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**From:** Maja Georgievska  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 March 2024 2:05 PM  
**To:** Portfolio Committee 6  
**Cc:** Simon Hickey; Scott MacKillop  
**Subject:** [SEC=OFFICIAL] RE: Current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney – Post-hearing responses – 9 February 2024 hearing  
**Attachments:** Transcript - PC6 - Western Sydney Transport - 9 February 2024 - UNCORRECTED\_WSI edits.pdf

**OFFICIAL**

Good afternoon Lauren,

Please find attached corrections to the transcript at pages, 3, 4, 5 and a minor change at pg7 (all marked by X in the margin for ease of navigation). Yellow highlight means that word should be deleted.

Thank you for the opportunity and let me know if there is anything further.

Kind regards,

**Maja Georgievska**

External Affairs and Communication Manager

*Warami [Dharug gnurrayin](#). Hello from [Dharug country](#), home of Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport.*



**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 - TRANSPORT AND THE  
ARTS**

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT  
NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY**

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**At Performance Studio, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown on  
Friday 9 February 2024**

**The Committee met at 10:05 am**

**PRESENT**

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

The Hon. Rachel Merton

The Hon. Natalie Ward

**PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine

The Hon. Bob Nanva



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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the final hearing of the Committee's inquiry into current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney. I acknowledge the people of the Dharawal nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we're meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Cate Faehrmann and I am Chair of the Committee. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures.

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**SIMON HICKEY**, Chief Executive Officer, Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport, affirmed and examined

**SCOTT MacKILLOP**, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome and thanks for making the time to give evidence. I assume one of you will have a short opening statement to make.

**SIMON HICKEY:** Yes, thank you very much. It's great to be here. Firstly, I acknowledge the Dharawal people, the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we stand today. I pay my respects to Elders and the continued cultural and spiritual connection to land, skies and waterways. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today. Western Sydney international airport made a submission to this inquiry that reflects the need for efficient and well-connected ground transport that will ensure communities are able to maximise their access to the socio-economic benefits, most particularly the jobs, that WSI will create in Western Sydney.

Western Sydney international airport will open with capacity for 10 million annual passengers a year, about the size of Adelaide airport today. We've already signed a domestic deal with the Qantas Group, which will base up to 15 aircraft at WSI from the early phase of operation. This will see around 25,000 flights a year, connecting four million passengers a year from Western Sydney to Australian capital cities and leisure destinations. WSI has been designed for growth in stages over decades to eventually become Sydney's primary gateway. In the 2060s, WSI is planned to accommodate 82 million annual passengers per year, which is around the size of London Heathrow or Dubai airport today.

Ensuring that Western Sydney and, in fact, all of Sydney has fast and convenient access to WSI through well-planned, customer-centric ground transport is essential to maximising the economic benefits of the airport to Western Sydney and beyond. Tourism, employment outcomes, supply chain resilience all depend on ground connectivity. In the context of a greenfield airport and despite its strong growth potential, we will open relatively small compared to the large, established airports like Kingsford Smith. Our ground transport proposition is off to a strong start. We're opening with a dedicated, high-quality motorway connection, upgraded arterial roads and a metro rail line.

However, we need to plan for and fund the growth in that network now so that the inevitable growth of the airport over the next 40 years is met by a public transport system that will provide great connectivity for local passengers and visiting tourists and, of course, for the tens of thousands of people from Western Sydney and beyond who will enjoy high-quality employment both at the airport and in the developing area around it. High-quality public transport, planned and funded in line with demand, will also support stronger sustainability outcomes. Western Sydney international airport is on track to open for international and domestic passenger and air cargo services on time in 2026.

Our submission calls for planning and funding for growth in the Sydney Metro Western Sydney airport rail line; further development of the road network around WSI, including widening of Elizabeth Drive and the development of an Eastern Ring Road; optimisation of journey times for the WSI bus network—this will be particularly important before the airport's metro rail line develops to connect to more centres across Western Sydney and Sydney more broadly—and a modification to the Blue Mountains Line train timetable to include St Marys in the stopping pattern to optimise connectivity and journey times to the Sydney CBD for passengers transferring from the first stage of the WSI metro. Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Hickey, for your detailed submission. When is the airport metro due to be completed? When is that expected to link up?

**SIMON HICKEY:** It is due to complete in line with the opening of the airport at the end of 2026.

**The CHAIR:** So at the end of 2026, and that goes to St Marys?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Yes, Bradfield and St Marys, stopping at the airport.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any agreements that Western Sydney airport has entered into that will restrict some—for example, Sydney airport has the contracts that restrict some services in terms of public transport and buses and it makes it very expensive for people. There is the airport access fee at both domestic and international terminals. Is there anything similar that Western Sydney airport has entered into?

**SIMON HICKEY:** We haven't entered into any commercial contracts in relation to that at this point in time. Obviously any agreements in that line will be commercial-in-confidence as they develop, but we are looking and we call upon government to look at cost-efficient ways, cost-effective ways of getting to and from the airport.

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**The CHAIR:** So you can't say at this point that Western Sydney airport won't enter into any agreement that would prohibit the provision of future public transport services to Western Sydney?

**SIMON HICKEY:** I can't say we will or we won't, but we're not looking at that at this point in time.

**The CHAIR:** Your submission talks about arterial roads. You talk about the expansion of the Sydney Metro to Leppington and Glenfield. Have you seen any, or have you been in, discussions with the Government that have indicated that they will look at that in terms of the Western Sydney airport line? We've had a lot of witnesses talk about the need for it to go beyond St Marys, particularly south. Are there any discussions with Transport for NSW about the potential for that?

**SIMON HICKEY:** My message is that this wouldn't be a surprise to Transport nor to the Government in terms of our submission as it's put here. We have discussed this with New South Wales Transport. We don't have any commitments one way or the other on anything but there is funding for a business case looking at the expansion of the metro line.

**The CHAIR:** The funding for the business case of Western Sydney airport, do you coordinate that business case or is that a Transport for NSW project?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Transport for NSW project.

**The CHAIR:** So there is funding for a business case to look at what else they could do in terms of future stops. Is that correct, with the Sydney Metro West?

**SIMON HICKEY:** That is correct. **This was answered in the context of Sydney Metro - Western Sydney Airport. Are we able to clarify as follows: That is correct for Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport.**

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** Specifically, my understanding is that the business case is to look at the case around extending the metro to Glenfield via Leppington and then south to Campbelltown.

**The CHAIR:** Particularly pertinent considering we are in Campbelltown today. Have you done modelling around, when you're talking 2030, 2040, what proportion of trips will be taken to Western Sydney airport via particular transport modes? Do you have, for example, goals for a certain percentage of those trips to be by public transport compared to cars?

**SIMON HICKEY:** We have looked at different modelling in those areas internally just to understand what that would look like from our perspective. It obviously depends on what **how** that network unfolds and what it is in those decades ahead. But we've done that in line with the growth from the air transport clinic we will have at Western Sydney airport. But that's more for our internal—looking at what we believe will eventuate or what we would like to eventuate so that we can say what our priorities are and engage in forums such as this one. What we believe is that the number of people coming via public transport will be in line with other airports around the world. Usually, depending on where that transit connects to, somewhere between 20 to 50 per cent of passengers will come via a well-connected metro.

**The CHAIR:** With the metro, just going back to that, in terms of Western Sydney airport being what you get financially from a public transport project, is there a way that you will benefit financially from that metro station? I'll put it this way: If you have lots of car parks, for example—and we look at Sydney airport again in terms of how it operates. It makes a hell of a lot of money from the car parking that's there. It incentivises people to drive and park, as well as catching Ubers and taxis, and really limits those bus services. There's not a direct rapid bus to the airport from the city and that is deliberate, in terms of contracts. How are you making money, firstly, from any public transport options? How is the Western Sydney airport making any money from public transport?

**SIMON HICKEY:** I don't believe we are making money from people coming on public transport to the airport at this point in time, as I talked about. We're still a few years off opening. We don't make money through that, but what we do make money from is people coming to the airport and through the airport. We have a retail proposition. We obviously make money because airlines come and go. They take slots at the airport. Having an attractive, well-connected airport actually is how we make money.

**The CHAIR:** But also from car parking?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Yes, we will make some money from car parking. That is envisaged—that there will be a charge for parking. Again, we haven't determined what that charge will be, but the provision of parking will be available. That will be one of the revenue streams that we have.

**The CHAIR:** It would be good to rule out today, if we can, whether at the metro stop—the Western Sydney airport metro stop—passengers will not expect to be slugged with any fee to get off at that station.

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**SIMON HICKEY:** We are not having those conversations, but I'm not going to rule it out at this point in time.

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** Chair, if I may, I think one of the benefits of developing a greenfield airport is the opportunity to look at these things a little bit differently than legacy airports that have an established reliance on different revenue streams. One of the most important things for Western Sydney airport is sustainability. The reason it's very important for us is not only because the community expects it but because it is really the number one priority of the aviation industry at the moment. There is a benefit to the airport commercially in having a great public transport connection because it increases our sustainability performance. I think it's fair to say airlines are very interested in our sustainability performance when they're talking to us about the airport.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Good morning. Thank you so much for coming along today and for all your work on the exciting new airport.

**SIMON HICKEY:** Thank you.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Lots of talk, and now it's happening. That's very good. A couple of things from your submission—and thank you for taking your time to prepare it; my colleague might have some questions as well. Can I just start high level? There is a number of options, obviously, for transport: metro, cars, buses, rail. You've talked about connectivity principles, which was very helpful. Knowing that you're not Transport for NSW but that you do have a pretty high stake in the success of transport options, and knowing that in the perfect world we would have all of those, and they'd be brand new and operational by 2026—given that's not the real world, can you talk to the Committee in terms of prioritisation about what you think could be the priority wish list for realistically and practically getting transport options, and then I'll get into some specifics of those, knowing that there will be choice among people using the airport and the commercial entities that are partnering with you as well?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Thank you very much. I think where we're starting is way ahead of other airports in Australia. We're actually in a reasonable position in our starting blocks. If you look at the M12, the realignment and expansion of the Northern Road, these are very significant investments in our road infrastructure that will connect people seamlessly, from a road perspective, to the airport. The M12, which connects to the M7 and the Northern Road, comes basically straight into our car parks. As we all know, the M7, which connects the M4 and the M5, means they are two really great corridors for us, from a motorway perspective. We also have a metro. I don't believe any other airport in Australia has ever started with a metro or rail connection. Starting in that position—taking our passengers and bringing them to and from St Marys—is a great start. It's a really good proposition to start with. I'll come back and talk about priorities but it's worthwhile thinking about where we are. We will have a bus network as well—at least to Penrith, Liverpool and Campbelltown there will be rapid buses.

When I look at what our priorities are, we say, "Let's start with what we think can be done quite quickly." The re-timing of the Blue Mountains train so that it stops at St Marys so that passengers can get to and from the CBD and Parramatta as quickly as possible would be a very good thing to do. We think that that's completely achievable. We think that looking at the routes that buses take to ensure that they are as rapid as they can be—because, really, they're competing against people driving their own vehicle—we think that that's a really good idea and worth investing the time and effort into ensuring that they're rapid. I think that those two things are achievable and should be prioritised right at the top of the list, because they can be done. I think that an expanded bus network before we get to metro expansions, so that we're ensuring, for example, Blacktown and other centres can be connected, is also something that is well worthwhile once we get the first bus network up and running. And then we've got to think about connecting, ultimately, Western Sydney via a metro. That's really where we're heading as a city.

So understanding those expansions of the line that we've got today and where they can go to and what are the priorities—we've got three priorities. The first one is connecting via Leppington to Glenfield. That would connect the two airports and allow people to travel via one connection into the CBD; it also connects the Cumberland line up to Liverpool and does connect via a connection here to Campbelltown when you're at Glenfield. That's a really important one for us to look at—bringing the line down to Macarthur. This area is going to be one of the highest growth corridors in terms of residential growth over the next decade. We want to connect people from here to the great jobs and opportunities that will exist not just at the airport but at all the businesses that are around the airport. We've got a 200-hectare business park at the airport as well.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes, the whole Bradfield area.

**SIMON HICKEY:** Bradfield is just next door, and the metro goes through Bradfield. We think making sure that people get access to those opportunities should be being planned right now. It should be done in growth corridors and where people live. Then we've got the metro line that finishes at Tallawong up there at Schofields.



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When you look at Blacktown, all of the growth in Blacktown happened in what used to be market gardens and is now Schofields, Tallawong. That's where the people are and I think we need to connect them to those opportunities. They're connected going back around through Macquarie Park et cetera, but they need to be connected to where the new jobs are going to be, those great jobs that are quite close to them. They are the three connections that I'd like to see with the metro. I'd like to see them all as quickly as possible.

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** I think, to build on that as well—that's the short- to medium-term wish list.

**SIMON HICKEY:** Yes, of course.

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** And in the medium to long term, as Western Sydney International Airport grows to become Sydney's primary airport, then the extension of the Metro West from Parramatta and Westmead to Western Sydney airport will become more important, so that should definitely be looked at in a longer time window.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes, sure. You can take this question on notice or come back if you need to. I probably should know this but what's the break-up of users, if you like, of the airport in terms of freight, passengers and other commercial users? Can you give us an idea? Is it a third, a third, a third, or is the focus on—will that depend?

**SIMON HICKEY:** It does depend on, ultimately, where we go with commercial operations. We'll likely start with a larger number of domestic flights. We'll have freight.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The reason I ask is, in fairness, in context, if it's a freight emphasis and you're finding that's a large emphasis, you're obviously going to need those roadways to bring in the freight, unless the other transport options can do that.

**SIMON HICKEY:** I mean, there will be a strong freight presence at the beginning, but that's not to diminish at all that this will be a passenger airport. We will be growing the international network. When you think about what the international network will look like at Western Sydney International, it's clearly going to have a very strong Asia-Pacific network. The reason is, you look at the population here in Western Sydney: 170 different ancestries. In global terms, 26 per cent of international aviation is driven by visiting family and relatives, but in Western Sydney that will be higher. We will have strong connectivity in a broad sense across Asia, but clearly India, China, Vietnam—those are critical countries.

**The CHAIR:** I should have said at the start that we do have two members online. My apologies for not saying this. We have the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine and the Hon. Bob Nanva from the Government online. Mr Nanva, go ahead.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr Hickey and Mr MacKillop, for your attendance this morning. I am just interested in your submission and its observations regarding the surrounding aerotropolis and the airport on the Airport Business Park. You make the observation that non-aeronautical development surrounding airports is always a key determinant of the viability and the value of public transport services being built. But it seems to me it's a bit of a stalemate going on at the moment where there is a lag in development because of a lack of clarity around the construction of future roads and public transport connections, so there's a sort of chicken and egg scenario here. Is that your view as well?

**SIMON HICKEY:** I think that the Western Sydney airport—when we look at air traffic capacity in Sydney, we really need to expand our air traffic capacity at this point in time. We won't get that through any further development at Sydney airport, and that is essential on a global basis to have that air connectivity to drive economic outcomes for Sydney and New South Wales and beyond. Western Sydney airport will continue to grow. What that provides us with is a fantastic opportunity to develop industries and to develop new jobs in and around that airport as a result of that connectivity, as a result of the airport growth. So really what we need to do is to take advantage of that. I welcome the master plan that was recently released by the aerotropolis. What I'm saying there is I very much support the idea of developing new industry, new skills, new development around the airport, whether that be in our business park, whether that be at Bradfield, but in and around that. That will include, obviously, some housing, but it's essential that we also look to develop new industry.

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We have an advanced manufacture **manufacturing** and research facility that's being developed. That's going to bring new types of manufacturing jobs, high-tech skills, AI, robotics, cybersecurity—all of those types of jobs are going to come. One of the things that creates diversity in the workplace, or inclusivity in a workplace, is the access to great jobs close to where I live. To give you an example, we had four traineeships that we recently put out to the marketplace. We had 400 applicants. We say there are plenty of jobs about but we got 400 applicants because people are looking for great jobs with great organisations. We've got a real opportunity to develop those new jobs



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that are great jobs that are for the next 100 years, not for the past 100 years, in and around this airport. And I very much support that.

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** If I can add to that as well, the development of Bradfield and the aerotropolis is not the only non-aeronautical employment activity in the region. The airport itself has a 191-hectare business park that, like the airport, will be developed in stages and over decades. That will be a significant employer. One hundred and ninety-one hectares is comparable to the size of the Parramatta CBD. We are already in advanced planning for the first stage of our business park. Stage one is around 20 hectares near the Western Sydney airport metro stop. There is a very high level of activity. We anticipate that our own business park will be a very successful non-aeronautical commercial development that will house a lot of employment and will be a source of demand for public transport as well.

**SIMON HICKEY:** If I can, this may be a bit of a longwinded way of answering the question but is it a chicken or egg? You need to get the planning, you need to have the vision and then you need to execute against that. That includes transport. It includes utility corridors. It includes just getting the sewerage to Western Sydney, which is often one of those issues that we've got. And we need to connect the west to the west and the west to the rest. We need that in Sydney in order to make sure that we deliver the promise to Western Sydney, which is that we will create great industry and you will have access to jobs close to your home.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Has the airport provided advice previously to the Western Parkland City Authority around the planning of the airport and the Bradfield precincts? Have you given advice around the roads and public transport connections that were needed to really escalate and drive that development? The concern I have is there has been a bit of commentary about the lack of pace in that precinct's development. Have you previously given advice to the parkland city authority around all of this?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Yes. We've definitely spoken to the parkland authority. As I say, we very much welcome the master plan. We encourage the parkland authority to keep going and focus on delivering all of those things in the planning. We've certainly given our views of the opportunities that are presented and the priorities that we've mentioned here today.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** You note in your submission that public transport options need to be attractively priced, with a mix of lower cost and more premium services to marry up with the economic demographic of Western Sydney. I note that the Chair has previously asked about parking at WSI. Given Western Sydney is still heavily dependent on vehicle use, that is still going to be a dominant form of transport to and from the airport, particularly at the genesis of the airport. Will the airport be considering that point that you have raised in your submission with respect to public transport in the context of the provision of parking, because it's a justified criticism of Sydney airport? I'm wondering if that's part of your thinking.

**SIMON HICKEY:** We will. We haven't announced any of the parking prices, which you wouldn't expect us to do this far out. We will announce those parking prices. They will be competitive. We will have different levels of parking. We will have some premium parking that's very close in. We will also have drop-off zones et cetera and waiting areas. There will be the provision for car hire, which is going to be significant as well there. Then there will be other car parks which are further away, which you can then connect to the airport. That will be our lower cost. So there are multiple car parks throughout the precinct.

Remember, it's a very big precinct. It's 1,780 hectares—about twice the size of Sydney airport. But we do have two metro stops and we can use those metros to connect people as well, and we will have buses that will connect people if they made an economic decision sometimes or depending on their time away. There will be a whole lot of new options that will come to people through parking in and around the airport. There will be the ability for charging capability et cetera. We're looking at a car park that is ready for the next decade as well, and that includes a lot of different components, as you think about it. In terms of just pricing, there will be a range of pricing, but it will be competitive, understanding that a number of people will choose to drive.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** In terms of your transport priorities, I note that you've got a proposal around a metro connection between Parramatta and the airport. I wanted to ask you about what discussions you had with the previous Government about metro connections between Bankstown and the airport, because there was some speculation that the south-west metro conversion of the Bankstown line was premised on an extension at some stage in the future going to the new airport. Can you perhaps elaborate on what kind of discussions you had with the previous Government—why that proposal doesn't appear at all on your priorities?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Do you want to talk about Bankstown?

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** Yes, absolutely. We've had good engagement with all levels of government—the previous Government and the current Government. I think what it comes down to is that, as an airport, we have to look at the region, take a priority perspective, and I suppose the more that we list in our priorities, the less

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effective that that advocacy is likely to be. At the end of the day, I think that the right option is to talk about our three immediate priorities and our longer term priority with the Parramatta connection, understanding that funding is not unlimited and that, at the end of the day, you're not going to be able to have seven or eight metro extensions in the next 40 years. So we have picked the three that we think provides the best balance and broadest access.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Were there no discussions with the previous Government about an extension between Bankstown to the airport?

**SIMON HICKEY:** I don't know across the entire airport, but I can say I did not discuss it with the previous Government.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It was never raised?

**SIMON HICKEY:** Not by me, and not in a meeting that I was in.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** In terms of metro, following on from that, you helpfully mentioned, Mr MacKillop, a business case. Understanding you're not from Transport for NSW and you're not purporting to be, I'm just interested in that. Obviously, you're talking about priorities and getting things moving, and that's a good thing to hear, particularly if funding has been allocated. Is that in relation to a strategic business case on a specific line or a final business case? Can you help us with further information? That might help us to understand the prioritisation.

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** I don't have enough detail and understanding of the distinctions between the two types of business cases. I think what we understand is that there has been joint funding from both the Federal and New South Wales governments into the business case that has been conducted by Transport for NSW. We've got a good level of engagement, and we provide information to Transport for NSW, which I'm sure they're feeding into both business cases. But the detail around the nature of the business case, we're not in a position to speak to.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It's not a trick question in any way.

**SCOTT MacKILLOP:** Yes.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** That's a good thing if there are business cases being done to get that moving. Going back to your submission in relation to commercial partnerships, I flagged that we might come back to that. Without wishing to ask you to disclose any commercial conversations, that's a good thing. But can you give us an understanding of those commercial relationships, how that might assist with all of the infrastructure, transport—not only other airlines that you said you were in discussions with but how that might play into the wider development of the site and of future commercial prospects of the site?

