

UNCORRECTED PROOF

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 1

Tuesday 17 November 2009

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

ROADS

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS

Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile (Chair)

The Hon. T. J. Khan
Ms L. Rhiannon
The Hon. M. R. Mason-Cox

The Hon. P. G. Sharpe
The Hon. I. W. West
The Hon. H. M. Westwood

PRESENT

Roads and Traffic Authority

Mr M. Bushby, *Chief Executive*

Mr P. Collins, *Director, Network Management*

Mr P. Halton, *General Manager, Compliance and Freight Strategy*

Mr P. Hesford, *Director, Finance and Performance*

Dr S Job, *Director, Centre for Road Safety*

Ms A. King, *Director, Licensing Registration and Freight*

Mr B. Watters, *Director, Major Infrastructure*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

CHAIR: I declare the hearing of the inquiry into the budget estimates 2009-2010 open to the public. I thank those witnesses who have returned for this supplementary hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Roads. Before we commence I shall make some comments about procedural matters. In accordance with the guidelines of the Legislative Council for the broadcast of proceedings only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photos. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation you place on anything that is said before the Committee. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available on the table by the door.

Any messages from attendees in the public gallery shall be delivered through the Chamber and support staff or the Committee clerks. I remind witnesses that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers while at the table. I remind everyone to turn off his or her mobile phones. For the information of witnesses, the Committee has agreed to the following format for today's hearing: we will commence with half an hour of questions from the Opposition then the Greens and then the Christian Democratic Party. Government members have indicated that they do not intend to ask questions at this stage. Then we will have a further half an hour with the Opposition then the Greens and the Christian Democratic Party.

The Committee has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided within 21 days or as otherwise determined by the Committee. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. All witnesses will be sworn to give evidence. Mr Bushby, Mr Halton, Mr Hesford, Dr Job, Ms King and Mr Watters, as you were sworn in at the initial budget estimates hearing you will give evidence today under your previous oaths or affirmations. Mr Collins, as you did not appear at the initial hearing I ask you to state your full, name, job title and agency, and then swear either the oath or affirmation. Thank you.

PHILLIP RICHARD HALTON, General Manager, Compliance and Freight Strategy, Roads and Traffic Authority,

SOAMES JOB, Director, Centre for Road Safety, Roads and Traffic Authority, and

ANNE ELIZABETH KING, Director, Licensing Registration and Freight, Roads and Traffic Authority, on former oath:

MICHAEL BRUCE BUSHBY, Chief Executive, Roads and Traffic Authority,

BRIAN JOHN WATTERS, Director, Major Infrastructure, Roads and Traffic Authority, and

PAUL MICHAEL HESFORD, Director, Finance and Performance, Roads and Traffic Authority, on former affirmation:

PETER COLLINS, Director, Network Management, Roads and Traffic Authority, affirmed and examined:

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Dr Job, do I take it that we are in a position where the State's road toll is now at 410, up some 94 fatalities over the same point last year?

Dr JOB: The latest figures that I have, which include Sunday—so these were released on Monday—show we are sitting at 412: 93 up on the same time in the previous year. We should note that those figures are provisional and they will change significantly. It may take 12 months for coronial hearings to occur, which may cause the exclusion of a number of those fatalities. For example, if upon examination it turns out that a person died of a heart attack and subsequently crashed that would be excluded, and that can make a significant difference. For 2008 the exclusions amounted to over 20 people removed from the road toll. We would anticipate a similar pattern for 2009.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Taking that into account, you have made a number of statements in the media and publicly with regards to the causes for this significant increase in the road tolls compared with previous years, is that correct?

Dr JOB: Correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It would seem that the reason you attribute to the increase is the global financial crisis, is that correct?

Dr JOB: That is part of it.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Would you like to explain which part and why you come to that conclusion?

Dr JOB: Happily. The global financial crisis has not had a huge impact, oddly, on New South Wales, so New South Wales has remained in positive growth. The reason that is an impact in an odd way is because of several things. First of all, we know that when we get a substantial economic downturn road tolls tend to go down with them. So New South Wales has, by virtue of maintaining positive economic growth, not had a road toll reduction by virtue of a significant recession.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: If I could just stop you there. Just to correct the record, New South Wales had two quarters of negative economic growth.

