Planning would have some kind of oversight in the city.

DAVID GAINSFORD: I understand.

The CHAIR: When you do a master plan—say, for example, the Carter Street master plan. Independent of speaking to the Department of Education or anyone else, you did the Carter Street master plan. You whacked 8,600 dwellings on it. You put in the master plan that there was going to be a primary school. Education didn't know about it, but you didn't worry about that because you said, "There's 8,600 people. There's going to have to be a primary school here, so we'll put it in the master plan. We'll put two football fields in the master plan because there's going to be 15,000 people on half a square kilometre." Planning does, in master plans, do things independently. Who's looking at this more broadly when you're considering these projects?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I can't speak to the specifics of the Carter Street master plan.

The CHAIR: That's just an example.

DAVID GAINSFORD: No, I know. You clearly know that better than I do. I guess what I do want to convey, though, is that government does work together. We do work closely together with our Transport colleagues. My colleague here and I work very closely with School Infrastructure. There is coordination that we attempt to do as part of strategic planning and also as part of major project assessment. I take your point in regard to concerns that you have around some of the failings there. No doubt we can continue to look to do better in regard to that work.

The CHAIR: Would "doing better" be putting more stations where the bigger uplift and the movements are that are already aligned on that expensive piece of infrastructure?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I can't answer that. I don't have an opinion on it.

The CHAIR: But you're from Planning. Surely you can answer that. Wouldn't that be a better alignment?

DAVID GAINSFORD: I genuinely don't know. All I can say is that we assessed what was put in front of us in terms of Metro West. We didn't assess all sorts of viable alternatives. That's often a criticism of environmental impact statements, but the environmental impact statement process is not designed to assess every potential alternative.

The CHAIR: I assume with the assurance function that you'll only deal with the data that's before you, not the possible better business case.

RENE BURKART: Certainly, our assurance reviewers make sure that all the options have been considered appropriately.

The CHAIR: You do make sure that they've been considered appropriately?

RENE BURKART: The assurance reviewers will look at the options that are in front of them, yes.

The CHAIR: But they won't consider other options?

RENE BURKART: They may make recommendations where they feel that options have not been comprehensive in dealing with the task at hand.

The CHAIR: Did they make any recommendations in this case?

RENE BURKART: That is, unfortunately, what I can't talk about. I'm very sorry.

The CHAIR: You can't talk about that because—

RENE BURKART: That information is part of the information we provide to Cabinet.

The CHAIR: So, there's an assurance function that you do. You provide a summary, because the public doesn't get a business case. But if it falls short and you give a different view, you can't tell us that.

RENE BURKART: If there was a different view, we would have attached that to the summary business case. In this case, we provided support for the project in our summary.

The CHAIR: So, you're essentially saying that you didn't put a different view than what the summary provided—that was your view that you put to Cabinet?

RENE BURKART: The view that we provided at the end of the summary was our view of the project at the time.

The CHAIR: Right. So, you didn't consider any other proposal or that anything else should be considered other than what was in the business case that was provided to you?

RENE BURKART: I'm sorry. The challenge I've got—I cannot talk about the information that was provided to Cabinet at the time.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: I'm aware that we're very tight on time; we're running a bit over. But you've assured us that the assurance process is good. Does that assurance process involve looking at other metro projects in other parts of the world?

RENE BURKART: Our assurance process is a New South Wales-based process. We look at New South Wales projects, and we've got 747 projects last financial year that we had on our books.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: So, you wouldn't look at metro projects where metros have been used extensively in other major cities around the world and see how the application of a metro in New South Wales correlates with the application in other global cities?

RENE BURKART: The expert reviewers that we bring in to undertake the review may actually be coming in from overseas and may therefore have been involved in other projects from around the world. Automated metros is a very specific subject area and there are only a few experts around the world, so we do bring expert reviewers in from overseas when we need to.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Would it have raised a red flag that the section between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park is the longest section of any metro in the world where there is no station?

RENE BURKART: I'm coming back to my point that unfortunately I cannot talk about the information that was provided to Cabinet at the time.

JANINE LONERGAN: The reviewers, at that point in time, did find that the overall case for the eight-station configuration was strong.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Coming back to Mr Williams' comments earlier, there are obviously a number of reviews into this project, and the Government's taking a look at it. Your job is to look at cost and time blowouts. Effectively, the Government has two options while these reviews are underway. It can pause the metro project or it can continue with the project while the review is underway. Which of those two options—pausing or continuing—would have a greater effect on a time or cost blowout, in your expert opinion?

JANINE LONERGAN: Our role is to provide advice to government on those matters.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing at the Committee today. Unfortunately, we've run out of time. You'll each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions from the Committee. We kindly ask that you return these answers within 14 days. If you have any problems, please contact the Committee staff and they'll be able to assist. Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr SIMON HUNTER, Chief Transport Planner, Customer Strategy and Technology Division, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

Mr PETER REGAN, Chief Executive, Sydney Metro, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our next witnesses. Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure to give evidence. Can you please confirm that you have been issued with the Committee's terms of reference and information about standing orders that relate to the examination of witnesses?

PETER REGAN: Yes, I have.

SIMON HUNTER: And I have, as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Would either of you like to make an opening statement before we begin?

