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230725 McKell Lunch

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Opening remarks

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

And I acknowledge any Indigenous people here with us today.

Thanks to Ed Cavanough and the McKell team for inviting me here to speak.

A little over 7 months ago I gave a speech to the McKell Institute titled "Putting people and passengers at the heart of our public transport system".

It laid out my progressive vision for the NSW Transport system:

An end to industrial warfare that plagued our network under the former government.

A system that put the public back into Public Transport.

A government that builds things here again, that puts people at the heart and which makes New South Wales a better place to live.

With the benefit of four months in the Transport Ministry, I want to bring you up to date on our pursuit of a more safe, accessible, integrated and, reliable transport system.

The Department

I will begin by observing that 12 years is a long time for any government. You can certainly leave a mark on a department – shape the way it thinks and operates to suit your political will.

So Transport has found it a little strange and confusing to serve a Minister that wasn't some type of Liberal.

I've needed to remind them of our core purpose – public service. We are not a business, despite Transport's tendency to refer to itself as such.

And we serve passengers – not customers.

This is emblematic of how we think about the work we are doing. And what we value.

Our mission is to build, maintain and operate a world class transport system for the public. And this is a responsibility to be proud of.

We're just getting started.

The story of us

Government is so much more than delivering a laundry list of achievements.

Good governments – good *Labor* governments, have a clear sense of themselves, if they are to have a long life.

That means a government needs a purpose and a narrative.

It must have a story – one that they tell themselves, to remember how they got there and the problems they are there to solve.

And a story they tell the public – so voters can make sense of how each little decision or announcement contributes (or doesn't) to the government's agenda and score them on their successes come election time.

So I want to tell you a story about my priorities and what I want to achieve as your Transport Minister in a reforming Labor Government.

My key priorities fall into five broad areas.

They are:

1. Restoring reliability leading to increased patronage

We were elected to make public transport work for the people who need it.

We need to improve service delivery so more people chose to use public transport more often.

People want to regain control of their journeys, especially after COVID.

People want reliable services, accurate information and a choice of modes to inform their decisions about how they move around our city and our state.

Yes, people's work and patterns have permanently shifted. Now we are traveling at different times and for different reasons.

So that means that the public service provision must change too. This provides us with major opportunities.

By providing reliable services that work for people and their busy lives, more people will choose public transport.

2. Respecting and re-engaging our people

I want to fundamentally change the way we engage with our workforce. We are a government that is already replacing conflict with cooperation. We will work with those that know the system best to make the system work better for everyone.

We will respect and value frontline staff, not vilify them. And we are committed to re-building our engineering skill base, at the core of our professional workforce.

We want the people who make our system work, to be proud of the system they run.

3. City shaping and precinct making

We were elected to make city shaping and precinct making a key part of what we do. We need to develop Transport Hubs and precincts that support the Government's urgent housing agenda and be a place for other government services.

To meet the urgent need for more housing, some Transport hubs will be transformed with developments that capture the opportunities of these new or existing connections.

To make people's lives better and easier.

4. An Integrated Public Transport system.

We need to make it easier for people to catch public transport, switch between modes, make ticketing seamless and work on making active and public transport a mode of choice, not a mode of last resort.

So often I hear stories from passengers about the lack of integration between train and bus timetables for example- of

passengers watching the bus leave as the train they are on pulls into the station.

Our integrated system must also work well with Freight, so we can finally move the dial on shifting freight from road to rail and support an efficient, safe and sustainable supply chain.

5. Focus on local manufacturing and jobs

We were elected on a very clear mandate to build the next generation of trains, buses and ferries here, in Australia. And wherever possible, in our own State.

Building things here generates jobs – sending manufacturing overseas cost us thousands of local jobs and didn't deliver the cost savings it promised.

By building things here we can create a thriving and sustainable modern manufacturing sector- with a wider supply chain of small and medium size businesses – all contributing to the construction of the next generation of Transport's trains, buses and ferries.