Dr JOB: Thank you. This year it has not had negative economic growth—I am sorry, I was talking about this year's road toll. There are two other ways in which I believe it has had an effect. First of all, when people are faced with harder times, though not necessarily extremely negative, they make various moves to try to maintain their income and reduce their costs. One of the most significant of those is to move to cheaper transport. In particular, we have seen substantial increases in the sales of motorcycles and, consequently, substantial increases in motorcycle fatalities and pedal cycle fatalities. So almost one-third of the increase this year is on two-wheeled vehicles. So I think that is the first way in which the economy has had an impact.

The second is—and now I am speculating as to exactly what the underlying reason is—I believe that one way in which people have responded to it is by trying to work harder, working longer, working a bit faster and getting more jobs done during the day. The pattern, in particular in the data which suggests that is part of what is going on, is that more than 50 per cent of that road toll increase has been in the periods of early morning through to peak hour and mid-afternoon through to mid-evening weekdays only. That pattern suggests to me it is related to getting up earlier, starting harder, pushing longer, perhaps being more fatigued, driving a bit faster to get more work done, staying on the job a bit longer. If it were more related to recreational-type travel we would see a substantial increase on Saturdays, for example. The fact that it is occurring mid-week at those times seems to suggest that kind of pattern of behaviour.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Going back to the two-wheeled vehicles. You indicated that one-third of the increase—

Dr JOB: Almost one-third, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Can we be more precise?

Dr JOB: I can. Motorcycle fatalities are up 21 this year and pedal cycle fatalities are up eight, so that is a total increase of 29 in two-wheeled vehicles.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Motorcycles are up 21. Up 21 from what?

Dr JOB: From the same date last year.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What figure is it up from?

Dr JOB: It is up from 44 to 65.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: How did last year's figure of 44 fit in with the trend over, let us say, the previous decade in motorcycle fatalities?

Dr JOB: The broad trend over the last decade for New South Wales has been a substantially reducing road toll.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I am talking about motorcycle fatalities.

Dr JOB: It has included two-wheeled vehicles. Those have trended downwards, along with the rest of our road toll.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What has been the trend in fatalities with cyclists on man-powered cycles?

Dr JOB: There has not been a clear discernible trend. The numbers are so small that they can bounce around considerably compared with numbers where, sadly, you get a more reliable estimate because there are more of them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In an earlier answer you talked of when the fatalities occurred. Has that trend existed also with two-wheeled vehicles as well four-wheeled vehicles?

Dr JOB: I would have to take that question on notice?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I take it that the analysis done as to the time at which fatalities have occurred relates to all vehicle fatalities?

Dr JOB: Correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is there identification as to whether the fatalities have been drivers or passengers at those times? If so, is something to be gleaned from that?

Dr JOB: That is a further analysis we are in the process of conducting. We only recently discovered this significant change in the timing pattern of the fatalities. We have now gone back and started analysing whether those increases are on country roads or urban roads, whether they are drivers, passengers or pedestrians, whether they involve heavy vehicles, et cetera. That is an analysis we are now conducting.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That perhaps steals my thunder for the next question. I take it you are not able to identify the geographic spread or whether there is anything to be gleaned statistically from the geographical spread of fatalities?

Dr JOB: Overall for the State's road toll we can, but not for the part of it that existed at that particular time. Overall there is a larger increase in non-metropolitan New South Wales than in metropolitan New South Wales for the year.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Are you able to come to any conclusion, taking into account your other assessment that it is caused by the global financial crisis, as to why it would be in non-metropolitan areas?

Dr JOB: Yes. What we also know is that speed-related fatalities are up significantly, again adding weight to the speculation that this is to do with people driving harder, pushing more to get going with more work. The reason that is likely to give more of an increase in non-urban New South Wales is because the speed limits are already higher. So if you increase your speed and fail to negotiate a corner or fail to stop in time, you are more likely to have an impact at high speed. So an error, including speeding in a high-speed environment, is more likely to be fatal.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Does the analysis you undertake go so far as to be able to identify whether people are travelling to or from work?

Dr JOB: No, those are not data that we get. We do not know the purpose of the travel in terms of the data we are supplied by police.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I am not being critical when I say this: Do I take it that where you identify the time of day and it is on a non-weekend or a work day you draw a series of conclusions from that time analysis?