PETER REGAN: Thank you for your invitation to provide evidence to the inquiry today. I joined Sydney Metro as its Chief Executive in April 2021. As you may know, Sydney Metro is Australia's biggest public transport project and Australia's first fully automated railway. The \$60 billion Sydney Metro program includes the operational Metro Northwest Line and three lines under construction. Metro rail services started in May 2019 in Sydney's north-west and will be extended to Sydenham in 2024 and then on to Bankstown in 2025 as part of the City & Southwest project. An additional two lines are also under construction: the Sydney Metro West and the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line. This means four metro lines spanning 46 stations and 113 kilometres of new metro rail, connecting people across Sydney in the north-west, west, south-west and greater west to faster, reliable and accessible transport.

The Sydney Metro West project was announced by the former New South Wales Government in 2016. It will transform Greater Sydney by linking key employment centres, connecting communities, unlocking housing supply and providing significant urban renewal opportunities. This will boost the economic productivity of Greater Sydney and unlock planned land use outcomes across the project corridor. As forecasted in 2018, by 2036, without intervention, the existing greater Parramatta to Sydney CBD corridor will face four rail lines over capacity, more than 100 buses per hour on Parramatta and Victoria Roads, and 40 per cent of the major arterial roads over capacity. We know that Sydney Metro isn't the only solution, but it will be the critical backbone of an integrated transport system for the corridor.

Sydney Metro West has been planned in parallel with Parramatta Light Rail Stages 1 and 2 and the More Trains, More Services program to deliver a highly integrated transport outcome for Western Sydney. In 2016 it was announced by the former New South Wales Government that the project would serve four key precincts—Parramatta, Sydney Olympic Park, The Bays and Sydney CBD—with further locations to be determined, subject to further analysis. In 2018, following extensive community and industry consultation, the Sydney Metro West scope of works was expanded to include a station at Westmead. It also included a T1 Western Line connection at either Parramatta or Westmead and a T9 Northern Line connection at either North Strathfield or Concord West to provide customers with a quick and easy interchange between metro and suburban rail services.

The project continued to investigate intermediate station options, including at Rydalmere, Camellia, Burwood North, Kings Bay, Five Dock and Pyrmont. The number of stations for the project was chosen to balance both the travel times and the areas served by the metro. Those station options were assessed using comprehensive, multi-criteria analyses which looked at stakeholder, community and industry feedback; government priorities; project objectives; technical and construction factors; affordability; and economic evaluation and risk. Key to this was ensuring that the stations selected would provide maximum benefits for Sydney by supporting population growth and new jobs, and delivering both new or improved transport connections across Greater Sydney.

The final business case for the project was completed in September 2018. The business case for Metro West was submitted to government in October 2019. In 2019 the former New South Wales Government announced confirmed station locations at Westmead, Parramatta, Sydney Olympic Park, North Strathfield, Burwood North, Five Dock and The Bays. In 2021 both the Pyrmont and Hunter Street station locations were announced, which resulted in the project having a total of nine stations between Westmead and the Sydney CBD. Sydney Metro West has received full planning approval and is fully funded through allocations in the previous New South Wales Government budgets, with an estimated cost of \$25.32 billion. Work on the project started at The Bays in 2020 and now three major tunnelling contracts are underway, delivering the 24-kilometre metro line from greater Parramatta to the Sydney CBD.

As you would be aware, in April 2023 the New South Wales Government announced it would be launching an independent review into Sydney Metro. Sydney Metro has worked collaboratively with the independent reviewers since that time. I look forward to assisting today the Committee with its important work.

However, I must note that advice provided by the Cabinet Office is that the final business case and strategic business case for Sydney Metro West are official Cabinet records, having been prepared for the dominant purpose of submission to Cabinet, so I need to be careful not to breach Cabinet confidentiality. I'm appearing alongside Mr Simon Hunter, Chief Transport Planner at Transport for NSW, who can address the transport planning aspects and linkages to Transport and whole-of-government strategic plans. I welcome your questions about Sydney Metro West.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Regan, as you would be aware, our ministerial terms of reference require us to examine the original business case. Can you provide the Committee with the original business case?

PETER REGAN: Chair, as I indicated in our submission to the inquiry and in my opening statement, I'm advised that I am unable to table the final business case or the strategic business case as they are Cabinet-in-confidence documents.

The CHAIR: Can you please state how you were advised that they are Cabinet-in-confidence documents?

PETER REGAN: Yes. I've been advised by the Cabinet Office that both those documents are Cabinet in confidence.

The CHAIR: Are you aware that previous business cases for the Sydney stadiums, the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum from Ultimo to Parramatta, and the proposed Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link have all been provided to the Parliament?

PETER REGAN: I'm not aware of the specifics of those, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you for stating your position. The Committee will consider the matter further. I'll ask the same question to Transport. As you are aware, our ministerial terms of reference require us to examine the original business case. Can you provide the Committee with the original business case?

SIMON HUNTER: The advice that we've received is the same as what Peter just advised.

The CHAIR: Could you tell me what that advice is?

SIMON HUNTER: That, based on the provisions of Cabinet in confidence, we cannot provide that business case.

The CHAIR: And you're advised of that by—

SIMON HUNTER: I was advised through the advice Sydney Metro received.