**SIMON HICKEY:** It's a pretty big development, so let me try to cut it into different territories, if you like. The first one is in terms of passenger aircraft. The first thing you've got to do is set up your domestic network—and I talked about that clients group—which is, in the early years, to get to 15 aircraft. What that does is it also enables, then, a retail group to come into the airport. That's another commercial proposition, in terms of retail, and then retail and advertising. Advertising could be for local et cetera, and then we have food and beverage. That's a lot of different commercial discussions that are going on.

You then also have a catering business, which is to put that into the passenger aircraft and potentially for the terminal, and you then have a freight business. Airfreight is a growing portion of the freight package, if you like. So 99 per cent usually comes through seaports but, in a modern world, that's changing a lot for resilience. We found through COVID there were a whole lot of issues that were created very suddenly. For example, in the Middle East they realised if they didn't get their airfreight working again that they were going to have a real food problem, and so we've found that around the world.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It also provides another option if there are, say, industrial disputes at ports or other hold-ups. You've got another option there for the supply chain.

**SIMON HICKEY:** Supply chain issues et cetera, and we're finding what comes in in freight is the high value. But you want to have good, solid, resilient freight supply chain networks—airfreight. We're developing, as well, the commercial arrangements that will get that up and running and get that in play. And then we've got the business park, and that will be actually just commercial development, outside of aviation, but often people who want to be close. As I say, there are economic benefits of being close to and around an airport. Finally, there are then those logistics centres that are outside of the airport. If you go to Kemps Creek, for example, Amazon—their largest sortation centre in South-East Asia is in Kemps Creek, and they have capacity to continue to grow. From the top floor of the Amazon facility, which I've been to, you look down on the runway. That's how close it is, and they say, "Giddy-up". They say, "Keep going; we really want you to get it done".

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**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** You got to exactly where I was hoping you might get to, of your own volition. I wonder if there are any commercial opportunities to discuss input. I know some private entities are very keen to assist with building roads or assisting with infrastructure or transport options for that very reason—to assist in those commercial entities. There's nothing wrong with that if people want to assist and put that in. You're welcome to take it on notice if it assists, but have you had any of those commercial discussions—or did you anticipate doing so—with some of those entities, like Amazon and others, which may be interested in those commercial opportunities to assist with infrastructure?

**SIMON HICKEY:** That's not really our role outside of the airport. We would talk to those whose it was, such as Transport for NSW, about what they might do about that, or Planning, if the opportunities came up. However, again, in road development, we look to the long term, not to the immediate short term, because we don't think that churning money—we think that there could be wasted money if you're putting it into short-term development. You need to look to what are the long-term requirements. If there's an ability to get private investment into long-term requirements such as the M9, the Eastern Ring Road—any of those road developments—then that's a good thing.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It could be into short-term buses, though—short transit buses or something like that.

**SIMON HICKEY:** And there may be entrepreneurs in Western Sydney that would also look to develop bus networks.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Good to know, thank you.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** In terms of infrastructure and the importance of having this airport accessible, I just picked up that the M7-M12 link that was on the books and was going really well has hit the headlines as being axed by the Federal Government. I'm wondering where we might sit now in terms of the airport, given some of those decisions.

**SIMON HICKEY:** We know that the M7-M12 connection will be made. The funding arrangements are not for us. What's been raised is around funding, and that is not for Western Sydney airport. What we are interested in is that they do exist and they are connected.

**The CHAIR:** That's the end of our session with you this morning. Thanks so much for appearing.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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**Ms BARBARA COOREY**, Councillor, Canterbury Bankstown Council, private practice solicitor and community member of various community groups concerned about the south-west metro, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back and welcome to our next witness, Ms Coorey. Would you care to make an opening statement?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Certainly. My comments all revolve around a cover letter sent to the Committee, to the Chairperson, dated 17 September 2023. It attached a cover letter, part one and part two. If I may make some comments from that cover letter as part of my opening address. First of all, before I make those comments, I'd like to thank the Chairperson and committee members for allowing me to give evidence this morning on this particular issue. I'd like to make some quick comments about the reason why I'm here and that is as a result of—there was an upper House inquiry that was commenced in August 2020 with some very extensive terms of reference in relation to the south-west metro, and we thought that that would be the end of the matter because those terms of reference and then the resulting report were very, very clear and very powerful, to the Parliament.

Much to my disappointment and horror was the announcement that the conversion would take place last year, despite some very extensive work done by Portfolio Committee No. 6. I appeared as a witness, as did a lot of people, back in 2019-20. Those recommendations were very clear. The one recommendation which was absolutely critical to my community was that the metro would terminate at Sydenham and it would not proceed to Bankstown, for very valid reasons.

In relation to the south-west metro conversion, I've had some very serious concerns in relation to the safety aspect of the metro, and derailment issues and non-participation of community groups. The safety issue of running a driverless metro from Marrickville to Belmore alongside a heavy goods railway track, carrying containers originating from Port Botany, has not been addressed since this issue of the conversion of the T3 line to the metro was first advanced in October 2015 on the front page of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. I understand that the metro south-west review members, under the review of Mr Mike Mrdak, were advised of the danger aspect of this post the finalisation of the interim report which was dated 23 June 2023.

The containers, at times, open, and they have struck present heavy rail commuter trains between Marrickville and Belmore. However, this danger has been averted due to the fact that the train was being driven by a human being, and the mishap was avoided. I have yet to see a full safety audit review done of running the first driverless metro alongside a heavy goods rail line—because this will be the first in the world—prior to any contracts to be signed to deliver the conversion of the line. We have fears of derailment and loss of life and serious injury to the commuters of the south-west metro. It's a very live issue and no information to date has been provided in relation to this aspect by Transport for NSW or Metro itself.

I am concerned that no community groups were invited to submit material to the independent review of the south-west metro, and I understand, with alarm, that developer property groups posing as community advocacy groups addressed the reviewers last year and no information exists as to exactly what input they had in the interim recommendations, particularly the property rezoning recommendations—which I might add, Madam Chairperson, were not part of the terms of reference for this particular review. I am particularly concerned given the fact that several of these groups appear to act for persons and/or corporations who have been land banking in the corridor or who have associated third-party financial interests in the corridor undisclosed, and several high-profile members of these groups are registered lobbyists at the State level.

Furthermore, I'd like to bring to the attention of the Committee that the conversion of the T3 line to metro is simply to densify the corridor, as improved signalling can increase the frequency of trains to every three minutes, as has been the case now at Chatswood station for the commuters travelling from the north-west metro and interchanging to heavy rail. That heavy rail line now is operating every three minutes. It is possible to do it with improved signalling rather than convert us to metro. In addition to this, former Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, in her capacity as transport Minister endorsing *Sydney's Rail Future*, dated June 2012, states on page 9:

The Western and North Shore lines are the key bottlenecks of the network, as these lines have the highest level of interchange and station congestion in the CBD.

T3 was never mentioned as causing a bottleneck around the City Circle link. That particular point has been repeated ad nauseam as the reason why we should be taken out of the City Circle link. That was the evidence back in 2012 by the former Premier—she was the Minister for Transport—and that was clear evidence that we never caused the bottleneck in the City Circle link. I have been in my political career for the last 30 years, a lifelong resident of that area—a lifelong user of the T3 line for in excess of 30 years, both as a worker and as a student. This business about the T3 line causing a bottleneck—and I represented council between 1991 and 1999—it was never an issue. It has come up as an issue. It is a furphy designed to densify the corridor. Furthermore, there was



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a paper produced by Patrick Fensham, who is a principal of SGS Economics, back in 2017, and his comments are now very relevant to what's happening with the housing policy in this city. He questions the wholesale development in the corridor and its implications. If I may reference his particular point, Madam Chair, in relation to the Sydenham to Bankstown corridor:

This significant shift in the settlement geography of our cities, at the scale proposed, is without precedent, certainly in Australia and probably anywhere in cities in the contemporary post-industrial era. It could be argued that it is occurring without much forethought as to what it means for equity, productivity, liveability and sustainability outcomes.

...

The concerns of incumbent communities where this sort of infill development is occurring are sometimes dismissed as NIMBYISM. Petty complaints about the impacts of modest redevelopment are often motivated by narrow self-interest. However, for some suburbs the renewal proposals represent a wholesale 'reworking' at much higher densities with hundreds of new dwellings per year. In these cases the concerns of communities about what the redevelopment means, how the traffic and transport networks will cope, how street level amenity will be affected, whether there will be sufficient open space and whether schools and other social infrastructure provision will be sufficient, are entirely reasonable.

Fenton goes on to say:

Large increases in population should not be proposed without integrated infrastructure planning and provision, and enhancements to general neighbourhood amenity. Otherwise, it is likely that the average quality of life for residents in a redeveloped precinct will decline over time.

That is my very point. The local members of Parliament did some very supportive submissions to the committee back in 2019, and it was mentioned that the resident's lives—the standard of living—will diminish as a result of this conversion and the densification of the corridor. The conversion of the T3 line to metro has never been about improving public transport for the citizens of western and south-western Sydney. There are no buses or bus drivers to move 100,000 commuters from the T3 line in peak hour. That's 100,000 that tap on and tap off every day, not 60,000 as Transport for NSW are leading everybody to believe. I have documented the 100,000 from their own paperwork back in 2019. I do not know how we have managed to be reduced by 40,000. The shutdown of the Chatswood to Epping line required 100 buses to move 10,000 commuters. We have 10 times the number of commuters. We will need at least 1,000 buses and 1,000 drivers, based on the Chatswood experience.

The end goal has always been to provide dwelling targets for Sydney's expanding population. The ultimate irony is that the current infill project, unprecedented in the history of this country—or, in fact, in any other postwar Western nation—will mean the complete wipe-out of migrant areas and communities that have settled in the west and south-west of Sydney from the early 1900s. Thousands and thousands of homes and five to six suburbs will be completely up-zoned and demolished to the ground to make way for the concrete canyons 400 and 800 metres from the metro stations. It will be the Canterbury Road fiasco on steroids in the back streets to the north of Canterbury Road that will bear the brunt of the infill onslaught. It will be the wipe-out of heritage conservation areas unrecognised by previous and current councils representing the suburbs in the corridor.

It is the Labor Party heartland that will be crushed and abandoned for the concrete high-rise canyons and the metro. It will be a repeat of the history of what the developers tried to do in Kings Cross and Potts Point in the 1970s, and the very brave Juanita Nielsen, but on a much larger scale—totally unprecedented in any other part of the Western world. The residents and the commuters of my area need a desperate circuit breaker in this mess; they need nothing less. Thank you, Madam Chair. That was my opening statement from my cover letter to Committee members.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Coorey. Delving into your opening statement and some of the comments, when you said that you had looked through the paperwork documenting that there would be 100,000 people needing the buses when the train—

**BARBARA COOREY:** Tap on and tap off—not 100,000 persons, per se, but 100,000 tap on and tap off.

**The CHAIR:** Where does it—

**BARBARA COOREY:** It's a document.

**The CHAIR:** You said "the documents". Could you explain what that is and where the data is from, when you say "the documents that do show that they have been underestimating the extent"?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Yes. The documents are in my previous folders submitted to the committee back in 2019. There were two folders submitted. It's an attachment. If you could kindly give me one moment, I will find that attachment for you.

**The CHAIR:** You could potentially give it on notice. Firstly, this Committee won't look at the documents submitted to another committee unless directed to—unless you submit them to this yourself. Secondly,



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I have a question about where you got the data to show that it is 100,000. Because, yes, it is interesting that the 60,000 figure has been in the media in the last couple of weeks.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Yes, we don't know where that has come from.

**The CHAIR:** Could you direct the Committee to where you got the stats from?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I won't be a moment, Madam Chair. I do apologise.

**The CHAIR:** It's okay. You can provide that on notice, if you don't know straightaway.

**BARBARA COOREY:** May I take that on notice, and I will come back to you? It is actually provided in previous evidence.

**The CHAIR:** That is fine.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It is a very important point. We have had briefings with Metro and State rail and they are talking about 60,000. I didn't take the point up with them at the time, but I do need to go on record because I have given previous evidence in relation to 100,000 tap on and tap off during peak hour every day along that line. There is a document that has been provided by these people.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, just to be clear, who are "these people"?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I think it was Metro or State rail, and they gave a breakdown for every railway station: how many tap on and tap off. They are really quite extraordinary numbers, and the fact that the bus union has—there is a taskforce at the moment, and the taskforce has been advised that there are not enough buses to move these people. Furthermore, there has been no analysis as to how the buses are going to move through these very, very congested areas. We're talking about students that are going to be doing their HSC. We're talking about workers that are already under enormous pressure because of the cost of living. They may lose their jobs if they don't arrive on time. The majority of the people that are using this T3 service every day are workers into the city and students. Now, if you cut off the lifeline to these people, you are going to cause economic and traffic havoc, not just for my area—we are not living with a fence around us. It is for the rest of Sydney. It is for the rest of the train lines that surround us, and that has not been taken into account.

It is as if these commuters on one of the busiest rail lines in this State—and, Madam Chair, may I say that we are amongst the highest users of public transport in this city, in my area. The Canterbury Bankstown socio-economic mix—we use public transport and we love it. It is a great line. I cannot believe that this is still proceeding. I want to go on record today to make my views clear to the Committee because of the safety aspect and the economic and social hardship that this is going to cause. The economic, the social—a lot of the residents are unaware that it will shut down for 12 months or more. There has been no discussion with the local schools. We have at least four or five schools along the railway line. There has been no discussion with them. There has been no traffic analysis presented to the council as to how these buses are going to move in our streets. It is incredible.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, and you are making your views very well heard in the inquiry today, so rest assured of that. You note in your submission that you had concerns about the way in which the Transport for NSW review of Sydney west metro and western metro—

**BARBARA COOREY:** It was into Sydney Metro and the south-west metro.

**The CHAIR:** Could you explain what your concerns are about that commissioned review?

**BARBARA COOREY:** My biggest concern was when Mr Mrdak was appointed. I had a look at his terms of reference. There was nothing in there regarding planning. We were not notified publicly that we could appear before him or make some submissions. We had no idea. And then when the report was—there was an interim report prepared and then we saw all these recommendations in relation to planning in the corridor, and I was quite horrified. And then one of the groups that did appear before him—and I actually have a paper trail of emails to Mr Mrdak. I am happy to make those emails available to the Committee members. I had grave concerns in relation to the way Mr Mrdak was appointed, the terms of reference that were attached to his review and the non-transparent way in which various members were allowed to address him.

It was only when I queried him in various emails as to who appeared before him that that information was forthcoming. It was not even produced in his report—who actually appeared before him. One interesting group that did appear before him was the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue. He happens to be a patron of that dialogue and I would have thought that that would have been a huge conflict for him, undisclosed to the Committee and to the Government. And then the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue proceeded to issue a press release after his recommendations were made public. I have grave concerns about that.

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As far as I am concerned, that review has been completely tainted. I feel that the Government should go back to the drawing board. If they want to conduct a review in a completely transparent and open fashion and seek comments from community groups and community members that have an interest in this issue, that is the way that they should be proceeding, and not in the way Mr Mrdak, with all due respect, conducted his review: virtually behind closed doors and certain groups. It is astonishing that these groups were able to appear before him. And he delved into planning issues. This is in relation to the south-west metro, not the redevelopment of the corridor. It was outside the scope of Transport for NSW to look into. It is not part of their brief.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you for appearing today and for your submission and your continued work. It is nice to see you today. I turn to one of the concerns you have raised. Am I to understand that you have not been consulted with?

**BARBARA COOREY:** No.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Has the council been asked to provide briefings, or you, as a councillor?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I am unsure of the council's position, whether they were or were not invited to make submissions to Mr Mrdak. I can't provide—

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** But you weren't invited?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Absolutely not. We knew nothing about it. We knew that there was a review. We did not see anything published in relation to the review, and I was quite horrified to read the terms of reference.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** You mentioned school groups. Your understanding is that the schools and other entities weren't invited, or just weren't—

**BARBARA COOREY:** No. In relation to the shutdown or in relation to Mr Mrdak's review?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Both.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Both.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Both are going to affect them. Can you expand on the concern around the buses and what consultation there has been on the planning or communication around the shutdown?

**BARBARA COOREY:** We've had one briefing session, and that's confidential. I'm unable to discuss that. They're coming back to see council next month to talk to us more about that. But there is an admission, I think, even publicly, that there are not enough buses and not enough drivers to do this. This will dislocate not just my area; this will dislocate Sydney. It'll cause economic hardship on such a scale it's unprecedented. It's one of the busiest lines in Sydney. You're hearing in the media about when certain lines shut down, the mayhem that it creates. Imagine this line shutting down for 12 months. It's not just a couple of days, a couple of weeks or a couple of months; it's 12 months. And it's not guaranteed that it'll be 12 months. This is the lifeline for my area. We are already suffering from COVID. We're suffering from the cost of living and high mortgage stress. These people need to get to their jobs on time, and that's just not going to happen.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The shutdown is five months away.

**BARBARA COOREY:** No, it's 12 months.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The commencement will be in five months. At what time is your expectation that there would be—

**BARBARA COOREY:** We have no information. We've been told—

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The Chatswood line was 12 months out. It took over 12 months for that consultation and planning to happen. Given it's five or so months away, when do you think the deadline would be for consulting? What opportunities have you got to have that input, or the council—

**BARBARA COOREY:** Seeing that we're 10 times the number of the Chatswood shutdown, I would've thought all of this would've been put into place before any announcement to shut it down. If it's to shut down between July and October, which is what the Minister has said—we're already in February. We have no information. In my view, as a lawyer, I feel that this is going down the road of the light rail fiasco, where it ended up in the Supreme Court. We have a lot of businesses along that railway line that depend on the railway line for their livelihood. There was a small business package that was referred to in the EIS. That seems to have been forgotten now. We're talking about an area that is already behind the eight ball economically and socially. To shut it down in this fashion—it's a line that has been there for over 100 years. It has serviced our area. We did not want this. I want to make this very clear—

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**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I think we're clear.

**BARBARA COOREY:** —we did not want this conversion.

**The CHAIR:** Can I jump in, Ms Coorey. We've only got another five minutes. I've got a question. You were talking about the confidential briefing. That's fair enough; we don't need to go into that further. I understand that is the confidential briefing for council by Transport for NSW.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** That's confidential. What community briefings or public briefings has Transport for NSW undertaken with the community?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Nothing that I'm aware of.

**The CHAIR:** So as a councillor, you've had a confidential briefing that you can't refer to or speak to in this inquiry, which is about Western Sydney transport, and you don't know of anything—

**BARBARA COOREY:** Nothing. Nothing has happened with the community. I can sit here and say this to you. In all honesty, hand on heart, nothing has happened. It is up to people like myself and our community members to bring the information out. How do I contact every school? How do I contact every worker on that line that they're going to have to find alternative transport? We're talking about thousands of cars being put on the road. The East Hills line and the inner west line is going to be chock-a-block because not everybody is going to be able to get on a bus and go to Sydenham.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Without going into, obviously, the details of the confidential briefing— and it's bizarre that it's confidential in any event—I would have thought that, with something like that, you'd want to be as open and transparent as possible and not have one briefing. Was there an opportunity, without going into the detail, for you to interact or for the community to have input? Or was it literally a briefing where Transport just told you how it was?

**BARBARA COOREY:** We have had no opportunity because they're still to come back to us with information. My initial concerns were: How do you get the buses around that area? Because we all know Canterbury Road and those inner city roads are just so congested.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Presumably, the community also has a number of concerns that they'd like the opportunity to raise. Have you been given any opportunity or a contact person to say, "This is the ongoing conversation we can have"? Given this is five months away, we would've thought it's imperative to have that back and forth to help.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Madam Committee member, there is nothing. That's one of the reasons why I've come here today.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** We can see you're concerned.

**BARBARA COOREY:** I would like the Minister to come out and talk to us. What the unions are saying—either delay this or get rid of it. They're the only options that the department really has at the moment. Because the announcements for the densification of other areas of Sydney aren't relying upon a metro. So we really don't need it. We don't need—

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just parking that, we've heard you loud and clear on that. I would have thought that the concern is not only about the implementation but the opportunity for ongoing consultation with the community about that. Is that your expectation—that there will be something? Or the vacuum and silence is somewhat concerning, perhaps the opportunity to meet would be helpful?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Madam Committee member, I cannot repeat to you—I have no information and it was a very, very tense discussion via Zoom. And that's all I'm prepared to say today—very, very tense.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it correct to say that the project has no community consultation mechanism?

**BARBARA COOREY:** There is some consultation with council but I'm not privy to all the discussions.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** No, my question is about community—is there no mechanism?

**BARBARA COOREY:** No, there is no community consultation.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So the south-west metro conversion project has no formal mechanism of community consultation?

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**BARBARA COOREY:** No.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There's no advisory committee for the community?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I understand it's still in the pipeline that they will consult. I don't know when they'll consult—perhaps the day before they shut down the line, they'll consult.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** If you don't know, who does?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Madam Committee member, I don't know. This has been our problem and we are being treated very, very differently to the Chatswood-Epping shutdown and I'm very, very concerned. My constituency—it's just really very, very sad that I'm sitting here giving you these answers. But they are my honest answers to you. There has been no consultation that I'm aware of or what's planned or when it's planned. It's a bit of anything goes. The fact that they've reduced the commuter tap on and tap off figures from 100,000 to 60,000—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You raised some issues around the safety and the derailment risk. What's the source of your information in relation to that?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I've been speaking to unions and I've been speaking to engineers. It's the law of physics. If something very heavy is going towards something that's very light and there's no crash barrier between—this is the difficulty we now have.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Sorry, can I bring you back? In what way has this issue been brought to the attention of the south-west metro conversion project?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I understand, with the review, that was brought to their attention last year, the committee members—with the review.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Who brought it to their attention?