Dr JOB: Again, I would call it speculation rather than a conclusion. I do not think it is definitive. It is a reasonable account of the pattern of data we have. You are quite right in identifying that although it is during work days and at that time it does not guarantee that all of that travel was for work purposes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Rest assured I was not trying to load up with the use of that word. If your analysis is correct, in terms of the conclusions that you draw for New South Wales, would it be fair to say that we can transplant that analysis to other like States in the Commonwealth?

Dr JOB: I do not know whether other like States have a similar pattern. I think New South Wales has been somewhat unusual in terms of the degree of the impact of the global financial crisis. In addition, New South Wales has very much been against a lot of the trend for the previous six years. So when we analyse this year's road toll and say we are 93 up we have to bear in mind that is in the background of a decrease in road toll for the last six years in a row. New South Wales has never in the hundred-odd years of records we have achieved six years in a row of decreases. No other State, as far as we can find, has ever achieved six years in a row of decreases. So we have come off an extraordinarily low road toll. We had to go back to the Second World War to find a road toll as low as that in 2008. Part of the impact when we compare this year with last year is actually how low last year was, not just how high this year is.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are not putting down the last six years as a matter of luck or statistical anomaly?

Dr JOB: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I take it you say it is as a result of various steps that your department and the Government have taken over those six years, would that be correct?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Therefore, you take the good with the bad. We have a bad year now. We are looking at why there has been a reversal in trends. That is fair to say, is it not?

Dr JOB: Yes, it is.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Therefore, one of the things you would necessarily do is compare the performance of New South Wales against that of the other States?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: If you had undertaken that performance, do I take it that you would know whether, for example, Victoria is going through a similar increase in road toll?

Dr JOB: We do know that. I am sorry, I thought you were asking me whether I had analysed that their increase was in the same times of the day.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No.

Dr JOB: Yes, we do know. A number of States have decreased their road tolls this year. For example, Victoria's road toll is down slightly. Western Australia's road toll is down significantly.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: And the Northern Territory as well?

Dr JOB: The Northern Territory is also down. But the State that has mimicked New South Wales most closely in terms of substantial reductions over the previous six years is South Australia. It shares our fate. Its road toll is up quite significantly, like ours. Again, the State that is coming off its lowest record road toll for quite some years, like New South Wales, is this year showing quite a significant increase.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Would you agree with me that South Australia is in a population sense a significantly smaller State than New South Wales?

Dr JOB: Absolutely.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Would it be the likelihood that the figures of a smaller State can have a tendency to bump around more than those of one of the more populous States?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So rather than simply grabbing onto South Australia would it be reasonable to look at our similarities and differences with, say, Victoria, which by population is the next largest State and its road toll is going down when our is going up and try to work out why we are reversing the trend?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Have you done that?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: What is the difference?

Dr JOB: The difference is that Victoria was not doing nearly as well as us in the previous year. So if you compare us now on a population base rate we would be fairly similar to Victoria. The population base rate is a typical international way of comparing jurisdictions on road toll—that is, the number of fatalities per 100,000 population. Last year New South Wales was at 5.4. It will be up around 6 this year. Victoria will be a little bit below 6 this year. It was well above 5.4 last year. Again, when you make that comparison, the biggest difference between New South Wales and Victoria was actually New South Wales's unusually good performance in 2008 rather than our particularly bad performance relative to Victoria in 2009. That may seem like double-dutch, but I am actually basing it on rates per 100,000 population to draw that conclusion.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I understand what you say; I am just not overwhelmed by the answer. That is essentially saying that statistically we were going to come back to the average. Is that another way of putting what you have just said?

Dr JOB: I do not believe that the answer is simply that we have come back to the average. I believe that we did particularly well in 2008, extremely well in 2008. It is not simply a matter of statistical variation and jumping around that we have got the road toll we have this year. I think it is, in part, in response to the things I have outlined to do with the economy and with two-wheeled vehicles.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Putting aside the overall figures, have you done an analysis in terms of the Victorian experience, for instance, and looked at its level of fatalities for two-wheeled vehicles, including motorcycles, whether there has been a trend in increases in the sale of two-wheeled vehicles, including motorcycles, and whether its fatalities are occurring at a similar time as they are in New South Wales—those factors that you say impact upon the New South Wales road toll?