The CHAIR: So you were advised of that by Sydney Metro?

SIMON HUNTER: Correct.

The CHAIR: Thank you for stating your position. The Committee will consider the matter further.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: We've heard today quite a bit about this 20-minute travel time between the CBD and Parramatta. I think all of the advice, pretty much, has been that that probably wasn't the best idea as a driver for this project. Where did that come from? What's the genesis of this "20 minutes" idea?

PETER REGAN: If I may, I'll attempt to give some flavour to that. During the period between 2016 and the investment decisions made by the previous Government in 2019-20, a range of options for Metro West were considered. They considered alignment, both north and south of the Parramatta River, and different alignments between the Parramatta River and Parramatta Road and the existing T1 western line corridor. There were a number of different permutations of station locations along those alignments. I believe over 50 station locations were looked at, along with those alignments. The alignments were probably three or four major groupings of alignments, with stations considered along those.

Along with the different locations for stations and the different alignments, those station locations and the overall design of the project were considered in the way—the relative trade-offs between those different stations and those different alignments in the area between greater Parramatta from Westmead to the Sydney CBD, but also the benefit that the project could provide in terms of the overall integrated transport network and the opportunities to improve capacity and resilience across the transport network, not just on the Metro West line itself, but also to provide interchange, capacity relief and resilience for passengers from the northern line through an interchange with the northern line and further west, with the western line.

The decision made by the previous Government was to have that interchange in the west at Westmead with a view to providing—in addition to additional transport options for people west of Westmead—the

opportunity for people travelling from Westmead to Olympic Park to the northern line or to the Sydney CBD, or anywhere in between, to change from their existing service onto the metro, and to provide a faster journey time and a more reliable journey time in doing so. The extent to which people are forecast to change trains is heavily impacted by both the interchange time itself and the journey time that they're changing to. In normal circumstances, if there's no timing benefit and they're going to the same location then they won't change. In this case, those four alignments that I talked about, both north and south of the river, each had different journey times. The number of stations that were included in each of those alignments would also affect the journey time.

I'm sure you understand that each time the train stops, it slows down. The doors open, the doors close and it moves to the next station. It adds journey time each time it stops. Of those alignments that were looked at, the journey time ranged—as far as I understand, back into the original planning—from 15 minutes or even slightly faster than 15 minutes with very few stations to more stations and up towards 30 minutes. At 30 minutes, you're certainly well beyond some of the equivalent journey times that are currently achieved. So there was a process in the development of the various business cases and the investment decision of looking at the trade-offs between the number of stations and the journey time.

I think there were lots of views expressed publicly at the time around the relative merits—15 minutes, 20 minutes, 25 minutes, half an hour. The decision that the Government of the day ended up making was that the alignment with the nine stations between Westmead and Parramatta provided the best balance between those objectives of transport time and journey time for passengers within Parramatta to the CBD but also further west of Westmead. The final investment decision for the project settled on that journey time of around 20 minutes as being the best balance between those options.

The CHAIR: Yet, as part of the original proposal, you looked at a dogleg to Rydalmere.

PETER REGAN: That's right. There were a number of alignments looked at. Going north to Rydalmere and other opportunities further along the route—

The CHAIR: Sorry. How does that align with the "20 minutes" proposal?

PETER REGAN: My understanding is that going via Rydalmere would not have delivered 20 minutes.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: You said that the Government arrived at 20 minutes being the sweet spot.

PETER REGAN: Yes. To be clear for the Committee, the process that is followed is that there is a strategic business case and then a final business case presented progressively in greater detail to the Government. The Government, in considering those business cases, then made an investment decision. The decisions as to where the stations were and which alignment, and therefore which journey time, were ultimately the decision of the Government of the day.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Do you know if that "20 minutes" figure was based on any expert advice? Or was it just that the Minister liked the number 20? Why 20?

PETER REGAN: What I do know—as I said, I can't disclose the detailed specifics of the business case—is that a very detailed analysis was done of all those options and that there's a trade-off in making those options. The Government decided at the time that the 20-minute journey time between Parramatta and the city created the right balance, with the ability to put station locations in the areas where they concluded to put those stations.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: You spoke about trade-offs. Can you speak more about what the trade-offs are? Let's say the current trip is probably about half an hour on heavy rail. If we were to add, say, an additional station at Camellia or Silverwater, that would probably add three or four minutes to the trip. When I look at the trade-offs, a 20-minute trip versus a 24-minute trip—there's trade-offs there. But the uplift or the benefit from having a station at an employment centre like Silverwater or Camellia, which is expected to have significant uplift in residential—to me, it would seem to make sense to have at least one additional station. What were these trade-offs?

PETER REGAN: Your assumption around the increase in journey time from a station of three or four minutes is probably about right. Obviously, it depends exactly where the station is and on the physical layout, but that's about right. The decision, as I said, was a decision that the Government of the day made around the balance that they were seeking to provide through the benefits within the alignment between Parramatta and the city, and the benefits to passengers further west of Westmead.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Do either of you have any commentary on what has happened since 2019 and that original business case being prepared? In essence, COVID lockdowns, the use of video conferencing—the impacts of climate change are now being realised in terms of increased rainfall. We had commentary earlier

about where the level of the stations is appropriate. In relation to that and people working from home and all those factors, do you have any commentary in relation to some of the assumptions that went into that business case in 2019 versus the reality in 2023?