**BARBARA COOREY:** The fact that there is a very serious safety issue—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Who brought it to their attention?

**BARBARA COOREY:** I understand the unions brought it to the attention of the committee members. I documented the concerns back in 2019. There were some questions that were attached to the back of my submission. I've reproduced those issues. That was: Will the Bankstown line track have to be slewed to the south to provide greater separation between the metro trains and the freight trains on the ARTC freight line? Nobody has been able to answer that question.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I ask you, has there been no formal response? That's a pretty serious concern.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Yes, it is very serious.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It concerns me that there would be no formal response to address that specific concern if it has been brought to the attention of the project team. As far as you're aware, there is no formal explanation—

**BARBARA COOREY:** As far as I'm aware, no.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —or view as to why this risk is or isn't an actual risk?

**BARBARA COOREY:** No, and I also asked the question: Is the crash-worthiness of the metro trains sufficient to withstand impact with a derailed train on the ARTC line without having to provide greater separation or a crash barrier? What has happened since those issues have been raised, there has been a very flimsy fence erected between the heavy goods rail line and the T3 line between Marrickville and Bankstown where they do run side by side. But that's not going to stop the catastrophe from happening. We needed either the lines to be slewed further south or a proper crash barrier to stop a catastrophe.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So was this in the correspondence? How do you know it?

**BARBARA COOREY:** Nothing, Mr D'Adam. I've had nothing.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There's no documentation where this risk has been identified—

**BARBARA COOREY:** Nothing. Absolutely nothing. It is as if the issue doesn't exist.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —and brought to the attention of the project management team.

**BARBARA COOREY:** Again, that's why I'm here to put it on a public record again because this was put on the public record back in 2019, and I believe the committee did look at it and there was a resolution to not

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convert the line. I'm not privy to what was discussed back in 2019 with that upper House committee, but the fact is from 2019 to 2024 I'm sitting here and I'm saying to you, hand on heart, I have very grave concerns about a derailment between Marrickville and Belmore.

**The CHAIR:** That is the end of the time for you, Ms Coorey. Thank you very much for appearing today and for representing your community the way in which you do.

**(The witness withdrew.)**



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**Ms ESTELLE GRECH**, Policy Manager, Planning, Committee for Sydney, affirmed and examined

**Ms HARRI BANCROFT**, Policy Manager, Mobility, Committee for Sydney, affirmed and examined

**Ms JULIANNA WALTON**, Convenor, Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc., affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome. Opening statements, Committee for Sydney? Ms Bancroft, is that correct?

**HARRI BANCROFT:** Yes, thank you. First of all, thank you for having us here today. I will introduce the Committee for Sydney as well quickly. We are an urban policy thinktank advocating for good outcomes for Sydney across a range of urban policy areas. We have 150 member organisations that come from a range of different industries, so we're not an industry peak body. We represent voices from businesses, community housing, transport agencies, architects, arts and cultural organisations, councils et cetera, so a lot of diversity of voices there. I want to talk today about the three Cs of transport in Sydney's west, so thinking about choice, comfort and caring. First of all, Sydney is a really big, sprawling city and it has meant that it's really hard to provide equitable transport for all of its residents.

Many people in the west, as we know, are forced into car ownership because they don't live within walking distance of a train station. Their closest bus routes are often indirect routes and might come once every half-hour or every hour. Improving bus and rail is key in Sydney's west so that we can address these transport inequalities. But for us at the committee, we also think it's really important to be thinking about active transport as well as public transport. That's really about how people are getting to the bus or train station—and making sure that those routes are safe, that they're accessible and that they're comfortable as well. In Western Sydney we know that there's a great urban heat island effect. We need to make sure that these routes are as cool as possible. There's another aspect here to be thinking about. It's not necessarily just about providing more and new public transport services; it's also about thinking about where we're putting development, so making sure that we're putting new homes around existing transport.

I want to quickly finish up this short introduction with a comment that was made by a resident in Willmot, which is just near Mount Druitt. We've been speaking to BaptistCare, who is a member of ours. They are doing some transport advocacy in that area. I thought this comment was very perceptive and sums up the importance of this issue: "Transport can make or break your future. It can create opportunities or create an obstacle." What we really hope to see here is that we're making sure transport in Sydney is creating opportunities for people and not creating obstacles.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that opening statement. Ms Walton, do you have one as well?

**JULIANNA WALTON:** Yes. Our submission pretty much echoes many, I think, in recognising the big problem of transport disadvantage and the lack of opportunity that that creates all through Sydney. I'll just leave that as read. But what we've done that I think is additional is we've been able to tie that to the history of where the public bus services ended—about Ermington—and where the public services never extended. That is, of course, most of the western suburbs. That came about because historically we were pursuing a model of urban planning and transport planning that was in vogue in the United States from the 1950s to 1960s. Its prime consequence has been a vast expansion in road space, which I'll talk about in a minute.

We think that you need to understand the history of the intellectual fads that this came about from—and that we have been in process, with what happened at Rozelle and WestConnex—in disproving the proposition that increasing road space and relying on private transport was a way out of congestion. It doesn't work. We should by now have no congestion if it worked. Los Angeles should be a veritable free-flowing paean to the use of the motor vehicle, which it isn't. The reason it doesn't work is now being understood as being to do with the reality that the service level you provide affects what people do. You're not dealing with a static level of demand and a static level of need. You influence what happens by a cycle that you set off when you decide at the beginning that you're going to focus on a particular method of transport.

We're arguing in our submission that what Sydney needs is fast, frequent and connected public transport, and that the focus needs to be on those areas that have never had it. That means it would start roughly at Ermington and go outwards. We point out that there were no advances in the bus system in that area until 1999, when the State Transit Authority bought a private bus company called the North & Western bus company. I was on the State Transit Authority at the time and I know that it dramatically improved the services available to the people of the western suburbs. One of the reasons, of course, was that the State Transit operator was such a good operator and very good at understanding patterns of movement, excellent at scheduling and so on.

The other thing that it did was it began to break down the artificial barriers of contract boundaries. We started off, again, historically, with a situation where you couldn't go across the boundary of one private operator

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through the area of another one; you'd have to get off at the edge, transfer to another bus—if there was one, which there probably wasn't—and then make your way to wherever it was you were trying to get to in the first place. That basically destroyed the viability of the bus system in the western suburbs. It is the reason that patronage has been desperately low. It is not—I repeat, not—the presence of backyards. It is not because there are houses.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Walton. In terms of making a short opening statement so that we can get to questions, if you could be another 30 seconds or so, please.

**JULIANNA WALTON:** Sorry, I'll be quick. The point that we want the Committee to be wary of is that a lot of people are going to say, "It's all because the western suburbs have backyards." Or because they're not dense enough and that's why they haven't got good public transport—or, more to the point, it's used as an argument, sometimes, on why they ought not to have good public transport. But at the time, in around about 1999, if you looked at Gordon and you looked at Carlingford—one in the north and one in the west—the residential density were about the same but the public transport usage was vastly superior in Gordon for the simple reason that there's a train. So there is this fairly nonsensical talk that goes on about how people won't use public transport if they live in houses, when, really, if you haven't got it, of course you can't use it. That's my introduction.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I know we have lots of questions and we could talk for hours. I want to start with buses. We've heard from a lot of witnesses about the lack of services, to begin with, but also that the facilities—the bus shelters—really aren't incentivising people to catch buses in a lot of places in Western Sydney. If you could talk about that a bit and what needs to happen. At this point, of course, we're not going to get trains or metros everywhere. That's a very long way down the track—excuse the pun—if it does happen. So we need buses, but they need to be frequent. I'll start with the Committee for Sydney witnesses first.

**HARRI BANCROFT:** With buses, to the point that Ms Julie Walton just made, if there is a service there and it doesn't have good frequency, then you're not going to have the demand. In some instances, it might be reconsidering service routes, even where there's a perceived lack of demand. Actually really upping the frequency and the directness of those services so that they're as fast as possible to, in a sense, induce the demand in the same way as we might see if we build an extra eight lanes for cars that's going to induce more people to drive. So making the service better in terms of frequency and also the directness of the route is really key. Something that we've seen in Sydney with the bus network is focusing on coverage to increase access so it means that pretty much everyone lives within 800 metres of a bus stop—so within walking distance—but the convenience of those bus services isn't always meeting people's needs of where they need to go other than just work.

To the question around bus stops, they're completely different all across Sydney. Sometimes it's just a pole. Sometimes you've got an amazing four seated, shaded/sheltered area. My understanding is that it comes down to these assets being funded by local government rather than State Government, which means that you're going to have a different experience dependent on whichever council area. It's also dependent on how close that bus stop is to other services. It's a really expensive thing to go and upgrade the bus stops of a whole council area. We're hearing from local councils that they don't have the funds to do that, to help encourage that. I think there is opportunity for Transport for NSW to either fund that or find a way to co-fund that with councils.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** Just to add to what Harri said, I think we also need to be thinking about the resilience of these bus stops, especially in Western Sydney if we are going to be upgrading—you know, like the actual bus stops themselves. Are there trees nearby? We should be thinking about water cooling options in certain places, like misting. That will be really important because on 38-degree days for 10 days in a row, how can people catch the bus if it's really uncomfortable waiting there? But that's definitely paired with frequency of services too. You don't want to be waiting at a hot sweaty bus stop for 30 minutes.

**The CHAIR:** Remembering that we're in Campbelltown—I should have put that into the question. This area, especially the expanded South West Growth Centre, is probably not as well serviced, can we say politely, by public transport as it should be.

**JULIANNA WALTON:** We've made a couple of points in various submissions. One is that 800 metres is not walking distance in heat and in the rain. It's not walking distance if you are transferring to a different service. So if you walk 800 metres you get on some conveyance, you then get off that conveyance and walk another 800 metres to the place where you are meant to catch the next conveyance. That's way too far and that comes about from—again, there's history to these things—somebody once decided that no person should be more than 800 metres from public transport, or some such thing, or from a bus stop, but that was then applied across the board to mean that 800 metres is walking distance. Well, it isn't. Historically, bus stops were much closer together than that, and they should be.

One little thing I like to say is that, yes, buses matter. However, there is no good reason Oran Park has been allowed to develop without that railway station shown on the map physically being there now while the

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people are moving in. It's long been promised. It's essential and what we find ourselves doing is pitching buses against trains when in fact it's a bit like *Monty Python* and the Romans. We start arguing about whether we can afford this one or that one, when the real enemy, the Romans, is over there and those are the eight-lane, 12-lane motorways that suck up funds and in the end do nothing of the kind that they are supposed to do, which is, of course, to ease congestion. They don't, so that's where the money is wasted, not on trains.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** One of your recommendations is around the strategic cycleway corridors. Can you perhaps elaborate on that in terms of what's a realistic step that can be taken in the short to medium term to enhance the cycleway infrastructure in Western Sydney?

**HARRI BANCROFT:** I think looking at the planned rollout for the strategic cycleway network is key. From what I understand it would be quite disjointed and dissimilar to when we build a train line, for example. It will not be one big project that happens. It will be left to local councils to deliver some sections of the cycleway. In some instances, it will be Transport for NSW, depending on where it is. I think to get the best outcome and have a connected cycleway network from the start, we really need to look at the option of delivering it as one project by one agency. The reason for that is if it's a disconnected network from the start, it's really hard for people to get used to using that. They might take their first ride and then find that they have to cross a very busy road or that the lane ends and then they have to cycle on a very busy road. So making sure that there's sort of a spinal network for cycling in Sydney and Western Sydney is really important. It's another option for people, if it's safe, to be able to get a train station or to a bus stop.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** If I could add to that too. The first step is to actually have a proper plan. I think the strategic cycleway corridor, it's a good start but it doesn't actually pinpoint which roads need the actual transport infrastructure. It indicates that you need a hierarchy of active transport infrastructure. Along busy roads like Camden Valley Way and Narellan Road, for example, you definitely need a dedicated path, and that's actually there and it's being used at the moment. But if you think of active transport infrastructure like a grid, you've got your main spines, which is the dedicated infrastructure, and then as you go further into the grid, there are different options. For example, in neighbourhood settings there might be good cause to lower speed limits, create shared road space where it is safe enough to cycle alongside cars and things like that.

In Western Sydney—and this is why it was so strong in our submission—there is the perception, and I've heard this in conversations, that people don't want to walk or ride a bike. Therefore, we'll just build roads. But that is a self-fulfilling prophecy that ends up in where we are today. What's very interesting is with a lot of traffic and congestion on roads like Narellan Road, for example, there is some uptake in biking along that corridor to get to Macarthur Station or Campbelltown Station. It shows that there will be culture change over time. You need to start with a plan. You need to indicate which roads are the priorities so that either councils can apply for funding to build the infrastructure or, ideally, Transport would have a dedicated active transport budget that could start building the cycleways.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There's no active transport budget at all in Transport.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** My understanding is that there's the get active transport funds. I'd have to take the exact amount on notice. It was around \$30 million to \$40 million. Councils right across New South Wales have to apply for that budget.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What's your understanding of the status of the cycle network plan? Where is that up to?

**ESTELLE GRECH:** There is a plan out, which is the strategic cycleway corridor network. But, as I mentioned, it's lines on a map that, for example, say there needs to be a route between Liverpool and Cabramatta. It doesn't actually detail that this is the road that makes the most sense for that route to be built on.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** And the greatest burden of the implementation of that plan is really born by the councils?

**ESTELLE GRECH:** Most likely.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So it's your recommendation or your suggestion that we need some kind of State government entity or agency within Transport that has authority to build the cycleway?

**ESTELLE GRECH:** I think so. There's definitely always going to be need for collaboration with local government, but especially when routes cross local government boundaries or are on the edges of local governments, there are always the forgotten spaces where you need someone with a city-wide or statewide view to come in and help direct and deliver that sort of infrastructure.

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Your submission also raises the issue around connecting Tallawong to Schofields. Can you elaborate on that? We've had a number of submissions that have suggested that as an idea. Do you want to perhaps elaborate further on why you think that's necessary?

**HARRI BANCROFT:** Really simply, it's about ensuring more people have access to the metro and making sure that we're futureproofing and leveraging the investment that has been made.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** I could add to that. There is obviously a significant number of people who live in Schofields. It has been an area of Sydney that has had the highest growth over the last 10 years, and they don't have a metro station. So it's critical so that people who already live there can access heavy rail. Ideally, it would have been done earlier, but there is a bit of retrofitting that needs to happen.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Walton, do you have anything to say about that Schofields connection as well?

**JULIANNA WALTON:** Yes. I'll just say that we agree entirely about cycling and walking. It's mutually supportive of public transport. They go together. We agree entirely with the Tallawong to Schofields point. We've been working on a strategy which we call the missing links strategy. The aim of it is to join different kinds of rail lines. Joining Tallawong to Schofields means that you're joining a metro line to the Richmond line. Then, if you go down further, you're joining it to the Main Western line as well. There are a lot of quite short links like that that have an enormous impact on the accessibility of people to lots of different places.

You have to think it through, but you realise that otherwise, if you're at Schofield, you've got to go all the way in the opposite direction to where you want to be if you wanted to be up on the Main Western line and vice versa. So a lot of people are going contrary to the direction they actually want to go when a very short link between different lines—the other one would be between Carlingford, where the light rail would stop, and Macquarie Park or Epping, where the rail line could be connected to. So we've got a lot of those comparatively short ones, which I think—well, we are arguing that there should be a lot of focus on those.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you all for your submissions and for coming along today and for your thoughtfulness. I agree with all of you, it's sort of the chicken-and-egg proposition that you've both put in there: You have to provide it for people to use it. I think you've both referred to that in terms of buses and active transport. If buses aren't available and easy, people won't use them. It's the same with active transport. So thank you for those suggestions. I think in your opening statement, Ms Bancroft—and forgive me, I'm not sure—you mentioned existing transport and homes, talking about how new homes need to be around existing transport. Could you just elaborate perhaps on that aspect of your submission?

**HARRI BANCROFT:** Certainly. The essence there, really, is around the viability of providing more public transport and better public transport. As we sprawl out further, it becomes more and more expensive because we need to put new services in. The high cost often means that those services aren't frequent and aren't direct, because the cheapest thing to do is to have them be indirect and to service as many people as possible in quite a winding route. That then means that there's a pretty poor transport option for people who live typically further west in Sydney. Then you end up creating this situation where people are forced into car ownership, if they can afford it. Making sure that we build more homes around existing transport—so the current TOD SEPP that has come up is really important, because that way we can leverage the public transport that is already there, and people move into a place where they already have good options for being able to get anywhere in Sydney.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Consider that we've just talked to an earlier witness—I don't know if you were here; it's fine if you weren't—around Bradfield and the concept of people and job opportunities there for people to live and work or to work close to where they live and those sort of expansions. Do you care to comment on that in terms of the opportunity for brand-new builds, around creating the infrastructure, the jobs, the homes and that sort of greenfields opportunity, which might be another aspect to that, working with communities around providing it all in a comprehensive greenfields way?

**HARRI BANCROFT:** I think there's definitely a possibility of doing that. It takes a lot of time to get that all. It still requires building everything from scratch. That is okay, but in the current housing crisis and the current I would say almost crisis of inequitable transport access in Sydney, we really need to be thinking about doing both. I think Bradfield is an example that is perhaps not going to be as well connected initially to the rest of Sydney's transport network as it could be. That will make it difficult for people who do live in the surrounding areas to access that as an area of employment but also in the area of services.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** To add to what Harri is saying, I think building a new city takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of money as well. If we're to respond to the housing crisis in a timely way, it makes sense to start with existing infrastructure. I also want to draw on the idea that the only thing you need to have good housing is a train line is also misguided.

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The Committee for Sydney are big advocates for density done well. If we are going to densify around train stations, it's really good that there's a train station, but we also need to think about the costs of social infrastructure like public spaces, child care, shops, services and entertainment. I'm a big advocate for not only thinking of transport as a commuter thing. Not everyone does the nine-to-five commute, so how do we also think about transport as dropping your kids off, getting your parents to the doctors—all of those care activities as well? It's really important when we're talking about things like TOD SEPP—yes, transport is definitely a box that you need to tick when it comes to doing density well, but there are lots of other things to think about too.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you, and I would have thought consultation with the community was part of feeding into that holistic approach to transport for your local needs. Not everyone wants to travel to Sydney.

**JULIE WALTON:** May I just say something on that point?

**The CHAIR:** Sure.

**JULIE WALTON:** There's a bit of a trap in the idea that you can have jobs move closer to people because, in fact, job movements tend not to be contained. One member of the family might live close to that particular job, but the other member of the family will be simultaneously trying to get to the other side of the city. In the worst-case scenario, the one who's close to the job is heading to the other side and the one who's further away from it is in more or less the same boat. We know that, statistically, it isn't true that people necessarily work close to home, even if it's there, unless they are very local-scale jobs. The higher paid, better jobs are better concentrated in hubs or centres. There's a paper here I'm happy to leave which points to the fact that we know that public transport usage is not strongly correlated with residential density—in other words, the density of the origin. It is very highly correlated with the density of the destination. The denser the destination, the stronger the centre, the better off you will be in terms of overall accessibility and the better the public transport patronage will be.

**The CHAIR:** You were saying you'd like to table that, and we can do that.

**JULIE WALTON:** I'm happy to, if you'd like.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, please. That would be useful. I'll continue along that line of thought about land use planning. Ms Walton, I note that in Action for Public Transport's submission, point (c), "changing nature of public transport needs", states:

New suburbs should be created around stations on rail lines, not between them, and any proposed rezoning of land that cannot be served by an existing rail line or a line for which funding is committed should be removed from planning documents.

At the moment, of course, the Transport Oriented Development SEPP is in the media a lot with those 30 railway stations and the Premier saying, "Let's build up, not out". But the situation is that Sydney is doing both right now and will for some time, because what is stopping the "out"? There's nothing stopping those suburbs being approved and developed without public transport right now, is there? Would you like to talk to that, and then I'll go to Committee for Sydney on that as well.

**JULIE WALTON:** This is what you'd call inertia. The plans have been there since the 1970s, when we didn't know what we know now. They have been just rolling along with people assuming that because they were told some time back in 1974, I think it was—with the Sydney Region Outline Plan—that this was an area slated for future urban development, that that could and should continue to be the case. But we now know that we're warming the planet. We now know that we are exterminating the koalas. It is simply a matter of a change in mindset and a change in government policy. There is no actual legal reason why one must rezone land that someone in 1974 said was in the urban development outline plan. So I think we need to bite the bullet and say we got that wrong. These areas like Oran Park—we've gone and done it again, and put the houses there before the railway line. I think it is simply that the strength of the expectation, the weight of expectation, of the people who would benefit from that overwhelms what you would have to say now is common sense.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, it is common sense. Ms Bancroft, Ms Grech, would you care to comment on that as well?