Dr JOB: The Victorian experience is like ours that there has been a significant increase in motorcycle sales. I do not know the times of day of fatalities for Victoria.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: If the sale of motorcycles and man-powered cycles is at similar levels as that in New South Wales, how do you explain that we have had an increase in fatalities in two-wheeled vehicles, which is not reflected in the Victorian experience?

Dr JOB: I did not know if it is reflected in the Victorian experience or not.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Why not?

Dr JOB: Because we have not analysed that and I do not have the figures with me at the moment.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: When you come to a conclusion that there is a cause, is it not fair to look at another set of data—say, Victoria—and see whether the conclusions that you have drawn are replicated in the Victorian experience?

Dr JOB: Mr Khan, when I make the conclusion that our road toll is up because of those experiences with motorcycles I base it on this year compared with last year or this year compared with the three-year average. With both of those figures motorcycle fatalities are up. I think that is a more legitimate comparison for making that claim than comparing us with any other State. New South Wales has unusual and distinctive features of motorcycle use, in particular a number of roads that are very much favoured by motorcyclists, including the Snowy Mountains, the Old Pacific Highway and a number of roads that have distinctive curves and beautiful scenery.

So I do not think the comparison with Victoria is as important as the comparison with New South Wales with those remaining roads' steady state from year to year. Comparing across years in New South Wales is a more legitimate comparison for drawing these conclusions. It is also more legitimate for us in a number of other ways in terms of what we would address. Victoria differs from New South Wales in its approach to the road toll in a number of respects, which means that the comparison is not necessarily beautifully useful. For example, the age of licensing in New South Wales is a year younger than in Victoria. That impacts significantly on the experience level and maturity level of our drivers when they start driving, including motorcycle riders.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Could I just go to that issue? Since the changes in the laws with regard to the number of hours to be completed by learner drivers and the change to the regulations with regard to the loss of licence after a speeding offence while on a red P-plate have you done an analysis of the level of injuries and fatalities amongst young drivers?

Dr JOB: The levels of injuries are not finalised to recently. They can take many months. We have done a detailed analysis for fatalities. Since we introduced that package of measures you referred to P1 fatalities have dropped 36 per cent compared with those in the year prior to its introduction. The data clearly indicate a significant improvement in P1 fatality involvements due to that package. Furthermore, the data particularly indicate that the number of P1 drivers involved speeding in a fatality has gone down markedly, which highlights that the zero tolerance to speeding approach has been particularly effective in terms of that package. However, the first year of data, which was the complete year we have had to analyse, do not give us yet the impact of the

120 hours. The reason for that is that in order to allow people to achieve the 120 hours we made the learner period one year, so that means the first year of data subsequently would not yet contain any of the learners who had to do the 120 hours. It will be some time yet before we can get a good analysis of the impact of the 120 hours in particular.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I want to turn to a couple of specific issues in relation to the RTA construction program. I suppose Mr Bushby or Mr Watters would be able to answer that.

Mr BUSHBY: Let us see what the content of the question is and we will work out who is best positioned.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I want to ask about the Harpers Hill road improvement along the New England Highway. It is a smaller project but one of significance to the local community. Are you familiar with that?

Mr BUSHBY: I know the project.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: There are 3.5 kilometres of roadworks that have been targeted with some black spot funding in relation to improvements that are needed along that section of road. The concern I raise is that it appears that the \$1 million of black spot funding has been targeted for one kilometre of that road rather than the 3.5 kilometres. I want to get an understanding of why that is the case, or if indeed it is the case.

Mr BUSHBY: I will respond to that and call on the others to add to it. As I understand it, the maximum allowable funding under the Federal black spot projects is \$1 million per project. We put the Harpers Hill project forward as a Federal black spot program, asking for \$1 million but aware that that was not going to be sufficient to treat the entire length of the project.

Dr JOB: I can add to that. These projects are selected on the basis of best benefit-cost ratio. That is, the projects are selected to be the ones that will give us the most benefit in terms of safety savings per dollar spent. The reason that particular one kilometre section was chosen for treatment, and the particular treatment chosen, is that it gives us the best benefit in terms of avoiding the particular crash types that are occurring there, which are very severe crash types, including fatalities. Since we put up that project there has been another of those fatalities in the last few months. That is the reason for that particular selection.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do you have a costing for the works to upgrade the road along the full 3.5 kilometres rather than one kilometre focusing on the black spot funding?