PETER REGAN: Sure. I might give a view from Sydney Metro's perspective. I'm sure Mr Hunter can talk more broadly across the transport network. Clearly during COVID we saw a very considerable drop in patronage across the transport network and, from the Sydney Metro perspective, a very considerable drop-off on the Metro Northwest. Over the past couple of years, as journeys have increased again, we are now seeing that there has definitely been a change in journey patterns. There are journeys perhaps spread a little more through the day and the consistency during the week has changed, with peak travel now occurring on Tuesday to Thursday rather than a more consistent Monday to Friday. But we have also seen an increase in weekend travel and in off-peak travel, so clearly people have made adjustments to their journey patterns.

On the metro line in the north-west, on Sundays we are now operating with patronage above pre-COVID levels. On average, we're at about 90 per cent of pre-COVID levels. Last month the north-west carried its second-highest monthly patronage, so clearly, we're seeing a very continued increase in patronage on the metro and we expect that will continue. There definitely was a dislocation of travel patterns. Things are not returning exactly the same, but there is definitely very strong growth coming back onto the metro network and we expect that will continue.

SIMON HUNTER: I would concur with that analysis. I note that there was a significant change to the net migration rate that occurred during the pandemic period, which slowed down a lot of the population growth projections. However, the projections for New South Wales are still that Sydney will grow from now until 2041 by around a million people, and a significant amount of that growth and development will occur in and around this corridor. In terms of what we're seeing on public transport patronage across the network, Monday and Friday have always typically been lower patronage days than Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. What we see now is probably 20 to 25 per cent less people on the weekdays than we might have seen in 2019. As Mr Regan has pointed out, on the weekends there has been a significant bounce back of patronage. That spread of use of the public transport system is more consistent over the seven days than it was previously, and I think our planning is evolving with that. With regard to work from home, we have seen more people working in the offices more days coming back, and I think it's a trend that will probably continue to stabilise over time.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: Given those trends, do you think that original business case would still stack up today?

PETER REGAN: My understanding is that, yes, it would. Perhaps there was a lag effect on patronage, and you didn't get growth for a number of years. We've seen it come back on the metro, as I said, to almost the same level it was at previously. What we're seeing around the world in other jurisdictions is something pretty similar to that as well. As Mr Hunter says, with continued growth in the corridor—and if Sydney Metro is able to contribute to the ability to support more housing in that corridor at the station locations that are currently in the project or as the project might be configured in the future—you'll see further increases in patronage.

These pieces of infrastructure are clearly built for the very long run. Like our other lines, the Metro West is designed for an initial configuration, but the capacity of the line can be further increased as we look further into the future as patronage comes. Certainly, what we're seeing at the moment would suggest that the patronage forecasts are not, in the long run, going to be materially different. Certainly, on the north-west metro, where the development around those station sites is continuing to come, we're seeing very strong growth in patronage on the line.

Mr NATHAN HAGARTY: One last question from me. This is for Sydney Metro. I imagine the mission of your organisation is to move as many people in Sydney around as efficiently and effectively as possible. Additional stations would be in line with that mission and vision. When this number of stations was landed on, did you or your organisation have any capacity to push back at the Government? Did you push back at the Government and the Minister and go, "Actually, we would much prefer stations here, here and here"?

PETER REGAN: As a government agency, our role is to deliver what the Government of the day asks us to deliver, in terms of the scope of the project, and to deliver that to the highest standard possible. That is certainly what our focus is doing. Our focus is delivering both the railway that was decided on by the Government, but also the precincts and the places around the locations of the stations and the railway services. Certainly, we've played a strong role already. On Metro West there is a very significant opportunity for metro to directly support the creation of significant further housing in and around the precincts, particularly from Sydney Metro's perspective, directly on land owned by Sydney Metro for the construction of the railway. Then there is clearly opportunity for further housing around where the stations are.

To try and answer your question specifically, it's not our role to criticise or justify the decisions of the Government of the day. We're implementing the project that the Government decided it wanted implemented as effectively as we can. We do strive to deliver a very high-quality product. Our metro in the north-west has very, very high-performance levels. It has customer satisfaction of 99.1 per cent, which we believe is the highest customer satisfaction of any public transport mode in Australia. We're very proud that it is actually working and working to that level of performance, and it is an attractive product for different types of commuters. It certainly has the capacity to support a very significant increase in patronage and the development of significant levels of housing and other economic activity and jobs in and around the precincts that it creates.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I'm curious. I know that you're not going to criticise any government decisions from before. But if the basis that you made your original stops on was shown to change along the way, surely you would have some capacity to change, talking about stations and things?