**ESTELLE GRECH:** I think probably just to add developing around train stations is difficult. There are land amalgamation challenges and things like that, which is why, I think, developments spread further west where there is no public transport but there are large landholders. In cases where that has occurred, though, I think there is a missed opportunity in not promoting better active transport, even, within greenfield developments. So, for example, if you go to many subdivisions in Leppington, which are about probably two kilometres from a station, even within them they don't have footpaths, they don't have bike paths, they don't have, I guess, urban design connections to the shops and things like that that exist. So I think, perhaps—how do I say this?—there are opportunities to bring things like an urban design guide for subdivisions back to the planning system so that there



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are minimum standards of mobility and accessibility if we are going to do greenfield, and that also just helps with the culture change of "Maybe I don't need to get in my car to get some milk. I can walk five or ten minutes to the shops". But it's all about urban design, making sure there are trees, paths and things like that available so it's comfortable and there is choice.

**HARRI BANCROFT:** And if I can just add one thing on there, which I know you probably intended to say, the design of the street network is really key as well. We often see in greenfield development what's called dendritic streets. It's very much like branches on a tree and it might mean that, as the crow flies, we live 500 metres from a shop but to walk there you need to walk a kilometre or more to access that location—so thinking about making sure we've got grid designs that are faster for people walking or cycling.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I have another couple of questions. If anybody else has, feel free to let me know. The Committee for Sydney's submission talks about the need to connect the Western Sydney airport to Sydney airport. You spoke about it in your opening statement. How would that happen? Are there existing connections? Talk us through how that would work. Or is it an idea and the Government should look at how? You don't need to have the whole plan; I just thought you might.

**HARRI BANCROFT:** First and foremost, connecting Western Sydney airport to more of Sydney and to more of Western Sydney, I think, is really important. I think rail is the best connector between the two airports, and that doesn't necessarily have to be a completely new line. That can be connecting the Western Sydney airport metro into another existing line and people can transfer—if you've got quick services, transfer, and it's a close distance. To your point before, Julie, with transferring it's easy and reliable for people to do and they'll be happy to do that. In a situation where we know it's unlikely we're going to see a commitment to any new rail in the near future, I think it can be done well with buses, but it needs to be really thought out in terms of how people are going to be accessing those stops.

It is an airport line, so buses need to probably look like quite different to how they look at the moment. There needs to be space for people's luggage, it needs to be easy for them to get on and it needs to stop relatively close to their house, or if it doesn't it needs to have a type of bus stop or almost bus station where people are able to line up together and wait, with their bags, in shelter. You don't want to be rained on on your way to the airport with all your bags et cetera.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Walton?

**JULIANNA WALTON:** We wouldn't be content with buses. It's a very short distance from Leppington to the new airport and we can't, for the life of us, see why that wouldn't be one of the missing links you would fill, along with Schofields to Tallawong. Once you've done that, you've now got an arc all the way up to the North Shore giving people on the North Shore the ability to get to the new Western Sydney airport by train. There are actually two short missing links in that arc, and we think they should be filled. It would be short-sighted to regard it as something we can't afford.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of plans and visions for public transport for Western Sydney, there is, of course, a 2056 strategy, but is there any transport vision plan to connect parts of Western Sydney in 10, 15 or 20 years that we are missing? Is there anything that exists or has existed and that might not be current any more that you can direct the Committee to?

**JULIANNA WALTON:** Yes. We actually have mentioned it in something that will be coming shortly. There is a future transport 2022, which says explicitly that the predict and provide approach should die, that it's wrong.

**The CHAIR:** Which approach?

**JULIANNA WALTON:** Predict and provide. In fact, in some of your terms of reference, you use it. You talk about what's the demand going to be. We predict the demand then we provide the road space—usually—for it. That is a flawed model for the reasons I have stated before, that we are not dealing with water we are dealing with gas. Gas expands to fill the space available. It is not like water; that's a given amount of volume that you've got to accommodate. AFT 2022 is really important because it now says that we need to envision what we want and then work out the means by which we will get there. We don't believe any longer, says future transport 2022, that predict and provide is valid. So I think you should look at that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. The question around specific—

**JULIANNA WALTON:** The second thing you should look at is Wales. Wales has now decided that it has completely departed from something I've not yet mentioned but is really important, and that's the malign influence of the benefit-cost ratio. They have noted that it has caused them to invest in things that are directly contrary to the objects that they are aiming to achieve. And you see it in another thing I could table, I suppose,

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but it's easy for me to get, in a report by Infrastructure Australia which was put out in October 2018. It's called *Outer Urban Public Transport: Improving accessibility in lower-density areas*, and it goes into chapter and verse about how dreadful it is that public transport is so thin on the ground in new urban areas.

Then it comes up with something that amounts to saying, "So sad, too bad. The benefit-cost ratios won't justify us providing any public transport for those areas," which started me off on a PhD on the subject—but that's kind of beside the point—because it cannot be so. What they're saying there is that, because the benefit-cost ratios in the areas that are to the west of Ermington are not going to be as high as they will be in Edgecliff, the logical thing to do is to go build something again in Edgecliff. The same goes, in fact, for all of regional New South Wales. "Why bother?" is where you get to. This is a really important thing that you should look at—the malignant influence of benefit-cost ratios.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Walton. We are almost out of time. I will get you to table that so we can use it for the Committee's purposes. Finally, Ms Bancroft, do you have any comments about the Western Sydney transport vision plan? Is there anything the Committee should be looking at? There does seem to be a plan, as far as we can tell.

**HARRI BANCROFT:** No. However, I would just say, in support of the issue around benefit-cost ratio, I think that is definitely something that needs to be rethought and gotten rid of because, again, I think a really key point here is—we've both said it today—you can't assume there is no demand if services are poor or if routes for walking or cycling are hot and unsafe. Making space for people on public transport and on streets is key to getting people to use those spaces more.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** My father was Welsh, so my ears pricked up when you talked about Wales. Am I to understand that Wales has abandoned the priority for BCRs?

**JULIANNA WALTON:** Yes. In a draft—I can't tell you off the top of my head, but I will send it in. In the last year and a half they have put out a draft revision of what is called their Green Book—the UK-developed Green Book, which is about transport project appraisal, which Wales was copying. And then it realised that it was leading them to increase the amount of carbon dioxide they were pumping into the atmosphere and, too, causing greater disparities in the welfare of groups in their communities because they tended to be funding, they called it—not the Peter principle. That is the wrong principle. But, at any rate, it is "to he who has, more shall be given".

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes, and your point was interesting. Just in terms of regions, you would never build otherwise.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** I can quickly add to that.

**The CHAIR:** We have about 30 seconds. As Chair, I am very strict with time. Ms Grech, you get the final word, but it must be short.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** With Wales, it is because they have introduced a wellbeing Act. We actually have someone from Wales out this week and next week, if you would like to meet with them. They are from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, so they are applying an intergenerational perspective to everything that government do, and transport is forming a big part of that as well.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** But, on that principle, Bradfield building the Sydney Harbour Bridge would not have met a BCR.

**ESTELLE GRECH:** Precisely.

**The CHAIR:** Luckily the last few minutes were interesting. Thank you so much for appearing today and for the great work done by each of your organisations. We will be in touch, if need be, for anything taken on notice.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

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**Mr ANDREW CARFIELD**, General Manager, Camden Council, sworn and examined

**Mayor TODD CARNEY**, Penrith City Council, affirmed and examined

**Mayor MATT GOULD**, Wollondilly Shire Council, affirmed and examined

**Mr BEN TAYLOR**, Chief Executive Officer, Wollondilly Shire Council, on former oath or affirmation

**Mr CHARLES WIAFE**, Principal Transport Planner, Liverpool City Council, affirmed and examined

**Mr MAHAVIR ARYA**, Transport Engineer, Liverpool City Council, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses. Is there an opening statement from Liverpool City Council?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity for Liverpool council to appear before the inquiry. Liverpool council in south-west Sydney is experiencing significant population growth. That is resulting in increased demand for public transport services. Council has, probably for the last five to 10 years, been making representations about train services from the Liverpool city centre to the Sydney and Parramatta CBDs and beyond. The concern that Liverpool has been expressing over the years is the lack of fast and limited-stop train services between Liverpool and the Sydney city centre in particular. Associated with that, and associated with increasing population growth, is the need for improved bus services in Liverpool.

Liverpool at the moment is serviced by Transit Systems as the only passenger bus service provider on a contract with Transport for NSW. Issues that tend to be run into are the provision of services, particularly in new and developing areas. The council appreciates that the road network might not be complete as development starts. The key example is an area called Middleton Grange and an adjoining one called Austral just next to the Bradfield City Centre. Because the road network is not complete, Transport's advice to the council is that interim bus services cannot be provided until the road network is completed. There we run into the difficulty of residents, particularly the elderly and parents with schoolchildren, complaining that there is not adequate bus services as the developments open.

Liverpool city centre, from its location, has a fairly good road network. But when it comes to public transport and bus services, it is a bit deficient and the council considers that there needs to be a lot more improvement. There should be early provision for services at new release areas that are developing. Council is happy to work with Transport for NSW and the bus service providers on interim bus routes to be used as the areas develop. For major release areas with schools, that becomes a big issue as well. We've got a number of schools where bus services at the moment are provided by minibuses. They tend not to be efficient, such that a lot more parents choose to drive to schools. It results in traffic congestion around the schools, and the lack of parking becomes an issue that council is called upon from time to time to address.

The other major issue council has got is that there's the Moorebank Intermodal Development that is developing on the eastern side of the Liverpool LGA. There's a train station at Casula. It would be very useful to have a passenger and pedestrian bridge that would connect Casula station to the Moorebank Intermodal Development. Council put in a submission, and if additional information is required, council will be happy to go through and provide a lot more clarification.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We will move to Wollondilly Shire Council.

**MATT GOULD:** I appreciate the opportunity to represent the people of the Wollondilly shire today. The current and future public transport needs in our shire in the broader Western Sydney region are of major concern for council and our community. The current state of our public transport infrastructure in Wollondilly is, to be frank, woefully inadequate. If I had travelled here by public transport today, it would've taken 3½ hours and involved two buses and three trains. Much of our shire has no meaningful access to public transport at all, and what limited access we do have is not fit for purpose. I understand that everyone is looking for improvements to public transport services, but the reality is that we have basically none, and we have a shire that is likely to triple in size over the coming decades.

The geographical spread of our towns and villages, and the chronic lack of public transport options, means that the 63.7 per cent of our residents who have to leave the shire for work have no realistic choice but to travel by car, and only 0.9 per cent of our residents travel to work by public transport. This is only going to worsen with the State-led growth areas planned for Wollondilly at Wilton and Appin. No clear plans are in place for the time of delivery of public transport for these growth areas. Our only rail access does not provide a regular and reliable service, as the Southern Highlands line is not electrified and prioritises freight movements over passenger services. This means that not only is there a small number of services on the line but they are regularly cancelled,

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leading a large number of residents who do use public transport to travel by car to Campbelltown or Macarthur stations, where the electrified rail starts.

Bus services are similarly insufficient, to the point that within our State-led growth area at Wilton, we have bus stops that have never even had a bus pull up at them. Only a tiny fraction of our shire is serviced by buses at all, and what services we do have are infrequent at best. We need to see a significant increase in both the frequency of buses across the shire as well as the areas they service. Our shire's close proximity to the Western Sydney airport will potentially provide us with opportunities for economic investment in our area. However, these benefits will only be possible if critical transport infrastructure is provided to connect us. To date, despite strong advocacy on the issue, we have been largely overlooked. The progression of stage 2 of the south-north rail connection from the aerotropolis to Campbelltown-Macarthur is an essential part of this connection, as are rapid bus services linking us directly to both Campbelltown and Macarthur stations and the aerotropolis in the short term. In the future, services directly to the Illawarra are also required.

For many years, we have advocated for the electrification of the existing diesel services through our shire. Electrified services will be particularly important to service our growth area at Wilton. Additionally, the completion of the Maldon-Dumbarton rail line would not only provide freight rail connection between Port Kembla and the aerotropolis, enabling significant economic benefit, but potentially also serve as a critical passenger line linking Western Sydney to Wollondilly and the Illawarra. An integrated transport strategy for Wilton and Appin is essential to support these future communities as well. We need a rapid bus service connecting these communities to major centres such as Campbelltown until such time as rail is delivered. The current public transport link identified between these two growth areas, which are going to be of about 50,000 people each, is a one-lane historic bridge which is inaccessible to heavy vehicles. The people of the Wollondilly shire want and deserve a future where public transport becomes more reliable, inclusive and equitable.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Now we move to Camden Council. Mr Andrew Carfield?

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to discuss council's submission. I'd like to commend the Committee for the work that they're doing on this critical issue. There are a number of things about the Camden local government area that are particularly noteworthy. Camden is the fastest growing local government area in Australia. In the five years leading into the 2021 census, Camden's population grew by 49 per cent. The next highest growth rate for a Sydney council over that same five-year period was the Hills at 18 per cent. By comparison, New South Wales at the same time grew by just 4.9 per cent. So the pace of growth we're experiencing in Camden is unlike anything else in Sydney.

The demographic profile of Camden is also a contrast to other parts of Sydney. Camden has a young and rapidly diversifying community. The median age of a Camden resident is just 33 and there are more nought-to-four year olds than any other age cohort. Today Camden's community has over 130,000 residents. By 2036, in just 12 years, the Camden community will again double in size to more than 250,000. Regrettably, our growing community also has the fastest growing jobs deficit in the Western Parkland City. When jobs growth is compared to population growth, Camden is lagging at a rate of 12 per cent, which is significantly higher than other local government areas across the whole Sydney region.

Without a convenient and connected public transport service, car dependency will be reinforced and our already congested road system will become unworkable. Camden desperately needs private investment in employment-generating developments and this will only occur when we have metro rail connections. Without these connections, Camden's jobs deficit will continue to grow. Camden's priorities for public transport investment are very clear. We're seeking commitment from both the State and Commonwealth levels of government to fund and complete the planned metro or rail connections for north-south from the airport and Bradfield to Oran Park, Narellan and Macarthur, and east-west from Glenfield and Leppington to Bradfield and the airport.

These new rail connections were identified within the Western Sydney City Deal and the progress that has now been made on stage 1, the St Marys to airport connection, is welcomed. These same metro rail connections are also listed as high priorities within the Western Sydney Transport Infrastructure Panel's *Independent Panel Report*, which was prepared last year. The planned rapid bus network between Campbelltown, Narellan, Oran Park and the aerotropolis is also a priority action and we consider that an important interim service to support the opening of the airport in 2026. In our growing communities of Oran Park, Leppington and our future growth areas, we're committed to delivering housing, jobs, local services and high quality sustainable urban precincts.

We have a rare opportunity right now to finalise the planning and delivery of the north-south and east-west metro rail connections in a coordinated, timely and cost-effective way, which will support the fastest growing region in Sydney. In summary, the Camden LGA and the Western Parkland City need equitable access to Sydney's public transport system. Good public transport is vital for our growing region and will ensure we can

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continue to deliver great outcomes for Camden and south-west Sydney. Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence today and I welcome the Committee's questions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mayor Carney?

**TODD CARNEY:** Thank you, Madam Chair and members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on this crucial issue both for our existing and future public transport needs in Western Sydney. Like Mayor Gould, it would've taken me 2½ hours to catch public transport from Penrith to here today. It's just the stark reality of people in Western Sydney—the connections that we just don't have. The significant change expected in Western Sydney and Penrith highlights the importance of shaping our city in a way that connects our community through improved public transport. At present, our community's access to public transport is limited, with high car usage. We see the potential for reducing car dependence through a well-connected public transport and active transport network.

Penrith has some of the most disadvantaged communities in Sydney. We believe that public transport can play a role in addressing social disadvantage and providing social inclusion. Over half of the working population in Penrith—55 per cent—travel outside of the area for work each day. Most choose not to use public transport. On census day, only 3.1 per cent took public transport to work. Our residents tend to live further away from everyday services and their jobs and education. Just an example, a staff member of ours who travels from Cobbitty to Penrith, which takes 50 minutes in a car, would take 3½ hours. That's just not equitable. Why would anyone catch public transport if that's the case. Our residents face greater cost of living on account of their distance travelled, car dependence, petrol and tolls. We also own more cars. Our residents need safe, reliable, convenient and frequent public transport so as not to present a barrier to jobs and educational opportunities for the lowest income earners.

There is a need for a better coordinated approach to infrastructure identification, prioritisation and funding delivery in line with development staging. If the buses aren't in operation when the people move in or when the airport opens, it entrenches car use and becomes even more difficult to shift behaviours. In particular, the extension of the Sydney Metro line to Tallawong and Macarthur is crucial in linking Western Sydney residents to their region, thereby opening up greater opportunities for employment and education and encouraging industries to further develop in our region. In addition, the rapid bus network from Penrith and other city centres to the new airport is critical to establish early patronage of the Sydney Metro network. This rapid bus needs to be dedicated, prioritised, fast and frequent.

We would also like to highlight the difficult first or last mile in the movement of people from public transport hubs, especially railway stations, to their final destination. While residents may take the train, there is often no reliable bus services to take them the rest of the way or to the service itself. In addition, there is a need for supporting infrastructure that improves the functionality of public transport for users, thereby increasing patronage, such as commuter car parks, pedestrian paths, cycle facilities, crime prevention, accessible ramps and lifts, and shelters providing weather protection, especially during those hot summer days. Finally, we want to see the prioritisation of public transport infrastructure and prompt, timely, safe and connected transport infrastructure that will enhance the health and wellbeing of our community. Thank you for considering council's submission, and I'm pleased to take any questions.

**The CHAIR:** My first question is particularly to Camden and Wollondilly councils, but others can jump in as well. When the new suburbs are planned and rezoned and new houses are being built—I think your statistic, Mr Carfield, was 47 per cent or something in terms of the additional population—and even now, how is Transport for NSW and the Government working with you as a council to determine your transport infrastructure needs and plan them with you? Realistically, I'm not from the Government but they can't deliver every single transport need to everybody at once. But I assume there are units, people within Planning, within Transport, who work with you to plan this. What is happening now with Wollondilly because we have heard south-west Sydney is horrendous? I think at the beginning you said "woefully inadequate" in terms of the transport there. What are the connections and engagement that you're having with the Government?

**MATT GOULD:** Through our Wilton Growth Area, we've had vague promises that in time there will be—

**The CHAIR:** "Vague", did you say?

**MATT GOULD:** Vague promises that there's lines on a map, that there will be appropriate infrastructure. But as things stand right now we have nothing concrete. We have no guarantees of any kind of rail link into Wilton. We have no certainty whatsoever on bus. We heard some utterances that there may be rapid bus but nothing certain. It very much is up in the air. A very large concern that we have is that we are going to have



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50,000 people that are not contiguous with Greater Sydney who are going to have to rely pretty much entirely on Picton Road and the Hume Highway because there simply isn't the public transport that is needed to get there.

**The CHAIR:** I'll go to you in a second, sorry, Mr Carfield. With Wilton, the Premier has been talking very strongly in the media, as have other Ministers, about building up, not out, in terms of the recent Transport Oriented Development SEPP. But in your council's point of view and what you're seeing on the ground, the "out" is still occurring, is it not? And the consideration for those residents and for your council to make sure that these new residents have infrastructure, transport—that's not happening, but the sprawl's still happening. Is that correct?

**MATT GOULD:** Yes, absolutely. I guess one of the challenges that we have is that whilst we welcome that change in direction, I guess, towards up, not out, the reality is that the growth at Wilton started several years ago. The concern that we have is that this change in focus is going to see the infrastructure investment then move away from the previous commitments they've made, where we have the doubling of our shire happening at Wilton and we don't have that infrastructure. Whilst we are supportive of the concept of up, not out, we need to make sure that the commitments that have already been made are honoured and that we actually have infrastructure for our communities.

It's also one of the reasons that we have significant concerns with the additional growth area at Appin, because there isn't enough infrastructure funding now to provide the desperately needed basic infrastructure we need at Wilton, yet we're opening up an entirely new growth area at Appin that has even less infrastructure. We're deeply concerned that what we're going to see is both of those growth areas fighting for already insufficient funding and things like public transport just won't materialise. Wilton was originally meant to be at no cost to government. What we've seen is it just turn to, yes, no cost to government, but the services just aren't being delivered.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mayor Gould. Mr Carfield?

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Firstly, I'd just like to provide an example around Oran Park. Oran Park's a master-planned community or town. It's been a partnership between the State Government and Landcom as well as the developer—who has a longstanding interest in the local area and significant other landholdings to develop in the future—and the council, as well as State agencies. Oran Park had a planned community of 7½ thousand dwellings, so the community itself would be 20,000 to 30,000 residents, but that number is underestimated. We're now revisiting the master plan and adding in ability for apartment buildings. This could increase that by another 2,000 dwellings.

If you were to go through Oran Park today, the pace of change really smacks you in the face. There are already seven- to eight-storey apartment buildings completed and occupied. Those apartment buildings sit right alongside a corridor and a signpost in the ground that earmarks the future railway station of Oran Park. I would say every one of those residents who has moved into Oran Park—and it's nearing completion—has visited the site office with the full-scale model depicting where the rail corridor is to be, the future railway station in Oran Park and the opportunities that that presents into the future. Clearly Oran Park, as a master-planned community, had a lot of engagement from State agencies planning out what is a sustainable system of transport into the future. Where will the jobs be? It relies on rail connections. The connection is to be between Oran Park and the aerotropolis and Bradfield; through, then, southbound to Narellan and to Macarthur.