Mr BUSHBY: The upgrade would depend on the nature of the work, whether it was just an intervention in terms of road safety works or whether a broader upgrade of the road was involved. We have done the work to identify the worst kilometre. We have looked at the broader length. I am not sure whether Peter has any advice on that.

Mr COLLINS: There is no doubt there is a justification for doing something because of the crash history. As Michael Bushby said, we have addressed what we see as the worst area for crashes. That is essentially putting a barrier in the middle of the road to stop people who lose control hitting other vehicles or obstacles on the road. You are looking at many millions of dollars to treat the whole length because—I am not sure whether you know the area very well—it is up a hill and some significant earthworks would have to be done if you needed to widen the road to extend the barrier and do other things. You are looking at many millions of dollars.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do you have a figure for what sort of cost we are looking at?

Mr COLLINS: It depends on the scope of work but it would probably be more than \$10 million.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What analysis have you done in scoping that work?

Mr COLLINS: In scoping any project you look at what you are trying to achieve. In this case it is to improve safety, so you look at the options to improve the reasons for those crashes. I have just mentioned one, which is widening and putting a barrier in the middle. It could be improving the clear zone on the side of the

road so that if you lose control you are most unlikely to hit something that will cause severe injury. It depends on what you are trying to achieve.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: That is a very good question. What is the RTA trying to achieve with this road given there have been 10 deaths over the last 12 years on this stretch of road? What is the RTA's objective in upgrading that road besides black spot funding?

Mr COLLINS: It is no different to any other road in that we want to try to make the road safe for usage.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What priority does that have in the RTA in terms of other projects that also need funding?

Mr COLLINS: There are many parts of the road system that need attention. My estimation is it has a high priority.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Give me an idea of the levels of priority. Is there an extreme priority? What is high priority? Is that the highest priority or is it a mid-level priority, or what?

Mr COLLINS: I look after the whole network around New South Wales and there are many issues with roads, not just safety but maintenance, congestion and things like that. We try to balance the best outcome for the whole network.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Does high priority mean you will get to it in a few years or does high priority mean you are doing the analysis and this is something you are going to push through as quickly as humanly possible because people are dying on these roads?

Mr BUSHBY: Certainly we have identified this as an area that requires attention and you have rightly pointed to the crash history associated with the road. We are looking at the road to identify what is appropriate in terms of the justification for intervening and doing some work there. There is a complication, of course, given that it is part of the New England Highway and part of the national network and we have to interact with the Federal Government in relation to any major projects that we would want to undertake. There is a difference between ongoing maintenance and minor upgrades versus any major works. That adds to the difficulty in scoping what we will aim to achieve.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: When will the works that have been planned under the black spot funding be completed?

Mr COLLINS: My understanding is that it is early in the new year, but I will come back to you later with clarification.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: That would be great. If you could take that on notice? What consultation are you having with the local community in relation to those works as well as any other proposed works in addition to the blackspot funding that may be necessary as a priority to safeguard that particular stretch of road?

Mr COLLINS: For the blackspot money that we have now?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: We will deal with it in two parts: the blackspot money and what sort of consultation you are having with the community in that regard.

Mr COLLINS: There are several processes. First of all, we talk to people like the local council and work through the issues with them. There is a need to do an environmental assessment of what we want to do to see if we can fit things in in accordance with the environmental laws. Generally speaking, for that size project there is a brochure prepared on just an outline of what is happening. I am not absolutely certain in the case of this project whether that was done.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: And that would be passed to the local community and sent out to the residents? Could you take that on notice to clarify that for us?

Mr COLLINS: Yes. Then once a decision is made on the scope of work it is a matter of getting on and doing it.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: And the scope of work is pretty clear so far as the blackspot funding is concerned, is it not?

Mr COLLINS: This is capped at a \$1 million project.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is the RTA going to provide any supplementary funds if the scope of those works is beyond \$1 million in that particular one kilometre stretch?

Mr COLLINS: We will complete the works as we have identified. We would hardly come and build something and find that we needed to spend another \$10,000 and not complete it. So we will finish the scope of works that we have identified for this particular project.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Then the question moves on to the other necessary works that are a high priority. What is the time frame and how much is the RTA looking at spending on that particular 3.5 kilometre stretch of road rather the one kilometre focused on to date?