PETER REGAN: That's clearly a decision for the Government today. You'd be aware that in April this year the Government announced an independent review into Sydney Metro and the terms of reference that were made public, including looking at the scope of Metro West and consideration of the extent to which Metro West and the scope that had been set will best deliver the Government's objectives. I understand the Government will, in due course, respond to that review. Clearly, at that point, if the Government asks us to look at additional stations or changes to the project then that's a decision for the Government.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I was really interested in your "20 minutes" explanation. I think somebody asked about the fact that we've been talking about the 20 minutes from Parramatta to the city. Your explanation of—if you make it longer then people will get on one. They won't change services and all the rest of it. But in 2016 we weren't talking about a housing crisis. We are now talking about a housing crisis with a huge delivery possibility between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. To get to Parramatta or to Sydney Olympic Park, if they live in Silverwater or Camellia or wherever, those people are not going to take into consideration the 20 minutes to Parramatta because they have to get there in the first place. Whereas if we had other stations along the way, then those thousands of people we're talking about in that housing area would have access to something that they wouldn't have otherwise. That's the first question.

PETER REGAN: That may well be right. The point I was making is that the decision of the Government of the day around that balance was a decision that they made based on the balance that they were trying to find between journey time in the corridor, beyond the corridor, and other benefits. There are, of course, ways to model. As part of the business case for any project, this is exactly the kind of modelling that is done. A value of time is ascribed to people's journeys. You can work out theoretically what that would do to patronage if you make a journey longer versus how many additional passengers and, if it is an objective that is part of the assessment criteria, how much housing it could support at each location. So, you're absolutely right, and there's a different set of answers. I don't think there's necessarily a right or wrong; it's the respective weighting that is put on those decisions. That's right.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: That's why it's vital for this inquiry to understand the original strategic plan and business case. If the world has changed in those couple of years, for us to actually be able to answer the inquiry—and I understand that you're not allowed to, but the world has changed. For us to make some good decisions or have information going forward, we really need to be able to understand that. The last question from me is where do you think the people are all coming from? Where are they travelling to now? Maybe it is for Transport. Are they all going to the city? We've heard about the empty buildings there. Are they going to Parramatta? Are they going west? In the next 100 years, where are they going to be going?

PETER REGAN: I think one of the really powerful things about connecting major city centres—railways that are designed to be single peak direction flows are nowhere near as effective as railways that have very strong flows in both directions. My understanding of the likely patronage flows on Metro West is that they are very much in both directions. It's not about getting people from the west to the city. It's also getting people from places along the alignment to jobs in Parramatta and in Westmead. Really, it is designed to have a very significant two-way flow. With the continued growth in Parramatta and in Westmead and the opportunities, both housing and jobs, we continue to change that distribution.

So you're absolutely right that, depending on how those things are weighted and the outcomes, you might come up with a different conclusion. The other thing to add to that is that the work on Sydney Metro West is well underway, but inserting additional stations is not necessarily precluded from a technical or an engineering perspective. All those things are decisions that have time and cost implications, but it depends what the overall objective of making a potential change is.

Mrs JUDY HANNAN: I like your words "along the alignment". I'll leave my questioning there.

The CHAIR: Just to be clear on why the 20 minutes was there, it was not about people along the line. It's actually about people from further west getting off at Westmead and making a transport change to the metro line to go into the city. Is that your argument around the 20 minutes?

PETER REGAN: To be clear, it's both. The faster the journey time between Westmead and the Northern Line and the city, the more interchange there will be. That's one bucket of passengers.

The CHAIR: No, sorry. I just want to know what was the driving factor of the 20 minutes.

PETER REGAN: It is still both. It was journey time between the cities of Parramatta and Sydney and the stations in between, as well as the likelihood of attracting significant interchange from the Northern Line and the Western Line. One of the reasons that's important is because, if I could use the Western Line as an example, pulling more passengers from the Western Line on to the metro itself from Westmead or Parramatta then creates more capacity on the existing Western Line, which then may support a different set of stopping patterns along the Western Line—either more express services or, alternatively, more infill stops. At the moment, those lines are forecast—at peak, as you'd probably be aware, some of them are very full.

The CHAIR: Yes, but I just want to be clear on what the driving factor was. You talk about housing and urban infill. I refer to the document you provided as part of your submission, which is the Environmental Impact Statement 2.2. If you look at the photo there, the picture that you have, all the urban growth is here, where there's no stop. That's where the bulk of the urban growth is, isn't it?

PETER REGAN: No. The intent of the metro and the understanding at the moment is that there would be urban growth—if it's housing you're asking about—along the route of the line. As I said, the decisions as to where the stations were located were decisions that were made at the time of the investment decision into the project. Where the actual growth comes is not just a matter of where the stations are. It's also what is the land use around those stations? What is the permitted land use? And what changes to land use might come at a later point, when the infrastructure is created?

The CHAIR: Well, you've got the planned growth here. You've provided a document with the planned growth.

PETER REGAN: Sorry, could you tell me which document that is?

The CHAIR: That's the Sydney Metro West Environmental Impact Statement, and it's page 2.2. It's what you provided as part of your submission.

PETER REGAN: No, no. That's part of the public document—the EIS. There is definitely an intent that inserting infrastructure allows for growth, depending on the land use change around it.

The CHAIR: When you're building the Metro West, the growth you were talking about and where majority of the growth is happening—you've got The Bays Precinct in there, which was happening as part of WestConnex. But where you have all the growth corridors—the Parramatta Road urban uplift, Camellia, everything that's going on around there—that's where the bulk of the housing is going in at the moment, isn't it?

PETER REGAN: No. We expect that there will be housing uplift along the route.