There are indeed opportunities for more railway stations between Oran Park and the aerotropolis. If you looked on a map and saw the frequency of railway stations on other parts of the rail system, you would expect there could be two, three or four additional railway stations. The locations of those would be sensitive, but there's great opportunities there. The thing that's quite unique about Oran Park, too, is just how simple it would be to complete that rail connection. There's a single landowner with a lot of capacity. On their own they are designing and accommodating this rail corridor. They are going to a lot of effort to ensure that there's not going to be conflict with services. There won't be conflict with road accesses and arrangements. The whole community has off-road, shared path systems. It will work fabulously with a railway station, but all that's missing is that final commitment.

**The CHAIR:** All that's missing is the train.

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** When is that going to be there? What have the residents been told? I indicate that I will go to all of you after this and then to other members with questions.

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Our expectation would be that the Government gets on with the planning and delivery stages as soon as possible. The community is growing; the road system is congested and breaking. The jobs issue will not come.

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**The CHAIR:** So if you're a resident of Oran Park, they don't know whether it's 2028, 2034. They have no idea. They're being sold these places with a shiny train model in the site office, but they don't know when the real train is going to arrive.

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Madam Chair, that's exactly right.

**The CHAIR:** Mayor Carney, did you want to speak from Penrith's perspective on this issue—engagement with Government, what they're committing to with you in terms of—

**TODD CARNEY:** I think there's always been engagement; it has occurred, but there's never been anything locked in. That's with successive governments, over many years. There's been nothing implemented within the budgetary process to make sure this happens. I think that's why I spoke within there the key to actually unlocking the whole north-south sector—this isn't just about Penrith, this is about Western Sydney in general. I want the opportunity for people who live in Penrith to work in Campbelltown, for people who live in Marsden Park to work in Penrith. That creates the activities that businesses want to be able to create jobs.

For too long we've been focused on putting all our resources into the CBD and around the eastern suburbs. You think of the light rail and what that money could have done for transport infrastructure within Western Sydney and the bang for buck that would have delivered, where a system that already had a fairly good—wasn't perfect—bus service to now having a light rail system; that money could have been better spent elsewhere. That's why we need to prioritise public transport into the future and make sure it's budgeted properly to make sure it's not done in a way that's just a hit and miss. That's what we've seen for too long in Western Sydney. We've missed out on that. People don't want to go into the CBD to go to work anymore. They want to work local; they want to work close to home. Being able to create these public transport corridors will help create the job opportunities for people in Western Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** Does Liverpool Council want to speak, in terms of your engagement with the Government and how they're working with you to plan transport needs in your LGA?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** Yes. I'd like to add the comment that I probably do a lot of consultation with Transport for NSW in the engagement as release plans are drawn up. I used to work at Transport for NSW, so at an officer level I know some of them. The system works well for engagement prior to release of land. Usually you have a list of roads which would be spelt out: ones to be delivered by the State Government and ones to be delivered by developers. Usually, because the work is to be done by developers, it's a requirement under the development consent, the road network tends to be constructed. What then fails is the provision of the bus service, because that's not listed in any of the planning documents to be signed that, yes, from day one or day five, this is the bus service that's going to be provided. So from the point of view of engagement, I would say yes, the engagement has happened but it is how you then implement. With regards to the implementation, yes, Transport for NSW, the road construction arm—they are responsible for road construction. Natalie, you would know the group because you used to work with them. So they will do the road construction. What tends to fail is when the public transport components come in and when it's actually implemented.

I've heard Camden and Wollondilly talk about the railway lines. We've seen the railway lines on a map. Liverpool sits with Bradfield as one of the stations to be built. Liverpool previously said, "We've got the heavy rail to Leppington. Why don't we extend the heavy rail from Leppington to Bradfield?" That would have provided a connection and, for that matter, train services for Liverpool residents to be able to get to the airport. At the moment you've got the airport 20 kilometres from Liverpool city centre. Liverpool city centre and, for that matter, Liverpool residents would not be able to catch effective public transport to the airport. So the engagement tends to happen, but it's the implementation. The two suburbs that I've talked about, Middleton Grange and Austral, they are developing at the moment. They have a very, very limited bus service and Transport says, "Well, but the road network is not completed. Please wait for five, 10 years for the road network to be completed." Meanwhile you've got 20,000 people in those suburbs who say, "We want to be able to catch public transport."

**The CHAIR:** Just to be clear, the road network isn't completed, but the roads are there because people are clearly driving around. When you say "road network" I was expecting a paddock with no roads, but the roads are there for the buses to drive on, potentially.

**CHARLES WIAFE:** Madam Chair, what I'm pointing out is you might have a particular road that's been done because the developer has constructed it, but there may be the ultimate bus route that has not fully been completed. You could have an interim arrangement where you might have to travel on, probably, minor roads. In Austral and Middleton Grange, most of the roads are already in place so, yes, the road conditions might not be perfect but people are driving on them so we should be able to have an interim bus service. I was talking to Anthony before and I was making the point about Nipper buses. I worked out at Penrith years ago. There used to be smaller buses that were operating because, again, the wider road network might not be completed, or you have

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situations where the density is such that you don't need the bigger bus but you could operate some other form of bus service.

**The CHAIR:** We will go to questions from the Government.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I want to ask about Fifteenth Avenue. That's an established road that really has fairly limited capacity.

**The CHAIR:** What suburb are you talking about?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** This is in Austral. There is a whole range of new developments that require access through Fifteenth Avenue. Clearly that road is not sufficient for an adequate public transport service to the new and emerging suburbs around Austral. How does this process progress? How do you actually establish an adequate bus service if the road infrastructure—you said that the road infrastructure would be there and the public transport would flow, but actually the road infrastructure isn't there. Past governments have failed to deliver, effectively, an adequate road system to service the new suburbs.

**CHARLES WIAFE:** Fifteenth Avenue is about 12 kilometres long. It's an extension of an existing arterial road called Hoxton Park Road. So if you draw an east-west line, you start from Liverpool city centre and you draw a straight line to the west, Fifteenth Avenue takes you straight into the Western Sydney airport. The problem is that it's an existing two-lane rural road. Vehicles are driving on it. In fact, a portion of it is a bus route. The current rapid bus service that's planned from Liverpool city centre to the airport, for all the planning, goes along the existing Liverpool to Parramatta transit way, then it makes its way to Elizabeth Drive. It goes on the M12 Motorway to go to the airport. So the people in Austral, the people in Middleton Grange, are not really going to benefit from that rapid bus service that will be provided. With regards to Fifteenth Avenue, it's now been given to, handed over to, Transport for NSW to design and deliver the project. In the current State budget there's a funding allocation of about \$50 million for the design to be completed, for approvals to be gained and for construction to start. So it's a gradual, staged upgrade of that route. But at the moment, buses can drive on the first seven or eight kilometres of that route.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What would be an adequate interim measure to provide sufficient public transport for those residents in that area?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** I would think it's just a commitment from Transport for NSW to work with transit systems that provide the public transport service to the area to say, "Yes, this is the bus route. The route network might not be complete, but here are the interim routes that can be used to provide a reasonable bus service to the residents who are moving into that developing area."

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** So you would ask that the Government prioritise that as an upgrade or a road that could then provide that public service?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** That's right.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It's really hearing the next steps. I hear what you say about consultation, which I think is incredibly important. We've heard evidence about that lacking but also making the decision to proceed. That would be your evidence to the Committee?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** That's correct. You might remember—as a Minister you may have seen a letter from Liverpool council saying, "Let's reclassify that road as State road because we think it's a continuation of an existing State road." It's the main route going into the airport. So that's one of the issues about responsibilities.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you for that. Getting that prioritisation is important. Mayor Gould, could I come back to your comments in relation to the dwelling increase and the doubling of the number of dwellings and that input? Could I get your comments and could you elaborate on that area? Clearly, with the emphasis on infrastructure in other areas and housing in other areas, are you having interactions with Transport or with the Government about plans for these growth areas or what might be proposed? What's the current status of the consultation with you from the Government or from Transport in relation to the future plans in this area? Has that occurred? Has it not occurred? Is it planned to occur? Your evidence is you've got rapid growth and that's going to be needed, and understanding the need in other areas as well, but what has been the interaction to date?

**MATT GOULD:** Meaningfully, quite limited. We currently have 56,000 residents. We're going to see about 50,000 at Wilton and then we're going to see an additional 50,000 or so at Appin. As far as a clear pathway on the delivery of infrastructure, it's not there. In the case of Wilton we have some lovely maps that show that there may be some things provided, but there are no time lines. There's no guarantee of when it will happen. At this point, we're fighting for things as basic as functional sewerage, high schools and basic public transportation.

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We have raised, for a number of years now, our concerns here. We have raised quite fiercely our concerns with the additional growth at Appin and the impact that that will have, but it has largely fallen on deaf ears as far as coming back with, "This is how we're going to engage, this is how we're going to address this problem and this is how we are going to have the basic infrastructure that is required." One of the things that we have been pushing very hard for at Appin, for instance, if the planned growth is to go ahead there, is that it needs to be linked to a binding infrastructure plan so that we have certainty that we're going to get that infrastructure. Because at the moment for neither Appin nor Wilton do we have any kind of binding plan as to what's going to be provided and when, particularly in that public transport space.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** That would be a first-order request from you to have that binding plan to provide that certainty so you can then work on the other plans going forward?

**MATT GOULD:** Absolutely.

**BEN TAYLOR:** Natalie, just on the engagement with Transport at an ops level as well, in case you're interested, I've been with Wollondilly now for almost five years. Through that time, we've talked with Transport numerous times, but there has been no certainty, no plan and no actual delivery timetable for when things may possibly happen. There are a lot of good, well-meaning officers trying to do their best, but no real commitment. It appears to me that they are spread so thin across so many priorities and have been so focused on some big ticket items like the aerotropolis that the areas that are getting housing on the ground like Wollondilly are being ignored and under-resourced. At an officer level, that's the reality of the situation.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Mr Carfield, in relation to Oran Park, you spoke about the opportunities that are there and already it seems that you've got all the other pieces of the pie—the developer has made those forward plans. Can you elaborate on your opportunity for consultation with Transport for NSW or with the Government to be able to plan? It sounds like you're doing everything you can from your side. What are the opportunities or future focus and priorities for you?

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** It would greatly assist Camden Council and the Oran Park community if we could have more certainty around the timing of actions. I think that the contact we've had from government agencies like Transport for NSW has clearly indicated benefits of the rail network and connections and finalisation, but is really struggling to move outside of the very short-term time horizon. So they're thinking in the one, two, to possibly the four-year horizon. Council and the local community would like to see a longer term planning and commitment to things. The council is investing heavily in local infrastructure. We're building a \$65 million leisure centre in Oran Park. The developer is investing heavily in local community infrastructure, but it needs to be a partnership. We need to have all of the supporting infrastructure delivered when it's required. We've had major challenges around local schools, and I could expand on that. But, really, the commitment to timing of delivery of those transport connections is vital.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes, because the nought to four-year-olds are your biggest cohort and they are going to grow up.

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Indeed. By way of example, the first primary school that opened in Oran Park, the Oran Park Public School, on day one had 11 kindergarten classes. By the time the second primary school was opened in 2021, Oran Park Public School had swelled to 21 kindergarten classes. Barramurra primary school, which opened in 2021, this year has reached its capacity and we'll see demountables on valuable playground space. So the lag in the timing of growth-supporting infrastructure is really evident across the board, particularly around State transport, sewer, water and schools.

**The CHAIR:** I should have said before that we do have two Government members of the Committee who have tuned in online: The Hon. Bob Nanva and the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine. Mr Nanva has some questions.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you all for attending this afternoon. It's pretty clear you've all had to contend with this problem of catching up with the infrastructure deficit in light of your booming populations. Naturally, that comes down to funding and there is always going to be that tension between State and Local governments regarding funding and the competing priorities that both levels of government have. We heard about the Oran Park example, a master planned community but one with a missing rail link. I'm just interested in alternative revenue streams and your thoughts on those.

More particularly, would you agree that there is a significant uplift in surrounding land values every time there is an announced rezoning or a new transport project which effectively results in potential windfall gains, particularly for those who have land banked around your areas? I'm particularly interested in the concept of value capture mechanisms. Would you agree that, given the real funding constraints all levels of government have, that it would be equitable for some of that uplift to be returned to ratepayers or taxpayers to pay for the very infrastructure or rezoning that has resulted in a windfall gain, beyond developer contributions?

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**TODD CARNEY:** Look, definitely, and I think it's something that we've missed out on a lot of, because we've seen a lot of growth, a lot of development, within Western Sydney already. But value capture is something that we've definitely spoken about within Penrith council for some time. It's an opportunity—where rezoning happens, the value of that land is lifted dramatically before it is handed over to development. To be able to have—even as a small portion of that, to be able to fund some of the infrastructure moving forward allows you to deliver that infrastructure up-front. The biggest concern is not having it there. It sets that precedent where people start using their cars, and as soon as they start using their cars they don't get out of the car. But it's definitely something that we would be keen to see. I think there is definitely some uplift in those property values at a small percentage that can actually help fund some of this infrastructure into the future.

**The CHAIR:** Would anybody else like to respond to that as well?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** I would like to add a comment, that most developers agree with the principle that, as a consent condition, the minor road network needs to be constructed. For the major road network, there is the regional development contribution, but it's the extent of that level of contribution. And then my second—the earlier comment I made about public transport provision. At the moment, when we transport planners do all the planning, we tend to concentrate on the physical infrastructure. How is that physical infrastructure going to be funded? Then it's arithmetic and discussion about how much of it is funded by the developer and how much of it is funded by the State Government. What we tend to leave out is the public transport services.

In terms of value capture, yes, as a concept, but it's probably how it's managed. If there's a lot of understanding, if there is a lot of approach to be saying, "Yes, we're going to have this development; it's going to generate a need for a railway line to be constructed and a railway line needs to be funded," to me, I would think, it's something that the Government and, for that matter, this group should pursue. Singapore has done that for a very long time. A number of the US states do that as well. I think here we've got into the process of saying, "Yes, let's have developer contribution," but I don't think the developer contributions stand to cover the cost of the infrastructure and, for that matter, the impact of the rezoning processes that we go through.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Do you think—

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Mr Nanva. There was someone else who want to respond to the question.

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to offer a few thoughts around our experience at Oran Park. There are some mechanisms already in place that operate in a similar way to value capture, and they're local and State development contributions. We've had a lot of success having community buildings like a library, leisure centre, youth centre and sporting facilities constructed through a local development contribution with that developer. There is also State infrastructure contributions which are levied, and I think there's a real value in working with developers to ensure that the timing of that infrastructure is delivered early in the development process. And that's where we've had success at Oran Park. But there needs to be a balance to make it work and ensure that development remains feasible.

I would also just add another thought on that, which is that there are over 170 railway stations in Sydney. The Camden community will grow in 10 years to nearly 250,000 residents. It only has one railway station, which is on the border of the Liverpool local government area. Camden residents also pay taxes to support Sydney's rail services, and there is an equity question that is a very large question in there.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Nanva, we will go back to you now.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** You may not be able to answer this, but do you believe the developer contributions at the moment are commensurate with the increases in land that have increased for no other reason than that they have become more productive by virtue of local or State Government announcements or investments?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** I don't think it does. I think your comment there about the uplift that happens with rezoning, if you compare that to the developer contributions, yes, there's State and regional contributions, but even if you add them, they don't come to the value of the uplift that tends to be realised with rezoning processes. But that's what I would say. Earlier on, it needs to be clearly defined about what's the contribution that is being imposed on particular rezoned land versus the benefits that the State Government and, for that matter, the residents who are already there are going to get.

**MAHAVIR ARYA:** Just to give you a bit of example of what we have got a problem in Austral, which is being developed. In Austral, it is the developers are coming to council with the plans to develop it and council tells them to upgrade the roads in front of their development. Now what is happening there is that Austral is nearly about 25, 30 per cent developed, but the link roads are not developed. That's what the developer is saying, that they are paying the developer's contribution and council is not developing those roads. Some of those roads are to



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be funded by the State Government and some of the roads have to be funded by council. The council is doing its best for those links to be developed. Even in Austral we have got a problem. It is not only the road network; it is Sydney Water.

There are the developments that are happening. They are putting the septic tanks and sometimes they'll say, "Don't do any developments because the Sydney Water infrastructure is not there." So we have to look at how we release the zoning area for developments. Instead of having the whole big area, have it in sections, so that that section is developed. So we collect the sufficient developer's contribution to do the development of the infrastructure. Or if we say, okay, if it is the developer by 10 per cent or 20 per cent, then there funding is available from the State Government on a loan or something like that. Our mayor, Ned Mannoun, has said that council can take a loan which can be funded in the future developer's contribution and complete the road network. No footpaths connections are there. No streetlight connections are there. The community wants it. So it is a contribution, that's all.

**MATT GOULD:** The infrastructure contribution scheme at the moment, certainly in greenfield areas like ours, is woefully not fit for purpose. Whether it needs to be looked at—some sort of value capture system or alternative—the big issue that we see is all too often there's not an agreed infrastructure plan up-front. That is the biggest shift we could see that would actually make a difference in this space. Because what happens is all too often there are vague promises made and it goes through that rezoning process. Because there is nothing binding, we then are far too reliant on developer goodwill. It really puts it into the hands of the developers as to what gets provided and when, and there is no certainty for community at all.

One of the real big challenges that we see in that space is the fact that, ultimately, somebody has to pay for this infrastructure. So the State Government has to pay for it or the developer has to pay for it, or it just doesn't happen. Too often we see that it doesn't happen. The reality is, when you're dealing with areas like Wollondilly, the infrastructure costs are very, very high. But they have bought land that was very, very cheap because there was absolutely no servicing. I don't think that it is unreasonable that, if they are then going to put thousands and thousands of people there, the developers should be making sure that they are then providing sufficient funding to provide the services that are needed to support that land. Because, at the moment, it just seems to fall through the gaps.

One challenge I would say with potentially a value capture system from our experience is—as I said earlier, Wilton was intended to be at no cost to government. It was meant to be a "developer pays value capture" type of arrangement. It really hasn't worked to the point that they've really walked away from that now. Because what ended up happening is the developers were turning around and going, "It's too expensive to do this. We can't deliver the product if we have to pay for the costs of what this infrastructure is actually going to cost." In any solution I think that that needs to be kind of balanced. One thing where there could be some value and maybe worth the Committee considering is that the new regional infrastructure contributions that are being collected probably do need to be directed to the growth areas on the outer fringes, where we simply don't have that baseline infrastructure that other parts of Greater Sydney have.

**The CHAIR:** Some other States have looked at this and have acted on it, in terms of looking at taxing what is often a very, very big windfall gain made by developers when their land is rezoned. I think recently Victoria has done it; ACT has, whether it's called "windfall profits" or "uplifting" tax. We don't really have anything like that. Infrastructure contributions are not quite like that. Is that something that you think is needed? It doesn't help existing areas—I'm conscious of that—and there's been a lot of rezoning. Ideally, probably we don't want much more rezoned. But is that something that is worth considering in terms of how to fund some of this infrastructure? Mayor Carney?

**TODD CARNEY:** If I may, I think everything needs to be looked at. The current infrastructure process that we have is broken. It's not working. It's not delivering on what's needed within our communities, especially around public transport. I think everything needs to be put on the table, whether it's value capture—and in many cases it's not so much the developer who owns that land; it could be the mums and dads who have been sitting on their land. You've got to be able to cover their costs to be able to move somewhere else. But if a property that was originally worth \$10 million is now worth \$20 million, there is definitely some value in capturing some of that.

But I think you've also got to make sure that it doesn't rule out that the development then becomes unfeasible to do. It's a very fine balance in doing that, but I think everything needs to be put on the table. The whole review needs to be done when it comes to all contributions, whether it's developer or a system like that, to fix the system because it's not working currently. It's not working for any of our councils. Usually it's us left to kick the can, which means we have to ask for more money out of our local residents, which means we're the bad guys, and it's not always fair. I think everything we can put on the table to review this current system, especially what's seen as the growth—we spoke about Penrith. Currently we have 220,000 people within Penrith. By 2041

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we're looking at 270,000 people within Penrith—a significant amount of people. The growth we're going to see in Camden, Wollondilly, Campbelltown—it's currently not working. We can clearly see that when it takes 2½ hours to go from Penrith to Campbelltown by public transport, something needs to change.

**The CHAIR:** I've got one more question before I throw to other members again. People have different solutions in terms of connecting north and south, connecting north-western Sydney to Glenfield—further south, even, to Campbelltown. What's the solution, from your councils' perspective? I think that does sound like a priority that should be announced and committed to by a government. Pretty much every submission says that this is absolutely sorely needed. What are your councils advocating in terms of that connection? There are different proposals on the table.

**TODD CARNEY:** For Penrith, ours is to go from Tallawong through to St Marys; then St Marys through to, currently, the airport, as we're going to see, and into Bradfield; but then going in and having those linkages to Leppington and then through to the Macarthur region as well. We need to be able to link the whole lot up, not just sections.

**The CHAIR:** It just makes so much sense that that's what should happen. Again, everybody's advocating it, but there's no commitment. In terms of the discussions that the Government and Transport for NSW is having, there's nothing of substance in terms of any commitment to start looking at it.

**TODD CARNEY:** It's something from us and the park city councillors as well to push that along. It's great that Penrith has that section, but it doesn't mean anything until we connect the whole north-south up. It only delivers a very short section. I want the opportunity for people to go and work in Campbelltown and areas like that. It's the way we can actually boost the economy in Western Sydney, by delivering on that rail link.