This will be a government that works well with our professional public servants to deliver these commitments. And works well with our partners, including the union movement who represent our professional and essential frontline staff that our systems rely on.

We are a Government that listens to the people who use our network every day and makes changes with them front of mind.

I'm really pleased that in our first 4 months of Government, we've been able to work together on a number of these key priorities.

Our reviews into Sydney Trains, Sydney Metro and the Bus Industry Taskforce are already reporting back to Government and providing tangible recommendations for change – many of which are now being implemented.

Our rail review has led to the Rail Repair Plan – the largest program of rail maintenance in our State's history. We're determined to get on top of the backlog left by the previous government so passengers can enjoy a more reliable service.

We've launched a new campaign to fill the 370 vacancies for bus drivers across our network and moved to reduce red-tape and application fees for people applying to drive our buses.

With our point-to-point team, we've secured an Australia-first agreement with Uber to limit surge pricing during transport disruptions. This system was then implemented during the Surry Hills, Randle Street fire and during unplanned line closures – like the one we saw two weeks ago.

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And in partnership with the Taxi Council, we launched a crackdown on rogue taxi drivers, increasing penalties for fare-related offences.

Our Cities and Active Transport teams have worked with us on providing \$39.5 million for more than 80 walking and cycling projects across the state.

Our Procurement team are working productively with the Maritime Union to ensure that 7 new Australian-made ferries, meet the unique requirements for operating on our harbour.

We've also committed to returning the beloved newly-refurbished Queenscliff Ferry to Sydney Harbour in Summer and we've introduced another 100 weekly services on the L1 light rail line.

And I'm particularly pleased that we've come to an agreement with the Transport unions to work with them to implement technology changes across the network.

Matt Longland and the Sydney Trains team are currently finalising a unique memorandum of understanding with all transport unions to facilitate major change.

Some of the most significant change in its history.

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An agreement of this type is incredibly rare – it is a world-leading reform that is going to make future-proofing our network much easier.

Looking to the future

Looking ahead four years where do we want to be?

In 2027, our work will be judged by the people of NSW on our ability to work together, the delivery of the commitments we made to them and the experience of our passengers.

So by 2027 I want passengers using a reliable and integrated system, and to have easier and better access to real time information about their journeys.

By using their phone it should take them seconds to work out the best way to get where they're going, before they set out.

Their phone can give them real-time, accurate information so they can weigh the time, cost and environmental impact of their journey that includes when things go wrong.

But people can only make use of that information if it helps them navigate public transport services which are reliable and fully integrated with one another:

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So, we need buses that link up with trains, tram stops and train stations where you can charge a scooter or park a bike: seamless transitions between modes.

A passenger centred system that makes using public transport or active transport an obvious choice not one of last resort.

And by 2027 I want many more people to be making that choice instead of using their car.

By 2027 working with those who know the system best to make the system work better will be ingrained in how we operate.

Transport connections have the power to shape the future of our city and by 2027 we will have expanded the Metro system.

But beyond the transformation delivered by new Metro services- I want us to harness the benefits for communities at more of our stations and interchanges.

Our stations, wharves and transport hubs can become focal points for the communities they serve, not just as transit points, but as places for people to connect and make their lives easier and more convenient.

A few weeks ago, I announced that Josh Murray has been appointed as the Secretary of Transport.

Josh would be well-known and highly-regarded by many of you.

Josh's years of experience across Government, including in this portfolio, and as Global Head of People with multi-national construction company Laing O'Rourke, makes him well placed to lead our organisation that so relies on an engaged and committed workforce.

He came out on top of a long, rigorous, global recruitment process and has my trust and faith to deliver on these priorities. He starts in a few weeks and I am eager to get to work with him.

So thank you again for your time – and I hope you have a much clearer idea of what this government is going to achieve in my portfolio.

Happy to take questions.