The CHAIR: How much housing uplift is there going to be at Five Dock?

PETER REGAN: Sorry, I don't have the specific numbers for Five Dock.

The CHAIR: We've had people in today who said there would be 20 per cent on 4,200.

PETER REGAN: I think the level of housing uplift achieved is not just about the physical infrastructure. It is also about what changes flow to the local planning or the overall planning controls around those stations, and that is a key issue for consideration around the metro station for land use.

The CHAIR: Yes, but the planning that is going on at Five Dock is a 20 per cent uplift, isn't it?

PETER REGAN: As I said, it depends on the future land use planning. The extent to which any of those sites could achieve a different land use outcome depends on the land use planning that is put in place, which may change over time, around each of those locations. Certainly, the metro has the capacity to move a very considerable number of passengers from each of the stations.

The CHAIR: Sorry, I think we're moving away from something here. We've got a business case that you provided documents for, yes?

PETER REGAN: That's the Environmental Impact Statement.

The CHAIR: But you provided documents for a business case saying there would be urban uplift and housing uplift, and that was your justification—

PETER REGAN: No. The Environmental Impact Statement is a planning document.

The CHAIR: I know what the Environmental Impact Statement is, thank you. I'm saying that as part of your business case, you provided data that said there would be housing uplift, yes? That dwellings would increase?

PETER REGAN: Yes.

The CHAIR: Right. Where will those dwellings increase?

PETER REGAN: The documents that we provided are the public documents that indicate, at that time, the view as to where there would be urban uplift. I'm sorry. I'm not familiar with the specific figure that you're talking to.

The CHAIR: Sure. So, the only document that you've provided that the public has access to is your Environmental Impact Statement, isn't it? What other document do you have that provides where urban uplift is?

PETER REGAN: The Environmental Impact Statements provided for the project do provide the information required to obtain the planning approvals.

The CHAIR: But where else do you provide the documents that go to your business case that say where the urban uplift is going to be?

PETER REGAN: That is in the business case. Mr Hunter can probably assist with this question.

SIMON HUNTER: Chair, just to add a bit of context here, Transport for NSW works very closely with the land use planning agencies, and we work to a common set of planning assumptions and targets. In the region plan published by the Greater Sydney Commission, targets for housing between 2016 and 2036 were provided for the LGAs along the corridor. The numbers—

The CHAIR: Let's just stop there, okay? Rather than running over the information I've just shown you—because that's that document, isn't it? That's that map in the Environmental Impact Statement, isn't it? Have you got your submission there?

PETER REGAN: I don't have the environmental impact statement with me.

The CHAIR: But that's what you provided in your submission, this section of the Environmental Impact Statement.

PETER REGAN: This is a public document. I can't answer that because I can't see the document from here. I'm happy to take the question on notice, if you would prefer.

The CHAIR: That's the document you showed. Of that urban growth and of that growth corridor that everyone's spoken about—and everyone talks about the uplift along Parramatta Road—the bulk of that is towards the western end of the metro, which is the bit between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. Is that correct, from looking at that document?

PETER REGAN: I do want to make sure I give you as helpful an answer as possible, so I'm happy to take that question on notice, if I may, to be able to give a precise answer on that.

The CHAIR: Let's just think that may be where the urban growth is going. Given that the three electorates out there—Parramatta, Auburn and Granville—are the three biggest populations in Sydney, that's probably right. Anyone who drives down Parramatta can just look at the high rise that goes on there. There are two things you talk about in the justifications and the objectives of the metro. One is the movements of people. So far, we've got the urban growth. From that document it looks like most of it is happening at the end, where there are no stops. Therefore, what you said earlier about people getting off at Westmead to change to go into the CBD—about making it quicker—was probably the driver of the Government, wasn't it?

PETER REGAN: I'm sorry, Chair. As I said, I can't disclose how the previous Government reached the trade-off decision that they made. What I can do is ensure that we are executing what the Government of the day has asked us to do. The independent review into Metro West is looking at the issue of whether the project is delivering on the Government's objectives. When the Government makes its decisions on that review, the opportunity does still exist to look at whether to change the scope.

The CHAIR: Except when you came in here, you said that you understood what our terms of reference were. Our terms of reference were specifically to look at the business case.

PETER REGAN: Yes, I realise that.

The CHAIR: I'm not asking you to disclose what you said to Rob Stokes or to Andrew Constance. You've made public a business case or a benefit-cost ratio on what was the justification for spending billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. I'm asking you what was the basis for that benefit-cost ratio? Was it urban uplift or was it that you wanted to get people off the Western Line and to change at Westmead?

PETER REGAN: I'm sorry, Chair. That is the information in the business case that is Cabinet in confidence—that trade-off. The summary of the business case was provided publicly by Infrastructure NSW at the time, but I can't—that's exactly the point, and I don't mean to be unhelpful. I can't disclose the contents of the previous Government's decisions.

The CHAIR: I have to tell you that I've spent 17 years in the Parliament. I have sat on hundreds and hundreds of committees. I have sat on the stadiums committees. I have sat on so many infrastructure committees in the other place that have dealt with this. I have never had anyone come in and say they cannot justify what their benefit-cost ratio was for a government infrastructure project.