**BEN TAYLOR:** My understanding is that there is a jointly funded State and Federal business case looking into the south-north rail connection, connecting the aerotropolis and Campbelltown-Macarthur as well as the Glenfield spur. The second part of the business case is the connection through to Tallawong. That's my understanding of where that project is up to. Ms Faehrmann indicated there is no commitment to that project—well, there is. There's a signed document called the Western Sydney City Deal, which was signed by the then Prime Minister, the then Premier and all the eight mayors of the Western Parkland City, which is a commitment to deliver that south-north rail connection between Macarthur, the aerotropolis, St Marys and Tallawong. So there is a commitment. What it actually needs is a firm delivery timetable so that we know as a council of the Western Parkland City when that's going to be done. From Wollondilly's perspective—and please jump in here, Mr Mayor—I would say our number one priority is that connection directly between Campbelltown, Macarthur and the new airport.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you very much for your detailed submissions and for your time here today. If I could go back to the opening—and I think it was Mr Wiafe—you were citing more development and the need for public transport infrastructure and then you cited Casula train station.

**CHARLES WIAFE:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** During this inquiry we've had a theme come out in terms of density and new targets, and, most recently, the density of transport hubs and the community feeling that they've been left out of the discussions and the consultation on this. In terms of engagement with government on some of these issues, particularly where we've got development happening—to happen, has happened—and the lag on the public transport, the Committee would like to know do you have a place at the table in terms of the discussions or the forums? I appreciate the work that's been done in terms of councils signing up to agreements in the past. I wondered where it might be currently be at, at the moment—the consultation and the discussions on this?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** In south-west Sydney, if I take Liverpool as an example, the increased density around stations in the current planning documents is not really affecting development around Liverpool, Warwick Farm or Casula per se. Council on our own has adopted and agreed to increase density around Liverpool city centre and, for that matter, the station. The council has been working with Transport for NSW to identify improvements. One of our key improvements, as I said in my opening statement, is the need for fast and efficient train services from Liverpool to connect Liverpool to the rest of the city. If I take the example, Liverpool is only 35 kilometres or thereabouts from Sydney; train services take more than an hour. My friends in Penrith could catch a fast train—that's almost 60 kilometres away—and that would take you there in an hour. So you've got that difference.

But in terms of consultation, I think consultation tends to happen, but it is the implementation. I think we all started talking about value capture. It is the fact that developments are happening but the contributions that the developers are contributing, in my view and in the view of a person who's looked at this subject, I've said the developers are not paying a reasonable contribution for the infrastructure and, for that matter, public transport

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services to be provided. At the moment, if you look at all the contributions plans, most of them will not touch on bus or train services at all. They tend all to talk about building the infrastructure.

So the State Government is then left with providing the service from the State budget. So transport officers look at it and they will say to council officers, "It's not budgeted." And we will say, "But that's a small amount of money. How come it's not budgeted?" I've dealt with big development applications where we've said to developers, "Provide a bus service for the first five years of the development." That could be a model that council could say yes. Or you have Oran Park. You could say to the developer, "You're doing a big master plan. Provide a reasonable bus service." We can do that sort of model, but then the State Government would need to pick it up after, whether it's the first five years or whatever the time frame, to make sure that the bus services are provided.

In terms of consultation, I think Transport, the department of planning tend to talk to a lot of staff members, but it's the implementation. From the priorities, Camden and Liverpool have all said, "Yes, we've seen the line from Bradfield to go to the south. We know there's a business case that needs to be prepared." What we don't have is a commitment for implementation once that business plan is agreed. Whilst I've got the floor, from Liverpool's priority point of view, you've got Liverpool city centre, you've got a portion of Hoxton Park Road, you've got Fifteenth Avenue. At the moment, a rural route. If we want to get to the airport, it needs to be prioritised and for it to be done.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Obviously you all represent areas that are highly car dependent. I think in Camden's submission you talk about setting mode shift targets. I just wonder, how do you think that would contribute to shifting car dependence? Perhaps Mr Carfield, given that it's your submission.

**ANDREW CARFIELD:** I think it is important to set those long-term targets around mode shift if the State agencies are working towards a delivery against those targets. So it's one thing to have an aspirational target that there's no accountability around, but if there's great accountability in terms of delivering the kinds of network improvements and connections that are going to support a mode shift, then those targets can be useful long term. I think we're coming from a very low base at Camden. I think at the last census day there was only about 2 per cent of our community that used public transport for the journey to work. We can do much better than that with better public transport services.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Does anyone else on the panel have something to say?

**BEN TAYLOR:** If you don't mind, I'll probably comment on a different area of Sydney. I think I talked about this in my last appearance here, but one of the benefits of the B-Line on Sydney's northern beaches, as I understand, is a 17 per cent mode shift from car to public transport. When that project was originally thought of, the feedback and the business case did not stack up because it was seen that it wouldn't actually deliver those sorts of outcomes. Now the reality was, through political intervention and leadership, the project was delivered and, as a result, it's now a golden shining light in the Transport for NSW portfolio because it has delivered those time savings of up to 20 or 30 minutes but also the big mode shift, which has meant that the Government hasn't needed to invest in road upgrades that it mightn't necessarily need to do.

The more that those mode shifts are incorporated in business cases, the more that they can actually look forward and provide a better public outcome for an area. That's what we see happening for Wollondilly, because if we did have those sorts of services—a B-Line style service from Wilton to Campbelltown, for example—people would jump on it. They don't want to sit in a car. They don't want to sit looking at the car and the red lights in front of them. They want to sit in a comfortable environment and travel from A to B on public transport. If we set that up now, then we will get the mode shift and we'll build a community around public transport rather than around cars.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Just a follow-up around that, what is the source of journey data for councils? How do you actually assess journey activity of your residents? What's the primary source of information? Is it data from Transport? Is it data from the ABS? Is it census data? How do you actually know where your residents are going day to day to assess where the linkages need to be put in place?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** Chairperson, if I can start, the census data asks a question about travel mode on the census night. ABS collects that information and every five years shares that information with councils and shares that information with Transport for NSW. Transport for NSW also does home travel surveys with ABS. That also provides information about public transport.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What's the cycle for that? How frequently? What's the frequency?

**CHARLES WIAFE:** I think that's done every five years, but if they need a catchment, they can go in and get information probably every two years or so.

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**The CHAIR:** Can I suggest for time's sake that the Committee could inquire about this? It's just that we've got one second left, almost, and I know that quite a few people put their hands up to this. It's a very interesting thing that we will endeavour to find the answer to within government because, as you started talking, I thought all the data is there and you could tell us if that's okay. Is there one more burning question, though, Anthony?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** No, that's fine.

**The CHAIR:** I have one more burning question and it's to you, Mr Taylor. The city deal was signed a bit more than five years ago by the two Coalition governments. The Western Sydney Aerotropolis connection first stage north-south link has been a commitment. The business case, I understand, has been done. Is that correct? It has been done. Has there been a commitment by the new governments to the city deal, and where within the whole process, within government, is that up to?

**BEN TAYLOR:** Thank you. In terms of the business cases for the south-north rail connection, no, my understanding is that they are still progressing for stage two and three, stage two being the Macarthur linkage and stage three being Tallawong. In terms of where they are up to, the three levels of government come together on a quarterly or sometimes even six-monthly basis at an executive level. Ms Fishburn from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure—I'm getting the new terminology right—leads that coordination. We also have representation from the Federal Government. The indications we have had from both the new State and also new Federal governments is that they will honour the commitments in the existing city deals. We work through those commitments over time as a collaborative approach. So, for example, we'll discuss the implementation, or non-implementation, of the rapid bus networks. We'll discuss the updates on the rail and where those things are up to, as well as other elements of the city deal. We're seeking to advocate strongly, particularly for that south-north rail connection to be done as the highest priority.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That's very helpful. I'm sorry. We're out of time. As Chair, I take full responsibility for not scheduling more time with you all, but thank you so much for your submissions and your very strong statements today. You can be assured they have very much impacted us in terms of where we go to with this. Thank you so much for appearing.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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**Mrs CATHERINE VAN LAEREN**, Executive Director – Metro West, Planning, Land Use, Strategy and Housing, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, affirmed and examined

**Ms REBECCA McPHEE**, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Customer Operations and Outcomes, Sydney Metro, affirmed and examined

**Ms PETA GAMON**, Executive Director – Western Sydney Aerotropolis, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr SIMON HUNTER**, Chief Transport Planner, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr ADRIAN DESSANTI**, Director Public Transport, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to our government witnesses for our final session this afternoon. Are any of you giving an opening statement?

**SIMON HUNTER:** If it's okay, Chair, I will give an opening statement on behalf of Transport for NSW and Sydney Metro. We'd like to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to give evidence. We would also like to acknowledge that we're meeting on the land of the Dharawal people and pay our respect to Elders past and present, and extend that acknowledgement to any Aboriginal people who may be with us today. As the Committee has no doubt heard and as we at Transport for NSW and Metro are acutely aware, Western Sydney is growing and developing at an unprecedented rate. The sheer scale and rapid expansion on many fronts presents a significant range of transport challenges. Currently, Western Sydney residents typically have longer distances to travel to get to work and to access services; they spend more time, on average, travelling than people living in other parts of Sydney; and Western Sydney communities are also more car dependent.

There are significant challenges that we are not here to downplay, but they are challenges which the Government's policy settings are directed at addressing as we expand our public transport offering and increase the amount of development that is occurring near public transport. Unprecedented investment in transport—billions of dollars—is being made in Western Sydney on road, rail, light rail and active transport projects, all of which are being delivered to help ensure that the transport network and the system enables all the crucial connections that people need and that is needed to move goods. We're focused on things like easing congestion, improving safety and providing more reliable travel times. There is significant investment to ensure that the Western Sydney airport is supported by transport and ready for the first day of operation, and many projects that are progressing in development and delivery across Western Sydney.

The Minns Government's \$116.5 billion Essential Infrastructure Plan, which sets aside \$72.3 billion for transport infrastructure across New South Wales, includes significant investment in public transport across Western Sydney: the Sydney Metro - Western Sydney airport, Parramatta Light Rail stage one and expediting stage two, the delivery of the Western Sydney rapid bus network, and the spend on operating Western Sydney bus services and anticipated spend on light rail, which will be over \$500 million annually. Integrated active transport infrastructure that supports better connectivity and opportunities to enhance socio-economic and environmental outcomes are a key part of road and rail upgrades and projects such as Sydney Metro. Enhanced active transport connections will help people with first-and-last-mile bike access, as well as creating a naturally integrated transport solution.

We're also seeing significant investment in new and improved roads, including those in the emerging airport precinct. They're being carefully planned, considered and delivered. Roads obviously enable the public transport network in buses, as well as freight movement and point-to-point transport, as well as support corridors for walking and cycling paths. As we deliver new networks, connections and services, we're very focused on managing safety and reliable access to the existing network, as well as supporting community members through change and managing change. We are acutely aware of the roles and responsibility that transport has in connecting people's lives and shaping the way that communities live, work and interact.

In Western Sydney we are really focused on and aware of the crucial role that transport can play in enabling social equity and making sure that the strength of the economy and growth is also part of our focus. We're working hard to deliver for the people of Western Sydney. We recognise there is a lot of work ahead of us over many years—over generations, probably—to keep improving public transport connectivity. We also acknowledge that the availability of funding is a challenge and that there is significant pressure on competing needs to deliver for communities across the city and the whole of the State.

Decisions around transport services and infrastructure are being made taking a sustainable approach, and there is care needed to balance between prioritising immediate and critical needs and ensuring the foundations and momentum for the future are also there. With the Government's focus on Western Sydney and commitment



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to delivery on public transport needs, we're taking a close look at all of our long-term planning to make sure that these plans are aligned to the priorities and directions of the Government. We work in very close collaboration and are partnering across government, including with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, and we use similar information bases on which to make our decisions.

Planning for transport is informed by many sources including megatrends such as population growth, changing movement patterns, climate change, emissions and economic growth. Transport for NSW has worked through a vision and validate method of planning where we set a long-term vision and then work to progressively deliver that. We are hopeful that the current investments in transport in Western Sydney will change the dynamic and allow for more public transport use and active transport use over only private vehicle use. I'm joined by colleagues from across Transport and Sydney Metro as well as the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. We look forward to the opportunity to answer any questions from our subject matter areas in good faith. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I will kick off by trying to get a handle on the various policy documents and frameworks that are guiding decisions within Western Sydney in terms of public transport more broadly. We just had a conversation about the Western Sydney parkland city deal. Where is that up to internally, and what other policy documents are there guiding this work from a broad Western Sydney perspective? Mr Hunter, you may need to direct a question if it is not relevant to you.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Absolutely. There is quite the brains trust here. There are a number of policy documents, frameworks and things that we rely on. The Australian transport planning guidelines, at a Federal level, give significant guidance on that, and we have a range of internal documents. Under the former Government, there was also the Future Transport Strategy that was released that provided an overarching vision.

**The CHAIR:** Is that the 2056 one?

**SIMON HUNTER:** There was the 2056 one that was released in 2018, and there was an updated version of that released in 2022. The strategies are progressively updated and refreshed, typically when there are changes to the land-use and housing forecasts and targets, so that we can integrate transport amenities planning. I think that part of your question pertained to the city deal. Given the delivery focus from Ms Gamon and Ms McPhee, possibly they could answer on some of the projects being delivered under that.

**PETA GAMON:** My key focus is in the aerotropolis, and there was a city deal commitment around rapid buses for the aerotropolis. At the moment we have done planning for the rapid bus services that would provide regional connectivity to centres like Liverpool, Penrith and Campbelltown. We've been given money to now progress the stage one of that rapid bus service, so we are looking at providing direct links between those three centres as part of that stage one and providing new bus services that have not yet been provided or are available. So that will provide new connectivity between those centres to the aerotropolis.

**The CHAIR:** So what we have so far is a Future Transport Strategy 2056, initiated in 2018 and revised in 2022 under the previous Government, and you just referred to the city deal. Is there anything specific in relation to anything else in terms of Western Sydney transport policy or a framework that the Government is guiding your work with, or is that in development? If the answer is no, that is good for the Committee, because that is very clear. We have been searching for them.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** I might just delve into some of the ways we actually undertake our transport planning and service planning. We do have service planning guidelines that we undertake to meet. That provides not just for Western Sydney but also all of metropolitan Sydney. There are similar guidelines for outer metropolitan areas as well. But specifically for Sydney and, more importantly, Western Sydney, those service planning guidelines provide guidance for not only practitioners within Transport but also our contracted operators, but also can provide guidance to—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Dessanti. That wasn't my question. I am very much aware that there are guidelines to guide contractors and how planning is done. My question was about whether the Government has provided a policy. I'll use Wilton and Appin as examples of suburbs that don't have the transport yet. Within the department, what work is being undertaken now to get transport to the new growth areas in south-west Sydney?

**SIMON HUNTER:** As planning for these areas progresses through master planning and then development assessment, we work very closely with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on what the service planning requirements and what the infrastructure requirements are. We then go through internal investment processes to seek funding for any necessary infrastructure upgrades or service planning to align with those guidelines for delivery of services to those new communities.

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**The CHAIR:** Can you be specific in relation to Wilton? We had Wollondilly's mayor here before as well as Camden's and they were pretty strong that really they can't see any commitments. They can't see anything down the track. They can't see anything now let alone anything down the track. With those growth centres, can you foresee anymore transport options being planned now for those growth centres? Again, I just want to use Wilton and Appin as an example. Bus services—is there anything in terms of if rail or anything else will get there? Does government instruct you, as in the Minister instruct you for this or do you look at it and go to the Minister with a solution to the public transport woes of those communities?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Absolutely. Planning is always undertaken, and I think Mr Hunter mentioned it a moment ago in terms of the broader planning context. But specifically for these areas in the south-west, we're constantly undertaking planning work, and for us Wilton has been on our radar for a little while. Clearly there has been in recent times a lot more impetus to ensure that we're having the right approach to planning. It's not just about planning, however. It's also about understanding opportunities for delivery of any service uplift. We're acutely aware of the deficiency, for want of a better word, of service absence in that part of the world.

That said, we are continually doing planning to understand the travel demand, which we have a good handle on, but also more importantly the delivery mechanisms. That planning, we do have discussions with government. We do take those options to government, and we are actually actively looking at how can we introduce services both from a local perspective but also that connection back into the broader Sydney network in, say for instance, the electrified rail network from a bus perspective. Obviously into the medium term and longer term there is a lot of work that we look at with regard to future rail extensions, things that could be looked at like electrification and so forth. There are probably more longer term initiatives, but certainly from a bus perspective, we are actively looking at some shorter term opportunities to get that and we have those discussions with government. I don't know if there is anything more strategic you want to add.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think in the Future Transport Strategy in 2018 the potential electrification of the line to support growth at Wilton was flagged as a thing to investigate within the next ten years. Obviously we're halfway through that period and in that time I think the land there has been put out on exhibition for that development. We also work with the developers on options, including a Greater Macarthur transit corridor that would serve public transport needs through the west of Appin development. There is ongoing sort of planning for that and it is very much integrated with the proposals for land use and development.

**The CHAIR:** We've heard, as well, a bit about Oran Park, and it's fantastic—lots of great evidence about that new suburb. They have the rail line but no actual train and there's no commitment whatsoever. There's nothing to give anybody any certainty of when that will arrive. That's one example of the planning being done. How do we get the train there? What's the process within government to get the train to Oran Park?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** I'm happy to take this one. The Western Sydney airport metro line, which is currently being constructed between St Marys in the north and the new city centre of Bradfield in the south, was always contemplated as phase one of the Western Sydney airport metro. The Government has committed to ask us to finalise final business cases for extensions to that metro line, so one going north and the one in question now is the one south. New South Wales Government committed to expanding what is an existing business case under development, which looks at the link between Bradfield and Leppington, to also look south to the link down to Campbelltown-Macarthur, which would come through that area.

**The CHAIR:** That's good to hear. Where is that up to in terms of expanding that business case? Is there a deadline for that business case to then go to government? We know how long all of this takes—and, of course, the funding has to be there to build the thing, finally—but where is the business case up to?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** Yes, absolutely. In the really early planning stages. The funding for that is from July this year, so within the next couple of years that final business case will be complete.

**The CHAIR:** Just to be clear, then, stage two is which bit?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** It's still to be determined. The second business case that's been committed to at this stage is the one that goes north—so from St Marys up to Tallawong, where the existing North West Line starts. Both of those business cases will be provided to government in order to inform their investment prioritisation.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You said you had very good travel demand data. What's the source of that data? How do you assess the travel demand?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** We have a number of different ways of looking at that demand. We obviously have traffic surveys and traffic volume data and so forth, but we also always look at census data in terms of where people live and where they travel to, specifically for their place of employment. There are also other surveys that

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are done periodically with regard to where people are travelling. We do know a lot of people in—I'm assuming you're asking around Wilton and the south-west areas. We do know a lot of those people travel north towards the south-west, towards Macarthur and further north, and some also travel towards the CBD. But we do know there's also some movement that heads to the Illawarra, and Wollongong specifically. Whether it's Wilton or whether it's other parts of Western Sydney, or even Greater Sydney, we do have a number of different sources. Mr Hunter, you could probably answer some of the other sources and other data that we use.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Yes, absolutely. We use things from household surveys. People get called and answer questions about their travel behaviour. We use forecast growth in population to inform what the likely movements of people will be based on current travel patterns and expected employments. We also have actual usage data of the number of tap-ons, tap-offs of the Opal network and things. It's a variety of those sources that we use to help inform our planning going forward.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** If your primary source of data is the census, that's a five-year cycle. In a place like Austral, where it's undergoing very rapid change, you're really not getting the data in sufficient time to actually be able to have a very agile response to the emerging demand, are you?

**SIMON HUNTER:** It's a very good question, and it is a challenge. Part of what the New South Wales Government does do, though, is, through the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, produce population projections that are the expected forward look in terms of the growth and development of areas, as well as a forecast called the Sydney housing supply forecast. These two sources help inform us of where people are likely to go, where development is likely to be, and allow us to do some of that planning ahead of the curve—and development. I don't know if Ms Van Laeren wants to add anything.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What about other data sources, like Google? Presumably they've got massive amounts of data that's very fine-grained in terms of its accuracy around individual journeys. Does the department purchase in data from those kinds of sources?

**SIMON HUNTER:** We do access a range of data sources, including some data around live trip measurement and things like that. We have other subscriptions that give different levels of data and sources. If you want an exhaustive list of all of the inputs, I would probably have to take that on notice; otherwise I might be here all afternoon.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I just ask, though, because your go-to was the census, when the census is actually probably the least accurate and least responsive, when there are other much more accurate data sources. It was just a surprise to me. On another issue, there was an issue raised by Ms Coorey in her evidence earlier today around a safety concern associated with the conversion of the Bankstown Line and its operation in conjunction with freight rail. I wonder, is this the first time the agency has been alerted to this issue? And, if it isn't, what response do you have to those safety concerns and how has that been addressed?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** I'll take that question. Thank you very much for the question. Sydney Metro is undertaking significant security upgrades along the Bankstown Line as part of the conversion to metro. That includes corridor security—so fencing and other automated security like obstacle and intruder detection systems—which will be monitored live, 24/7, from the operations control centre. So that's a full segregation of the line.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The particular issue was around a derailment risk. It was suggested that that issue has been brought to your attention through, I think, maybe the RTBU. You mentioned the union. Is that correct?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** We are well aware—as we have been through the entire planning stages of that conversion—that to put a GoA4, or a fully automated product, in that line, we would absolutely be upgrading the corridor security, including full segregation. As I mentioned, those other monitoring systems, which will ensure that obstacles don't enter the metro corridor, and, if they do, there's an automated detection system that would flag that straightaway to the operations control centre. Of course it's one of the elements, and safety is an absolute priority that we've been considering since early design work.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The other issue that Ms Coorey raised was an apparent inadequacy around the community consultation. I asked her a question about whether there was some kind of community reference group or consultative group for the project. Perhaps you could elaborate on the mechanisms of community consultation that are supporting the project.