Mr BUSHBY: I think it is probably worth saying that that will depend on the formulation of future programs. It is not in the 2009-10 program and so it will be part of our budget formulation process going forward to compare that project against other projects that, as Mr Collins said, have worthwhile outcomes in relation to the overall network. So in 2009-10 I do not think we have a formulation of any further project, but for out years we would be considering it as part of the program formulation.

Mr WATTERS: If I could add something about a major upgrade of that stretch of road: As Michael mentioned, it is part of the national network and we are in a bit of a transition period from the old National Highway program from the Federal Government where they had a number of projects on the New England Highway. With the new five-year Nation Building program, which we have just started, the Federal Government allocated almost—in fact, I cannot think of any significant project on the New England Highway; they favoured the Pacific Highway, the Hume Highway and a bit of money for the Barton Highway. We are obviously in discussions with the Federal Government over making adjustments to the five-year program, but, to date, they have been unwilling to change the five-year program.

Clearly, if there is a need for a major upgrade at Harpers Hill, then that would be subject to us proposing to the Federal Government they do include it in the next five-year program which commences in 2014. So between now and then, because it is a federally funded road, we are really talking about using blackspot funds and other funds for smaller blackspot type treatments rather than a major realignment of the highway.

CHAIR: We will move on to Ms Lee Rhiannon.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Of the RTA funding for blackspots, how much money is allocated for bicycle blackspots?

Dr JOB: Money is not allocated on the basis of a particular amount for bicycles or motorcycles or any road user group; it is allocated on the basis of benefit:cost ratio. So regardless of the mode of transport of who are injured or killed, we will analyse where we can get basically the best benefit for the dollars we spend. So the project could not outline to you which are motorcycle or bicycle or car, et cetera; it just is not a program run that way. There would be projects where the contribution to the benefit we are going to achieve would be from bicycles and from cars and from other groups all combined.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: It sounds like a group such as bicycle users will therefore miss out on specific blackspots where there are a number of injuries or deaths of cyclists not being addressed and fixed up. Could you tell us what the RTA is doing to improve safety at areas that have been identified as having frequent bicycle accidents, even if it is not specifically part of your blackspot program?

Dr JOB: Yes, we can. The RTA runs a significant bicycle program for safety and for improvement of amenity. This includes an education campaign, which includes brochures on improving people's awareness and people's behaviour for their own safety on bicycles. It also includes a very extensive network of bicycleways,

which I think now amount to over 4,000 kilometres in New South Wales, and that network is continuing to be expanded. So there is a focus on deliberately providing facilities particular to bicyclists and shared facilities for bicycles and pedestrians in preference to having bicycles on the roadway.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I was interested in the figures that you gave. I think when Mr Daley was Minister he gave some information to a previous estimates committee that bike lanes, where they are totally separated from the roads, were under 2 per cent. He said, "On-road bike-only lanes make up a mere 1.8 per cent of the 4,100 kilometres of cycleways across New South Wales." Does that figure still stand?

Mr BUSHBY: I might get you to repeat that question. I am struggling on what 1.8 per cent is.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: "On-road bike-only lanes"—which I understand is where there is a total separation—"make up a mere 1.8 per cent of the 4,100 kilometres of cycleways across New South Wales".

Mr BUSHBY: I think you are talking about on-road separated lanes on the roadway and a lot of those are situated on local roads. There are not too many of those that are identified on the arterial and State roads. We work with councils on how they identify what bike facilities are better suited to their local area. So the bike facilities on main roads may be either a separated bikeway or the use of a wide sealed shoulder for bicycles, but there are not too many locations on the road that the RTA manages that are separated lanes for bicycles.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Could you take it on notice to provide up-to-date figures because I am sure you are aware that there is a great deal of concern when the RTA claims shoulders as bike lanes because there has been a number of accidents and it clearly is quite dangerous and it certainly deters people from being regular bike users when shoulders are claimed to be cycleways?

Mr BUSHBY: Can I suggest that the bicycle users are often very keen to use the shoulders—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Some are.

Mr BUSHBY: Correct. And those who are looking for long-distance bike riding for training are attracted to the wide shoulders of the main roads because they give them good grades and a predictable road that they can actually maintain high speeds on. So those training bike riders are often very attracted to the wide shoulders for bike riding.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I totally acknowledge that, but I would hope that we are all in agreement that we are just trying to make it more attractive for more people to use bikes. Considering at the end of last year the former Roads Minister said that it would take 5 to 10 years for Sydney to catch up with other Australian States in terms of expanded cycling facilities, are you still on the same track or has the margin expanded or decreased in terms of catching up with other States?