PETER REGAN: Chair, to be clear, it is for the reason I described. The advice I have—which you could take up with the Cabinet Office, if you wish—is that the business case of the previous Government is Cabinet in confidence and I can't disclose it.

The CHAIR: You're telling me that a project that a department is spending \$23 billion on—that is the last cost I heard. Is that correct?

PETER REGAN: The budget for the project is \$25.3 billion.

The CHAIR: It is \$25.3 billion. You won't even give the public the basis of what the benefit-cost ratio was?

PETER REGAN: As I've said, the benefit-cost ratio is a key part of the business case and of the decision. I'm not trying to be unhelpful. I am advised, confirmed by the Cabinet Office, that those documents are Cabinet in confidence. Perhaps if you wish to take that up with the Cabinet Office that might be a better route, because I am advised that I can't disclose that.

The CHAIR: We'll consider that at a later date.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: This is more of an operational thing for Metro. Is the metro able to skip stations in the same way as a train that's driven by a driver? Are you able to timetable it in so that it misses certain stops?

PETER REGAN: The normal operating pattern of the metro is a consistent stopping pattern at all stations. Technically it can skip stations if there is a problem at a particular station, but the normal operating procedure is that it stops at each station. The way the metro is designed, the dwell times at those stations are quite short. The higher number of doors and the lack of internal stairs mean people move in and out quite quickly, so the general operating procedure is that it stops at each station. It is technically possible, but part of the benefit of the product to the passenger is there is a highly frequent, regular service that comes through. The normal operating procedure is that each train follows the same pattern.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Was there any consideration given by Sydney Metro to the distance between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park? We've heard evidence that that's the longest stretch between two stations anywhere in the world. First of all, is that correct, to your knowledge?

PETER REGAN: Not to my knowledge. I don't know. What I can say is that clearly, as I mentioned earlier, there were over 50 station locations looked at, including station locations between Parramatta and Olympic Park. The decisions that were made at the time were not to include any stations in that section, but there was definitely a range of options looked at on both sides of the river and between those locations at the time. But they weren't what was ultimately decided to be included in the project.

Mr WARREN KIRBY: Granted that planning decisions change over time, we've heard evidence this morning that in Westmead, because of what is already there and how it's locked in geographically, the uplift is only around about 10,000 and can only be about that. In the case of Parramatta, it's even more limited because of the metro station being in a flood-affected area, so the growth there is limited. We heard the same evidence in regard to Sydney Olympic Park. I'm struggling, as is the Chair, to understand the justification of those three stations based on the concept of growth in the corridor when the councils that are responsible for it are saying no.

PETER REGAN: That's certainly not my understanding in terms of what could be facilitated. If you look at Olympic Park, for example, there are some pretty considerable residential developments there. Certainly, there is lot of potential in and around a metro station for considerable further residential development—Parramatta and Westmead also—but it will depend on the local planning controls. In terms of the other issues that might impact and that were taken into account in looking at the alternative station options, clearly flooding is an issue

and contamination is an issue. But all those things—in fact, most things, from an engineering perspective—are surmountable. It's just a matter of relative time and cost.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Simon and Peter, thank you so much for being here today. As someone who uses the north-west metro on a regular basis when I travel to the Parliament, I fit into the 99.1 per cent of satisfied customers, and I certainly can confirm that patronage is increasing. If I remember correctly, just talking about time frames and travel times for metros, once the north-west metro is completed into the city next year I think the trip from Rouse Hill to the city will be approximately 45 minutes. Currently, with the change at Chatswood from Rouse Hill to Wynyard, the trip at the moment is roughly 55 minutes. That's almost an hour less in peak hour than what it would take to drive through toll roads in the morning. That 45-minute trip that was always proposed and that will be achieved next year is an incredible attraction to people in my area who are not only accessing the city but accessing stations along the way. And it works both ways because there was a very, very significant flow of western-travelling patronage, as you would know from your particular figures, travelling out to areas such as Norwest Business Park every morning.

There has been a lot of emphasis placed on this 20-minute trip from Parramatta. Surely that would be a great attraction if you've currently got a situation where people around Parramatta, or people who are currently accessing the T1 Western Line at this point in time, and the time that it is taking them to travel to the city, or subsequently driving into Victoria or Parramatta roads—once again, you could easily put an hour on that 20-minute trip. Surely that would have been a fundamental imperative, I imagine, in the business case for a government to say, "Well, we can get you out of your car. We can put you on a form of public transport which is accepted around the world as being first class. It is a very, very quick mode of public transport to get into the city." I'll just throw that out there. I know it's a comment, but I'm more than happy if you wanted to answer anything in it.

PETER REGAN: What I would say is that next year, when the city section of the City & Southwest Metro opens, as you rightly indicate, the journey time from Chatswood direct on the metro to the city will be about 12 minutes. It is much faster than the current journey. Therefore, not only will it be faster for people from the north-west, but we expect we will get a further interchange of people coming onto the line from further north on the North Shore Line to get to the city. Similarly, people coming from the south-west, the south and the Illawarra will have the option of interchanging at Sydenham onto the new city section, which will get them to the city faster but also increase the connectivity to North Sydney, to Chatswood, to Macquarie Park, to the educational facilities and the like.