**REBECCA McPHEE:** Absolutely. No problem at all. Community consultation is a significant part of any major construction effort, and a project like Sydney Metro plans right from the outset. From the really early stages of planning right through delivery and construction, we have a really significant community engagement program, and that's with all levels—so State Government agencies, councils, communities and peak bodies. We

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have both formal and informal mechanisms of engaging—so newsletters that go out to the whole community, we have community engagement forums and sessions, and we have more formal engagement with the councils at times through project control groups. It's an ongoing daily effort to answer questions and respond to issues that are raised with us.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Coorey suggested that she'd been briefed in a confidential briefing that she wasn't able to disclose the contents of. Is that correct, that that's a mechanism that's—

**REBECCA McPHEE:** I would have to take that question on notice. I'm not aware of—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is there a reason why you would insist on confidentiality in terms of those briefings as opposed to having an open—

**REBECCA McPHEE:** I'm sorry, I'm not aware of that particular session, so I would like to comment.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** As a general practice, is that something that the agency would undertake?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** I'm happy to take that question on notice.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You don't know whether you use confidential briefings as a mechanism?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** We clearly do sometimes provide confidential briefings. That would be when we're seeking to share information that's in development rather than ready for communication with the public. But, as I said, I wouldn't like to comment on that specific instance.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Okay. She also raised concerns about the planning around the provisional transport arrangements during the course of the line shutdown, particularly the use of buses—not having sufficient buses. I think she was saying 1,000 buses a day. Would you like to offer some comment about that?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** Yes, absolutely. I'm happy to take that question to start with and then I'll pass to my Transport colleagues. The final conversion period for the metro line—so the Bankstown Line conversion to metro—will commence sometime between July and October this year. We recognise that that will be disruptive to the commuters who are currently using that line, so the first thing we've done is work really hard to reduce the impact. Initial estimates put the period of conversion at around 50 months. We've worked hard to receive work and get that down to up to 12 months. The next priority, of course, is to ensure that the temporary transport plan that we've put in place for those disrupted passengers is of a really, really high quality.

My colleagues at Transport for NSW are in the process of tendering the contract to deliver those temporary services. I think there are two things in particular to note. One is that this isn't a regular rail replacement service. There will be traditional rail replacement services that serve each of the stations, but there will also be expressed buses and rapid buses. We're looking to reinstate a rail shuttle between Bankstown back to Lidcombe so that customers also have a rail route from Bankstown to the CBD.

A lot of community engagement is still to happen with respect to what those services will look like. We've also built the assessment of what goes into that service plan, based on a lot of experience. This will be around the sixtieth time that we have temporarily closed the line, admittedly for much shorter periods, but including up to a month over the Christmas holidays this year. So we've got a lot of lessons and understanding about the community and how they like to travel in that situation. Adrian, I don't know if there was anything you wanted to add?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Not particularly. Obviously that particular piece of work is being undertaken by a separate team in Transport, so I cannot talk to the specifics. But, as Ms McPhee was indicating, we do have a lot of experience in operating those replacement services. In actual fact, we have relatively recent experience on the Epping to Chatswood line three or four years ago with that conversion period as well. While that was a slightly different distance and duration, there is experience in operating those sorts of semi-permanent arrangements.

As we've already mentioned, taking a lot of lessons learned and making sure that we can do absolutely as much as we can with the different levers that we have available in terms of not only the actual bus procurement and provision, which, as Ms McPhee mentioned, is currently in procurement, but also around traffic conditions on those key major corridors—Canterbury Road, Bexley Road, Liverpool Road et cetera. Also making use of existing transport services that operate across that corridor, recognising that not everyone on the Bankstown line travels to and from the city all day. While in commuter peak that is very true, there are a lot of local journeys on that. We understand and believe that there are a lot of local bus connections that are already available on that, but I wouldn't want to talk too much about the specifics, as that's being looked after by another part of Transport.

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Obviously, Ms Coorey was articulating a degree of community anxiety about whether you will actually be able to procure a number of buses and drivers. This is your opportunity to allay that community concern. Are you confident that there is an adequacy of buses and drivers to meet the challenge?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** As Mr Dessanti said, the procurement for these specific services is still ongoing, so I cannot speak to the outcome of it. But I think I will pass to Mr Dessanti to talk about the great work that's been done in recent months to alleviate that bus driver pressure.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Absolutely. Not just specifically for the TTP on the Bankstown line but just more broadly around bus driver availability and so forth, we've obviously had some challenging times over the last couple of years with regard to driver shortages and so forth. The work that the teams are doing with relation to making sure we have as many incentives as possible to get new drivers to come on board, but also more importantly to retain those drivers—one of the issues is not just to hire new drivers but also to retain those drivers as well.

We're working very closely with the Bus Industry Taskforce. That's been established in the last nine months or so. There's been a lot of effort put into looking at things like sign-on bonuses and other retention arrangements to make sure that it is attractive for people to want to drive buses, and also making sure that we understand where those drivers are in terms of where they live. We are obviously finding that areas closer to the city have a slightly higher degree of driver unavailability, but that is improving. I cannot talk to the specifics in terms of which regions or which areas have particular vacancies.

Generally speaking, with some of the taskforce work—and I cannot speak specifically to what all the taskforce members are looking at with driver recruitment—certainly there's a lot of work being done and almost no stone being unturned with regard to making sure that for the TTP along the Bankstown line, those buses are sufficient to cater for the demand and also making sure that they can be delivered efficiently and in a sustainable manner.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, each of you, for being here, for your time and for your submission work. If I could pick up on a theme that has come out of this inquiry in terms of the changing nature of housing development and density and what that means for public transport, given the terms of reference regarding Greater Sydney and public transport. I'm wondering, in terms of Transport, what role do you play in that? We've got community concern here that we're going to have an increased demand for public transport, housing density is going up, more and more housing is coming. I'm wondering, how does this work from a Transport perspective?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Our understanding of population growth and likely growth in housing stock and housing supply is based on a set of planning assumptions that are common across the New South Wales Government. We rely on the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to provide that. Our understanding is that between 2021 and 2041 the population of Western Sydney is projected to increase by more than 850,000 people, up to around about 3.6 million people. The highest level of housing completions over the next five years are expected to occur in the local government areas of Blacktown, The Hills, Liverpool, Parramatta and Camden.

The housing typology is more detached dwellings and things like that than what you might see in the eastern part of the city. How we plan to support that is thinking more about road-based transport, looking at putting in place active transport corridors and cycleways to support that, but also through the committed investments, such as the metro project, the More Trains, More Services program and things. There are a number of initiatives underway to help support that growth that we are aware of due to our ongoing collaboration with the department of planning.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I note that you made reference to research and planning over a five-year period and generally, but I'm just saying that, of late, we've had some announcements of some big housing density changes and the community is concerned about this. Does Transport take a more active role on this, or does that change?

**SIMON HUNTER:** We do work very closely with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and the development sector on the transport needs and the impact of development, all the way from master-planning and precinct planning right down through to the conditions that are placed around development assessments before some of these larger developments are built. Mr Dessanti, I don't know if you want to add any detail about the specifics of how we do that, but it is an ongoing and iterative process involving developers and the department.



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**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Absolutely. Recent discussions around increasing density around existing transport connections and transport nodes obviously allow us to better plan for future service uplifts, both on the rail network, metro or bus servicing. One of the key things for us is really embedding that discussion with planning but also local government as well, because they're often at the coalface, as I'm sure you would have heard in the last few hearing sessions, where they're approving lots of development and so forth. For us to be cognisant of that transit-oriented development, that push to provide that uplift in density, actually allows us to then put the case to government for further enhancement of either rail services or bus services through a growth program.

We have experience, especially on the bus side of things, with previous programs, where funding has been made available for us to put new or enhanced bus services in areas where they've experienced residential growth. While that's not necessarily closed the gap, so to speak, in some of the areas that have been developed over the last 10 or 15 years, it has been a lot better. But I think this new impetus to focus on those existing transport corridors allows us to do a lot better planning and actually also—not just from a transport or service planning perspective but also from an investment prioritisation perspective—understanding that if we're going to have an extra however-many-hundred-thousand dwellings in a particular area on a corridor, we could actually then target future service uplift on that particular corridor so that the service provision and the housing development hopefully occurs hand in hand.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Also reflecting from earlier witnesses, a lot of the community are feeling ignored, left behind and in the dark on this and, "What does this mean?" How do we best communicate this? Who does that? Is that planning? Is that Transport? That community engagement—I think Ms McPhee mentioned about the community consultation framework in reference to the Bankstown Line. I'm wondering whether we could learn a bit more about how that works.

**CATHERINE VAN LAEREN:** In terms of consultation, as we go through and introduce the planning reforms, there will be consultation around the specific precincts that have been identified and as the planning reforms themselves are put in place and refined. So there is yet to be that detailed level of consultation that the community are looking for. The announcements at this stage have been a broad indication of the direction of increasing density, but there will be detailed consultation around specific precincts and also consultation with Transport as we move forward about how we service those precincts.

**The CHAIR:** I know Mr Nanva has got a bunch—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Sorry, if I could just follow up on that one. We're getting residents telling us that they've been informed of these changes in the density when they get a knock at the door by a real estate agent. I appreciate yet to be; will be around the precincts. What time frame are we looking at here, just roughly, given what's in the public domain on this?

**CATHERINE VAN LAEREN:** I think it's in this next quarter coming up this year, but I'd have to take it on notice to give you specific dates.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** If you could, yes.

**CATHERINE VAN LAEREN:** There's a fair bit of speculation, and that happens in any circumstance.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I'm not sure who to direct my question to, but it has been answered, to a degree, to one of Ms Merton's questions, so I don't know if you have anything more to add. You've cited the significant population growth that's projected, particularly amongst the LGAs in western and south-western Sydney. What academics and think tanks have constantly told me is that the reason we have extremely limited public transport access in areas like Wilton, Appin, Menangle and Oran Park is, frankly, because land use planning and transport planning in Sydney has been siloed for a decade. I know you've touched on it and it's good to see that land use planners and transport planners are now talking to each other, but I'm really interested in the how, because that seems to have been a significant cause of why we are in the position that we are, where we have these sprawling suburbs with very little transport infrastructure connected to services. Can you get into a little bit more of the mechanics around how those planners communicate and what the machinery is? Is there a turf war, or was there a turf war between departments that got in the way of this?

**CATHERINE VAN LAEREN:** No turf war.

**SIMON HUNTER:** We're going to argue about who answers.

**CATHERINE VAN LAEREN:** I think it's really important to understand that generally, in most of these areas, there's a suite of plans that apply to the area that start out at the broad scale and then work through right the way through to implementation. At each stage of that we are working across government to implement those plans, depending on whether you've got the broader scale—so something like the Wilton 2040 plan, which has your major transport corridors identified, your major land uses identified. These plans are worked up together

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across government, and Transport and Planning work really closely together because we're probably the two agencies that affect land use outcomes the most.

In the growth areas particularly there are these growth centre plans, the broader plans that stretch across. Then down from that there are often master plan areas or smaller rezonings, where we continue to work with Transport about what the mechanics are in terms of infrastructure delivery to be able to service a proposed population. Where we are in the planning process depends on the nature of the work and how we're working together. But it comes from high-level project control groups, where we meet on a growth-centre basis probably every six weeks, where all the government agencies are around the table, the councils are around the table, and we're talking about infrastructure needs in those growth areas, through to round where we're looking at specific development applications and referring those through to the various departments, including Transport, and getting their direct feedback around what type of road infrastructure and intersection infrastructures, or whether there is specific public transport there to be able to service those. The level of consultation is tailored depending on what phase of planning and delivery we are actually up to.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Just adding to that, if I may, from a Transport perspective, we are very aware that there's a strong community expectation—and this is conveyed to us by our Ministers—about the importance of having a joined-up approach and Transport and Planning being in lockstep. So from our perspective, working with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, to understand what the potential land use changes are and inform them with advice as to what that will impact in terms of creating demand for travel, requirements for public transport infrastructure, active transport infrastructure and services to meet the needs of those new communities is absolutely core business for us. I would say that we have regular forums at all levels between the two agencies that are about making sure we meet the community's needs and expectations around joined-up planning. There are a number of examples we could give, including the aerotropolis planning that's occurred, which really showed the two agencies working in lockstep.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Do you agree with the criticism that historically in Sydney, land use planning and transport planning has operated in silos? Given your experience now, have those bottlenecks that have resulted in the situation we find ourselves in disappeared? Have we learned the lessons from the past?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think we are always looking to learn lessons and to improve how we do. I probably wouldn't like to comment historically too much. I've been in my role for 18 months, or a little bit over, and in that time that focus on collaboration and working together has been extremely strong and communicated down to us from all levels—Ministers, secretaries, and that sort of thing. If there are historical disconnects, then we're definitely working as hard as we can to make sure that the mistakes of the past aren't repeated.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I had an unrelated question. I recall it was in a submission. I don't know who this is best directed to. In your submission, you stated that demand is going to exceed capacity on a number of rail lines in Western Sydney by 2036. Can you tell the Committee, what's driving that demand? Is it new developments, proposed infill development? What's actually driving that demand and what sort of investments are you looking at to avoid that scenario?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** I might take that one briefly. In terms of some of those rail lines, absolutely it is those population projections and that future view of where land use change will occur, especially in Western Sydney. That is one of the key areas where we undertake that demand analysis. While it sounds like 2036 is a fair way away, like everything, it creeps up on us. Certainly in terms of what are we doing to make sure that we provide the right level of service on some of those rail lines, but equally across the whole public transport network. We obviously in more recent times have had fewer people using the network, especially post-COVID. While there are certain lines, like the Western line or even the T8 towards Campbelltown, at certain times of the peak period you might get certain trains that are full. Our average loading on a lot of those lines is still below what we saw pre-2019.

But still, having said that, we expect, through natural population growth and through that change in development, both from a residential perspective but also employment growth as well as across Western Sydney, we are anticipating that those rail lines will be very busy when you head into the next 10- to 15-year period. As I've mentioned earlier, in Transport we always do continual planning to see what future investments are needed beyond the current investment pipeline that we have at the moment with the current metro or light rail or even bus networks. We are always continually identifying what those future needs are. Clearly they are options we will take to government as we develop those, but we are obviously very cognisant that before too long, the next decade or so creeps up on us.

That planning work is always undertaken and at the right time we will make sure that we have those discussions and seek investment decisions through our normal internal processes but also take those to government. We are acutely aware that, like the previous question you had about land use, Planning and Transport

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being in lockstep, that is a by-product of that transport and land use being in lockstep, to make sure that we take to government at the right time for the right decisions to be made so that we don't have that problem where we're retrofitting service capacity, whether it's on the rail network or the bus network, after the fact. Again, that's obviously a matter for government at the time, but we are always doing that medium- and long-term planning work.

**REBECCA McPHEE:** If I may, Mr Dessanti. That's exactly the issue that metro investment is there to help resolve. The Sydney Metro West project will double rail capacity on the corridor between Parramatta and the CBD. The city and south-west project will do a similar thing through the CBD, linking all the way from the south-west, all the way down to Bankstown next year, and all the way up to the north-west. Both of those metro investments double the relevant rail capacity in their area.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** You've spoken about the metro being used to assist with capacity. On lines like the T1 line through to Penrith and the Blue Mountains, where capacity was an issue—I don't know if that's changed post-COVID—are you looking at ways to sweat existing assets where there is no proposition for a new line or a new metro to service those areas?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Absolutely. In addition to some of the investments on metro and so forth, sweating the asset is something that is obviously an option for transport. In actual fact, we have the Digital Systems Program, that is currently in its early stages, being rolled out on some parts of the network. That Digital Systems Program is about upgrading the signalling system on the existing heavy rail network to the twenty-first century and bringing that to the fore, which enables that sweating of the asset, so to speak, where you can have more throughput on your existing infrastructure. At the moment, the existing signalling system may allow headways of three or four minutes. You could get that down to every two or three minutes through a digital systems approach. That's only in its early phases. I don't have the specifics of when the first phase will roll out. I know the program is underway. But that is one option, aside from a lot of money spent on augmenting capacity on the western line and building extra tracks or a totally brand-new corridor. But, absolutely, putting those things like digital systems in is one thing.

Another thing that we constantly look at, not just on the rail network but in public transport more broadly, is also making sure that we provide all-day service frequency. A lot of our transport network is still very reliant, in terms of its service provision and timetabling, on peak periods. Clearly, that's when a lot of people want to travel. That's a key time of demand. But we have already seen, with COVID and the post-pandemic, a lot more flexible working and a lot more different arrangements. We slowly want to move to that more all-day, frequent type of service so that everyone is not trying to travel at eight o'clock in the morning or at 5.30 in the afternoon. That's another way of sweating the asset, by providing service frequency at a higher interval earlier in the morning and throughout the day so that people aren't necessarily compelled, where they can—obviously, there are lots of things like childcare commitments and other reasons why people can't travel earlier or later. But for those people that can, one of the factors that they don't is because the frequency drops off. Even without digital systems in the medium term, putting extra services on in that shoulder peak period or throughout the day actually does help get people on and spread people across the network a lot more evenly.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I am pleased to hear that. In a prior life, I was involved in the rail network, and we constantly heard that there was a lot more that could be done with the existing heavy rail network, both with respect to speed and capacity, if signalling was addressed, if bottlenecks on the City Circle were addressed and if staffing was addressed. Those are all things that are in the mix as well, not just building shiny, new bits of infrastructure.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Absolutely. Future stages of that will be dependent on investment decisions but, absolutely, that planning work is always continual—just making sure we've got our eyes wide open for what's coming.

**The CHAIR:** I might jump in to cover a few more issues that have been raised by witnesses throughout this inquiry. The issue of bus shelters has come up a lot, and the fact that it's often the councils that have to fund those shelters. That's the arrangement, I think. What is there from the State Government perspective to support councils doing that? Is there any policy targets in terms of upgrading bus shelters across Western Sydney? Let's just stick with Western Sydney.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** There's no policy or targets that I'm aware of in terms of upgrading bus shelters. A lot of our work obviously is the bus service itself and getting more frequent services so that people aren't waiting as long for buses to turn up. But in terms of the bus shelters themselves, you're correct in saying that largely that is a local government responsibility. But clearly where we have people using our public transport network, we want to make sure that they can access that network safely and efficiently. We know in Western Sydney, as in other parts of Sydney with hotter summers and wetter and colder winters and so forth, that that is a big issue. One

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of the ways to address that is through shelters and working with local councils. We certainly do have discussions with council from time to time in terms of where we will be putting future investment in bus services so that their upgrades to bus stops can be in concert with that. But certainly from a shelter perspective, we don't have any particular targets so to speak or necessarily policy around increasing the number of shelters.

**The CHAIR:** Do you keep a tally of the different types of bus stops in Western Sydney, how many don't have shelters, how many are just a pole without a seat? Do you have those statistics across the different LGAs?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** We have information about the types of bus stops we do have. Specifically whether or not we have number of shelters at each bus stop, I'd have to take that on notice. But obviously in our service planning, if we're putting new services in, we work very closely with those councils.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, you have said that. The local government, as well as Sweltering Cities, councils, other witnesses, have spoken about the fact of the huge disincentive to catch buses as a result of there being no shelter. Your responsibility as the State Government, as Transport for NSW, is to look at services but, unless the services are attractive and people feel comfortable catching those services, they're less inclined to. Therefore, patronage goes down. Therefore, the bus frequency usually goes down as well. Also, the statistics in terms of what local governments were able to fund each year was something like five shelters a year when they've got demand of needing to upgrade 400 bus stops with no shelters. And, again, these are 45-degree days, 46-degree days. I know you're not the Minister so I won't go too hard on you, but what you're saying is there actually isn't anything within State government to assist to really ensure that there are shelters, that they're comfortable and, most importantly, that they encourage people to catch a bus.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** We would agree that obviously the more amenity you have at bus stops is one factor in attractiveness of using public transport, so we absolutely do agree with that. But in terms of shelters, as I mentioned, largely they're a local government responsibility, but it would be a matter for government to—

**The CHAIR:** I know it's a policy perspective. I just needed to get a sense that there is nothing.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Chair, I would also add that in establishing the Bus Industry Taskforce and the review of that, the Government did give that taskforce a wide remit, which includes talking to Transport for NSW around things like bus stops and considering how we can make the services more in line with community needs. Separately, there was a white paper released in October last year looking at on-street transit and particularly ways that we can improve the provision of bus services, consideration of more frequent and rapid services, and a better end-to-end journey offering on buses.