Mr BUSHBY: Over the past 10 years a lot of effort and funding have been put into providing bicycle facilities, as we know. We have been trying to deliver as best we can and we have been working with local government to produce local facilities as well as interregional facilities. At this point I cannot answer the question you asked about whether we are further ahead or whether we have caught up with interstate facilities at this point. If it is an important question, I will take it on notice and do some research for you.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I ask you to take that question on notice. I have one more bicycle question, but first I wish to clarify this: does the Roads and Traffic Authority have anything to do with building any commuter car parks, or is that the responsibility of the entity on whose land it is on?

Mr BUSHBY: It is my understanding that the commuter car parks largely are built through the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation, or TIDC.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: They do not come under you?

Mr BUSHBY: The only interaction we have relates to traffic management because often they are in areas close to shopping centres and so on. We try to make sure that the local area traffic is well accommodated to be able to support the commuter car parks.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You said earlier that you look after traffic management aspects, so maybe it does come under you. What work do you do when a commuter car park is being constructed to ensure that cycling infrastructure is included? We are getting a lot of complaints about the fact that when these new car parks are being constructed cycling infrastructure is being overlooked time and time again.

Mr BUSHBY: Certainly the traffic management aspects, such as connections to bicycle paths and other attractive routes for cyclists, would be taken into account in identifying locations and how to access them. The facilities within the car park is not something that we would be responsible for.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You would not cover things such as bicycle sheds, racks and things like that?

Mr BUSHBY: Or the boxes, no.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: What work is being undertaken to implement technology that would enable the Government to implement a congestion tax? In your answer could you cover what work you are doing on plate recognition systems and global positioning satellite systems to facilitate such a tax or money-raising venture?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is a loaded question.

Mr BUSHBY: The collection of tolling revenues across Sydney is done using a range of technologies. The collection done by the Roads and Traffic Authority on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Harbour tunnel certainly is done using electronic tags. The technology used to identify people whose tags have not worked or whose vehicles do not have a tag includes taking a photograph of the vehicle and then being able to use optical character recognition to identify the numberplate of the vehicle to be able to chase up payment at a later date, or to confirm that payment has been made through a pass product within 48 hours of it being passed through. But that is not the only technology that is used for tolling within Sydney.

The M7 tolling arrangements are done on a per kilometre basis with a maximum charge. That is done by identifying vehicles, of necessity, when they enter the motorway and again when they leave, and matching the distance that they have travelled to be able to identify what toll should be paid. That means that, if the tag is not working, you use and are much dependent on the numberplate identifier to collect the appropriate level of revenue.

In answer to your question relating to identifying vehicles for congestion tax purposes, other than our ability to collect the tolls that we are collecting at the moment, I do not think we are using technology for that purpose other than national initiatives that are being considered in relation to the pricing of heavy vehicle use of the road network through Council of Australian Governments [COAG] initiatives in which the Roads and Traffic Authority is participating. You referred also to global positional system [GPS] technology. Obviously, that is one of the possibilities that would be considered in a feasibility study under the Council of Australian Governments Road Reform Plan.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is the COAG Road Reform Plan looking at possibly using global positioning and plate recognition? Is any other technology being looked at?

Mr BUSHBY: COAG has not yet got to the technology; it is looking at a feasibility study for moving to a mass distance charging regime. The technologies will be investigated as part of that over the next 18 months or so.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The Roads and Traffic Authority is not doing any investigation of other technologies of its own; it is just part of the national process?

Mr BUSHBY: Referring to GPS tracking, we are not doing any technology work of which I am aware.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I want to ask about some of the plans to upgrade roads on the Central Coast. I refer specifically to Brisbane Water Drive and the Manns Road intersection. Again we have had a number of approaches from people. You would be aware of the various options that have been put forward. What is being raised specifically relates to issues to do with safety and also the damage to the local wetlands. People also are concerned about the lack of meaningful public consultation. They feel it is already worked out when the

meetings are held. Could you provide information about what steps are being taken to protect the wetlands in this area when these road upgrades are undertaken?