In terms of Metro West, yes, there will be a fast and very frequent service under the current plan, but it's not just connecting people between A and B—say, Parramatta to the city. The ability then to interchange in the city onto the Metro City & Southwest line, or on to other lines, will provide a significant increase in options for passengers. I think it is important to make sure that the consideration of the design of metro systems is not in isolation from the broader transport network either. It's how it works and interchanges and provides capacity relief and resilience with the existing Sydney Trains network so that it can facilitate future change, but it's also a more integrated approach around buses and active transport.

To the Chair's question before, one of the advantages of Metro West is that it also facilitates connections to the metro. There is certainly the opportunity to look at further north-south public transport connections, be they bus or otherwise, into places like Silverwater, Olympic Park, Concord and Burwood. It would further increase the potential catchment of people and would decrease the journey time for a wide range of people, not just those located directly at a station. The metro and broader precincts that I spoke about before are designed to be interchange hubs with different types of transport, including active transport. Even just the ability for people to be able to access them and to improve the connectivity within a precinct is a key part of the design of what we're trying to do. It is very much inserting infrastructure into a broader, integrated transport network that we're looking to achieve, along with the broader work that Transport for NSW does in that space. Greater options and supporting journey time is part of it, but supporting housing is a really big opportunity for any of these investments as well.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Out in our areas, in all of those suburbs surrounding our precincts, there are buses—many thousands of routes now—that are part of that interconnected service that you talk about and that are feeding those particular stations each and every day. It would be nice to be able to provide a train or a metro for everybody, but ultimately it has to stick to certain routes. Those connected buses provide great links for people to encourage them to use public transport. Are you able to provide the Committee with a brief summary of where we're up to at this point in time with the construction of the Sydney western metro, the amount of tunnelling and the station development? Is there any work that has been done between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta at this point in time? I don't mean to put you on the spot and ask you to give us an appraisal over 50 pages or something. I just wonder whether there is some brief summary that the Committee could benefit from?

PETER REGAN: Yes, I could give you some high-level figures, but I am also happy to take it on notice to give you the precise detail. In terms of progress on the development and delivery of the Metro West, we have acquired all of the property and have all the planning approvals in place to construct the existing alignment. We have let three major tunnel and excavation contracts at around \$6 billion; all three of those are underway. We currently have four tunnel-boring machines in the ground on Metro West: two tunnelling from The Bays towards Olympic Park and two tunnelling from Rosehill towards Olympic Park. We are in a relatively advanced stage of excavating all nine station boxes, as well as a railway crossover and tunnel-boring machine launch facility at Rosehill. The remediation and earthworks for the main stabling facility at Clyde are well underway. We've also completed construction of some other enabling infrastructure.

We've built a new speedway facility out at Eastern Creek. We've built some major construction facilities in Western Sydney, which are supporting very significant local jobs around manufacturing the segments and the componentry that is used as part of the tunnelling. The tunnelling is well underway. Of the activities between Parramatta and Olympic Park, the station boxes are being built at each of the stations. We have launched two tunnel-boring machines from Rosehill towards Olympic Park, which are tunnelling at the moment. The first drive of those tunnels will be finished by the middle of next year, and then we'll return them to Rosehill to do the section through to Parramatta. So we're well underway with the construction progress for the excavation, which is obviously the first major piece of infrastructure before the actual railway works are put into that infrastructure.

I mentioned before that those tunnelling works, particularly from Rosehill towards Olympic Park, don't preclude consideration of an additional station between Rosehill and Olympic Park. Certainly, the tunnelling works are planned, and we have acquired all of the property and have the planning approvals in place for the alignment. I do note that there were a number of comments made by witnesses to the Committee earlier today around making small alignment changes in order to be able to facilitate other options. I do think it's worth making the point to the Committee that any material change to the alignment does have an impact. It's not simply a matter of just moving the machine over a bit and tunnelling in a different direction. It's a time and cost impact.

It's not that it necessarily can't be done, but the tunnelling actually has to take place after substratum property acquisitions are completed. There's a time period for that, and we need to stay within the approved alignments of our planning approvals. Now, those are things that can be changed, but there is a pathway that needs to go through—and public consultation involved, potentially—in making changes to the alignment. As I said, though, the ability to look at that is a matter for the Government of the day. Certainly, we have continued to progress with those tunnelling works, but there are definitely still options that are open for other ways to alter the project, if that's what the Government wants to do.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I greatly appreciate that. In conclusion, what I could draw from that summary is that it would be a significant cost for any alteration of that corridor between Rosehill. Given the tunnel-boring machines are in the ground at this point in time, there would be a significant cost for that particular project, if that was altered.

The CHAIR: Sorry, Ray. We have to wrap it up there. We've run out of time.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Of course, we have, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Mr Hunter and Mr Regan, thank you for appearing before the Committee today. You will each be provided with a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings for corrections. The Committee staff will also email any questions taken on notice from today and any supplementary questions from the Committee. We kindly ask that you return these answers within 14 days. If you have a problem, contact the Committee staff and they will be able to assist you. That concludes our public hearing for today. I would like to place on record my thanks to all the witnesses who appeared today. In addition, I would like to thank Committee staff, Committee members, long-suffering Hansard staff and staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services for their assistance in the conduct of this hearing.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:55.