**The CHAIR:** That was a white paper that was statewide, do you mean?

**SIMON HUNTER:** It was. It did recommend I think 39 routes for potential rapid bus corridors in Sydney, and it did also talk about steps that could be taken to make buses, including the kerb and on-street environment, more attractive.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** In the B-Line project you actually did provide bus shelter upgrades, didn't you? Is that right?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** That's correct and, I think, in that instance, that's where we provided shelters because it was part of that project to upgrade that particular corridor. Largely that's on the State road network in terms of having a B-Line product, with the augmentation of the amenity at those stops, so shelters where we could provide them, real-time information, a dedicated fleet of double-decker buses and so forth. As Mr Hunter mentioned, as we progressively roll out future frequent and rapid corridors, which are similar to B-Line, then obviously that's where we would look at the amenity of those bus stops. We would look at those specific types of shelters and so forth. We also have that similar arrangement in shelters on the transitways. There is the Liverpool to Parramatta transitway and also the Rouse Hill to Parramatta transitway. Typically, when you go away from those three main corridors, all the other local services that operate in our network, where there are shelters, they are the responsibility of council.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** And there is no dedicated State fund to provide shelters, is there?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Not to my knowledge, no.

**The CHAIR:** With the Western Sydney airport operating 24 hours, what safe and accessible transport options have been put in place or what is the thinking, other than the metro stations? If passengers are arriving at 3.00 a.m. or 4.00 a.m. what transport options will be available for people at that time of the morning?

**PETA GAMON:** I might start with that question and then I'll probably hand over to Ms McPhee. The key public transport options for the aerotropolis will be the bus services that will be provided as part of that stage one rapid bus program initially and then also the metro services. So we are in the early planning stages of really



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refining the scope and the timetable for those bus services and a lot of that is reliant on understanding how the airport are going to use their—what we're going to see with passenger movements in and outside of the airport, in that particular place, and also worker movements around the area and the types of people who are coming and moving to the place. So that will inform the types of services and the timetabling around what we provide for both those services. Safety is always a consideration—it's the number one consideration. So as we're going and developing those services, we will start to have a look at how do we implement the right safety measures for those services in line with how we deliver safety for all our bus services and metro and rail services across the network.

**The CHAIR:** Is it expected or is there anything that says that in the first few years the planes coming in need to be just freight? That would not make sense. I'm just imagining, 2026, if suddenly it's operating 24 hours and those planes that have wanted to land at 4.00 a.m. or 2.00 a.m. do so, that's a completely new transport system for Sydney, isn't it? You're saying buses, but I'm sure that's not shuttling passengers all over Sydney. So if the buses take those people to, say, Parramatta, maybe to the Sydney CBD, they still have to get everywhere else and at 3.00 a.m. the transport system is shut down. So what is happening with that?

**PETA GAMON:** Yes, it's a really great question. I think it will be an integrated transport solution to support the airport and it's something that we're going to have to learn over time. We haven't done this before, so it is something that will be a little bit of a learning along the way.

**The CHAIR:** That doesn't sound very encouraging, I have to say, "learning along the way". If planes are arriving when the airport opens in 2027, "learning along the way" now in 2024, probably we need to know that the transport—

**PETA GAMON:** Let me take a step back on that then.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Maybe.

**PETA GAMON:** There is a lot of work and planning work that has been done with the airport, with our partners in Metro, with the bus services as well and also we've looked very closely at what happens overseas to other 24-hour centres. So while it's the first time we may have done that, we certainly have learnt and taken lessons learned and taken a lot of information on how planning gets delivered and what best practice looks like. We're still trying to identify the patterns of—the airport will release, over time, how they're expecting the journeys and the trip journeys to occur from the airport and what they're expecting to see in those first initial years of when things will happen, and that will help us pivot and have a look at what we need to provide. We're still a few years out and the bus services will take time. We've got the time to work in with the information we get from the airport as to how we think the airport will be operating in those early years.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Just to add to Ms Gamon's point and to your question around 24-hour services, we do have a network of NightRide services that do operate overnight to complete the 24-hour availability of transport. A lot of those services operate, as you may know, on the key rail corridors. So when we operate those services from the airport to St Marys or to Liverpool or to Campbelltown at three or four in the morning, there will be NightRide services that customers needing that onward journey can use. But as Ms Gamon pointed out, as the city keeps growing, we are always constantly looking at opportunities to improve our 24-hour service provision. We have a number of bus routes—admittedly in the eastern part of Sydney—that do operate 24 hours, but we do want to continue to expand that provision of public transport on a 24-hour basis.

**REBECCA McPHEE:** If I can give you a metro service to the airport perspective, we are still targeting our metro service commencing at the same time as passenger flights to the airport. We haven't finalised the hours of operation for the Western Sydney airport line, but by way of comparison, the existing north-west metro runs from around five in the morning to between 12.30 a.m. and 2.00 a.m. at the weekends. Because of the metro product, there is very little shutdown overnight, so we will adapt that. But, again, the city section is planned to operate for 21 to 22 hours a day.

**The CHAIR:** So if someone arrives at 3.30 a.m., they've got a bit of a wait.

**SIMON HUNTER:** We would probably counsel thinking about it as an integrated transport system—night-ride buses, point to point transport as well as the heavy rail services. And understanding that, as Ms Gamon said, the demand patterns through the airport—how many planes will be landing, how many people are likely to disembark—will inform our planning for that.

**The CHAIR:** It's a big project. I'm curious as to how the departments work with councils and the transport plans for multiple LGAs, regions, areas, if you like—what that looks like. There are different views from councils as to how well integrated that is with Transport, to be honest. Councils have said that not much has happened; others say that there is some pretty good planning going on. So if a council says, "We desperately need these bus connections; we'd love some more rail," how does that work and what are the formal groupings, formal



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consultation processes or committees—whatever it is? Just talk us through how you work with councils on their transport needs.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think it is quite case by case, as you pointed out, and it will depend on the level of growth in a local government area, the types of service offering and a range of other things. If it's a precinct where the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure is convening a forum to look at a growth centre plan or something like that, we will work with the councils through those structured engagements. In terms of projects like the aerotropolis, the engagement has been quite deep with the councils. And through other things, like service reviews, we do have forums where we engage with councils. So I would struggle to give you an answer that was definitive that says, "This is the front door for every council on every issue." I do think it is determined case by case.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** I think, also, over the last few years Transport has also developed an area called "community and place". We have one in our Greater Sydney division and a similar one in our regional division as well. Really, that was off the back of a lot of councils, as you've mentioned, trying to find the front door to find out who to speak to with regard to bus or train services or major projects and whatnot. I think we have that ability for local councils and other stakeholders to come to Transport through that community and place environment. I think that has been a big success. That doesn't necessarily mean that everybody knows about it. Maybe that's something that Transport collectively can promote a little bit more. But, certainly, in recognising that improvement needed in terms of stakeholder engagement and so forth, including local councils, I think that has been a step forward.

**PETA GAMON:** I might also add to that, Mr Dessanti, in saying that we engage with councils on different things at different levels. So we are engaging them on projects, we are engaging them on strategic planning, we are engaging them on issues and things that come up locally and we are engaging them with safety. Transport is a big beast, as are some of the councils. My experience of engaging with councils is that the parts of the business that have to spend a lot of time with each other dealing with these have good, deep relationships that are established between the different councils and the different layers within Transport. As Mr Dessanti said, where we've had some hit and miss in that, that's where we've really tried to provide that concierge. So if there is a "How do you access us?" you can go through that and we can connect up with the different groups. But I absolutely agree with what my colleagues have said.

**The CHAIR:** It sounds like there's not—to really support councils and work with them in terms of what their needs are, because they are the ones hearing it. It's incredible. Their submissions to this inquiry really demonstrate how much they know the transport needs at a very micro level. In their community, some have developed transport plans within their council. But it doesn't sound like there is any way within Transport for NSW, for example, to meet with councils, discuss with them their transport needs and bring that back. That's not happening.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think we would probably say that there are many ways in which it does happen, not that there isn't any way. I think we wouldn't say that there isn't a single way to do it. In my experience, Chair, councils are pretty effective in getting into Transport and putting their views forward. I know personally some of the former witnesses to this Committee who have come in, met with us and advocated on behalf of either the eight councils or their council, where we've engaged in joint modelling or analysis projects, or looked at their plans and provided data and insights to help them develop those plans. So I do think we have a number of touchpoints. I think perhaps it's not known universally and perhaps there aren't always the answers that councils are seeking, but there is definitely an ongoing dialogue. It just takes different forms with different local government areas.

**The CHAIR:** I have one more question, because this has come up a lot as well—Metro West. The consideration that's been given to other stations along Metro West—Silverwater, Newington as well as Camellia—has come up a lot. What consideration is currently being undertaken within Metro West, firstly?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** Sure, no problem. At the end of last year the Government asked us to look at the potential to add up to two stations to the existing Metro West alignment, which runs from Westmead through to the CBD, and for one of those locations to be Rosehill Gardens, which is subject to a separate unsolicited proposal process via a proposal put by the ATC to government to build up to 25,000 dwellings on the existing racecourse site. So we are looking at that location and another location, which is still being worked up.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What are the options in terms of the other locations?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** We are doing quite a wide review and undertaking the assessment at the moment, so I'll let that work complete before talking about any outcomes.

**The CHAIR:** This is also, I suppose, for broader transport projects, ensuring that even if the stations aren't built, preserving the land for a potential station, or reserving corridors, which I think is part of the discussion

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we had earlier around land use planning—that tension. That transport connection and those corridors sometimes aren't mapped out and protected first. Is it your expectation that areas will be conserved for future stations if those stations aren't built? Is that an active consideration within Sydney Metro?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** With respect to the two additional stations that we've been asked to add to the existing—

**The CHAIR:** One is Rosehill, so you don't need to worry about that.

**REBECCA McPHEE:** —alignment, we are absolutely considering options which either would have the station commence and open at the same time as the rest of the railway or the rest of the alignment, and options which would have it open afterwards and be staged. We also, in our projects, do make active provision for extension. For instance, if you look at phase one of the Western Sydney airport metro, we've actually included stub tunnels at either end to enable easy tunnelling north or south in the event that that extension occurs whilst we are operational.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Just on the technical capacity, I think it was Parramatta city council saying you actually need to reserve the station boxes, and that if you don't do that at the outset then effectively there is no option of putting additional stations in at a later time. Is that correct?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** Yes. In order to build a station, you do absolutely need a flat, straight piece of track in the tunnel, so there are only certain places where you can come back. If you haven't made that decision up-front, as you say, to preserve, then there are limited opportunities to add stations. But the engineers will tell you that anything is possible. It is done globally, both that provisioning of station boxes for adding stations to lines at a later date and completely coming back afresh.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is provisioning for station boxes—how much additional cost does that add to a project? If you're not actually building the station, just reserving some space and making sure that there's a straight bit of line, is that hugely expensive? Or is that something that would add moderately to the cost of the overall project?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** That really depends on the level of provisioning. As I say, if you look globally, those options are anything from ensuring that there's a straight, flat piece of track that's suitable in the future, right down to fully excavating and building the construction, maybe not fitting out and putting the systems but creating, essentially, a soft wall either side of the tunnel. There are various options.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How would you retrofit a station without actually stopping the line?

**REBECCA McPHEE:** I think you're definitely moving outside of my area of expertise, I'm afraid. I'm not an engineer.

**The CHAIR:** Clearly, it's best to do it first.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Probably.

**The CHAIR:** Buses and newer suburbs—we've heard quite a few witnesses again plead for buses in the short term. "If there is a train or metro 20, 30 years down the track, at least get buses in the short term." I'll use Wilton and Appin again, potentially, as examples. Is there, say, a plan over the next five years to increase the provision of bus services in some of these newer areas that don't have good services, don't have existing services? We did hear from people where they just don't have that. Is there a plan to do that? Is there a target, as well, to increase the number of services available in parts of Western Sydney?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** There's no target specifically. But, as I mentioned earlier, we are working with the Bus Industry Taskforce, and one of their early recommendations from their first report was the establishment of a long-term growth program. While, previously, we did have a growth program that enabled us funding to put services in—and by the name of the program, "growth", it was targeted at a lot of areas, especially in Western Sydney—we are doing a lot of work as a result of that recommendation, to put cases to Government for funding of a longer term program. We're doing a lot of work in the medium-term sphere to make sure that we identify not only the rapid corridors and those frequent routes that Mr Hunter alluded to earlier but, even more importantly, getting services in on the ground, very close to day one of when people are moving into those suburbs.

But also retrofitting services to places like Wilton and some of those other locations in the south-west and also the north-west, where the services—we may have put some early services in, but the frequency's not right, or the areas now have fully developed, so we now need to go back and put a full-time proper service in. Absolutely, we're working and developing plans at the moment and, following that taskforce's early recommendation for that long-term growth program, doing a lot of work to take to Government to, hopefully, get funding in that. But our planning has identified a lot of those particular areas and where there is a need to put bus

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services in. We certainly are aware of those, and we are doing a lot of planning work, and we'll put those options to Government.

**The CHAIR:** Is there a frequency for buses at which it just becomes unviable, if you like, where people stop using it because it's only coming every half an hour or every hour sometimes? But half an hour, we heard the other day, doesn't seem to be enough. Is there a frequency that you work with for new suburbs and areas of Western Sydney that you must see and deliver for it to be something that people want to use?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Yes, absolutely. I did allude to service planning guidelines earlier. But, in terms of frequency, an ideal base frequency is 30 minutes. There are a lot of areas that actually have an hourly frequency. Most—

**The CHAIR:** Thirty minutes or more frequently?

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Or more frequently, yes. But, as a base to get an initial level of service into those growth areas, especially as houses are still being built, we believe a 30-minute frequency should be the minimum. As those areas develop, then we want to move towards 20-minute frequencies or 15-minute frequencies. And, in certain areas, once we have a bit more contiguous development, we do want to roll out what we call our all-day frequent network, where we have frequent buses that run up to every 10 minutes or better. As you get those type of service frequencies, people don't rely on trip planning, because they know that they don't have to wait more than five or seven minutes for a bus. But the base frequency is 30 minutes or better. That's what we want to aim towards, both in existing areas where it doesn't meet that frequency but also in new areas as well.

**SIMON HUNTER:** And probably just adding to that, the span of hours—the number of hours across the day where we can run the bus services can also be a determinant of people's willingness to use buses. If the bus service, say, stops at 6.00 p.m., they need to travel back at 7.00 p.m. and there isn't an option, that can be a barrier to use. So part of those service planning guidelines is to look at the all-day coverage options as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Camden City Council suggested an idea around mode shift targets, and I wonder whether consideration has been given to that by Transport. What consideration has been given to that idea?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I would probably refer that question to the Minister. It's a policy question, rather than one that we will answer.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you answer as to whether there has been consideration of that as a tool? Is it useful?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think, historically, mode share targets have been used. There aren't current mode share targets that we are working towards. There are different considerations made of different ways to increase ridership and things, and mode share targets would be one of the suite of measures that would be considered.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What are the limitations of applying that? What are the cons in terms of adopting that approach?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think it would depend on the nature of the target, the area that it applied to and the type of trip it applied to. For example, if you think about travel to the Sydney CBD, there's a very high mode share for public transport in the commute times because it's relatively frequent, reliable and cost-effective compared to, say, the cost of parking. Different factors will impact on people's travel choices and travel behaviours, and I am not sure, depending on the nature of the question, that a mode share target would always be the right way to measure the success of the system.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is it currently the policy to try to reduce car dependence, or is there no policy on mode?

**SIMON HUNTER:** In the Future Transport Strategy that was released under the former Government in 2022, there was a commitment to or a direction to stabilise growth in vehicle kilometres travelled across Greater Sydney. With the growth rates in Sydney and the growth of private vehicle use that typically goes with that, that would have the impact of encouraging more use of public transport to meet that target, and it gives our agency that government-led imprimatur to consider a range of methods and measures to change that travel behaviour.

**The CHAIR:** How is that going, in terms of stabilising?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think we are still seeing a normalisation of behaviour post-pandemic. I think the travel patterns and behaviours changed quite considerably because of that. We are seeing a slower recovery on public transport than on road use. I think road use is back to levels that it was at pre-pandemic.

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** How do you measure that? How do you measure how many kilometres are being travelled in vehicles? I am curious about how you quantify that. What is the metric you are relying on to determine whether they are increasing or decreasing?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think, to give you the best answer to that, I will take that on notice, if that is okay?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Great.

**The CHAIR:** I was hoping you were going to say that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** One of the other things that has come up in evidence is the issue around school construction. We heard evidence earlier today about schools in Oran Park with massive enrolments, and there appears to be a preference within School Infrastructure to build larger schools, and that is contributing to people travelling further for pickup and drop-off of their children. I want to ask about the dialogue that exists between Transport and School Infrastructure around that particular issue, because, obviously, it has flow-on effects in terms of local traffic. Maybe that policy preference being adopted for budgetary reasons by School Infrastructure actually has additional costs that are borne elsewhere in the community, and we are actually paying more for something that is being driven by a particular, narrow perspective.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Absolutely. In answer to that, in recent times we have been developing really strong collaboration with School Infrastructure. We have been working very closely with them because, as you have noted, in the recent few years we have obviously seen decisions made by other departments like School Infrastructure and then costs or other unintended consequences borne by Transport or others. A lot of that is around school bus servicing and dedicated school servicing and so forth. But even less in that regard, but also about timing and understanding that we have an enlarged enrolment area for a particular school, or where there are existing schools, enrolment zones are changing. That can make it quite difficult for us to then reorient our bus network, especially those dedicated school services, on a relatively quick basis. It does take time. Everything is intertwined.

Our collaboration with School Infrastructure has really improved quite a lot. In actual fact, there has been quite a lot of discussion about making sure that we get the right people at the table to understand both the near-term issues that are arising from things like changing school enrolments and school catchments to those medium and longer term propositions of building larger schools and so forth. Moving forward, there is going to be a greater opportunity for us to make sure we are a lot more aligned in a similar vein to what we were talking about before, about that general planning and transport nexus. There have always been discussions with School Infrastructure, but I think in recent times it has really improved and we are really both trying to make concerted efforts to get that a lot more aligned so we are not having those problems like you've mentioned in Oran Park.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There is a lot of hand-wringing about kids not walking to school anymore, but if you are travelling many kilometres to get to a school because of the location, and enrolment targets for those schools are high, then that is going to work against what is presumably a policy objective that was adopted by Transport to encourage more active transport, particularly around school journeys.

**ADRIAN DESSANTI:** Yes. I think it also goes to the local planning of those particular school sites as well. If we can get those school sites on or close to major road corridors and so forth, it is easier for us, from a public transport perspective, to serve them on the existing bus network or to have new bus services introduced. That dialogue I have explained around increasing our collaboration with School Infrastructure, they have also wanted the same from us as well. It is not just a one-way discussion. Over time, we are going to see those issues a lot better overcome than what we have experienced in the past.

**The CHAIR:** How is the planning for active transport undertaken within Transport for NSW: the need for cycleways, pedestrian access and pathways? How is that undertaken? It would be appreciated, even in terms of the unit itself, how is that done? Then, if you are aware, the portion of the Transport budget that is going into active transport cycleways? We heard evidence about that as well.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Transport for NSW does have a Cities and Active Transport division with a specific, focused active transport lead, and that team works across Transport to promote and plan for the needs of our active transport users across the network. They have got a range of programs underway, including their strategic cycleway corridors and various cycleways including, around Parramatta, the active transport link. From the figures I have seen, this year's budget contained an additional \$60 million in funding. I don't have a global number, so I will have to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** You can. We will also have an opportunity in a few weeks to get into the numbers a bit more.

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I want to ask about this—it is similar to the issue around bus shelters, which is the sort of interplay between local government and their role and Transport's role. On cycleways, it seems like all the actual implementation—so I think there is a cycleway corridors program. Transport is sort of identifying a big picture of where the corridor should occur. But actually, in terms of rolling out bike lanes, that expenditure is expected to be borne by local government. Local government tells us, "Well, we're not funded for that." And so any kind of cycleway expansion is actually contingent on obtaining additional funding. It seems like both sides are finding a reason not to be able to progress the expansion of the cycleways system. How do we resolve this issue?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think there are a range of different programs that are in place to fund active transport infrastructure. Some information I have says that in 2022-23 there was \$117.9 million of grant funding awarded to 283 projects and included programs like Alfred Street cycleway at Parramatta and shared paths in Newcastle and Parkes. Then in 2023-24 a further \$50 million was allocated to 87 programs. I think there are particular investments from the New South Wales Government in cycling infrastructure and active transport infrastructure.

**The CHAIR:** Is it combined with land use planning? Because they sound like small grants given to councils, which we won't sneeze at—that's great. But how is the integration between planning for new major transport projects happening—as in, cycleways, active transport?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Absolutely. In terms of the planning for greenfield and new developments, thinking about active transport means some planning for that to be put in as part of the development.

**The CHAIR:** Transport projects now, like metro and train—

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think Metro can give an answer about station precincts and active transport connections.

**REBECCA McPHEE:** Happy to if you'd like—if we take, for instance, the Western Sydney airport metro project as an example, we are putting in place multimodal facilities and that includes active transport facilities. So along that project alone—8.8 kilometres of footpaths, shared paths; 6.9 kilometres of cycleways; and storage on day one for 413 bikes, with space provision for 750. The planning for where those footpaths and where those cycleways go is done very much in collaboration with the land use agencies, including the department of planning but also the local councils with respect to their precinct plan and vision.

**PETA GAMON:** Yes, I might just add to that. The aerotropolis is one of those great examples where you get to start from the ground up and certainly the corridor provisions for the new roads that need to be built through there are all at a width that allows for that active transport use. Because we've got a nice flat area out there, you can encourage the active transport links really early on, not just only connecting to the airport but connecting peoples to the employment opportunities around there as well.

**The CHAIR:** We have gone over time. Thanks very much for your time this afternoon. That concludes the last hearing for this inquiry. The secretariat will be in touch for anything that you took on notice.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 15:50.**