Mr WATTERS: Firstly, in relation to consultation, consultation of the Manns Road intersection has been going on for a number of years now. We got to the point of identifying a preferred option, which met some opposition from one group in the community. Through the consultation process, we went back to a blank sheet of paper, effectively, and identified a total of 18 options, which then went through a new consultation process and has reduced. Recently it has been short-listed down to two options, which are going through further consultation. So as far as the wetlands are concerned, I am not aware of specific issues of the wetland. I will take that question on notice. Can you name the wetland please?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I can certainly provide you with the details of it. It is I think it is near Point Clare. I will clarify that for you so it is clear when I come back to you.¹

CHAIR: Thank you for coming to our hearing. I have a general question relating to noise road barriers, particularly on the M5. Could you explain the policy as to whether the barriers are now built automatically, or only where there is housing that would be affected by the traffic noise?

Mr BUSHBY: In general, noise barriers are a response to a measured or modelled understanding of what the noise effects of the road will be. They are not put in everywhere. They are identified as to where the noise is likely to transmit and what the noise level will be at a particular, usually residential, location. The barriers or the soil mounds or other things are put in place try to minimise those effects that we identify as part of the modelling of the noise regime. On the M5 itself, I am not sure whether Brian has any advice on that.

CHAIR: Sometimes there appear to be no houses where the barriers have been built. Maybe you are anticipating a development.

Mr WATTERS: State guidelines have been prepared by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, which set down the criteria for assessing noise. At the planning stage of the project, when we do the environmental assessment, we forecast traffic 10 years ahead of opening. We forecast the traffic level and noise level on opening a new road and 10 years later. We have to look at the likely noise-sensitive receptors around the road, whether it is a residence, a school or perhaps one isolated building. We forecast the noise and the Department of Environment and Climate Change guidelines give specific criteria about the increase in noise; that is, the noise level above ambient night-time or daytime noise. There are different criteria and measures that trigger the need to mitigate that expected noise impact. Through the process of environmental assessment and the Department of Planning and the Minister for Planning approvals there would be conditions that relate to the specific noise mitigation required.

Generally, noise walls are installed where there is existing housing. They may be where there is some planned housing or where there is simply an isolated building which appears to be some distance from the road but which currently enjoys a very low level of noise so there is a significant impact. We do not always use noise walls. We also use architectural treatments if a house is in an isolated position. We sometimes offer to install double-glazing and air conditioning, which is a more cost-effective way of treating a single house. It may be a noise wall, a noise mound, surface treatment of the road itself or architectural treatment of the house. The treatment differs from location to location.

CHAIR: Can you explain the breakdown lane policy in respect of main expressways like the M5 or the M7? Accidents have occurred when a vehicle has pulled over and another vehicle has smashed into the back of the stationary vehicle. Does the department have a policy covering areas where motorists can pull over in an emergency, for example, when a child needs attention and they need to stop the car? Are such bays provided at a certain distance apart with appropriate signage?

Mr WATTERS: The road design guidelines make two provisions for broken down vehicles, including a continuous shoulder, which is generally a minimum of 2.5 metres or 3 metres wide. Where it is difficult to

¹ Ms Rhiannon has indicated that the wetland at Point Clare has three names

- The wetland area north of Manooka Road is identified as Reserve 0091 Henry Kendal Street Reserve
- The wetland area south of Manooka Road is identified as Reserve 0204 Manooka Road Bush Reserve
- The wetland area east of Brisbane Water Drive is identified as Reserve 0071 Point Clare Waterfront Reserve

provide a continuous shoulder, breakdown bays are provided. I cannot recall the spacing of those bays, but the road design guidelines specify the minimum spacing if there is no ability to provide shoulders.

CHAIR: Accidents can still occur where there is a shoulder.

Mr WATTERS: I acknowledge that there are fatalities where people have broken down on shoulders—perhaps while they are changing a wheel. A truck travelling on the M7 recently veered off a through lane and into a shoulder and hit a cyclist. Shoulders are problematic. People who have broken down can be hit if there is no shoulder. Even if there is a bay, they might not reach it. If we do provide a shoulder, there is nothing to stop motorists using them. However, if we provide an over-wide shoulder our experience is that people use it as a traffic lane. A 2.5 metre or 3 metre lane is sufficient for motorists to get out of the traffic without encouraging them to use it as a traffic lane.

CHAIR: Does the policy require the installation of signs indicating a breakdown zone ahead? I cannot remember seeing them.

Mr WATTERS: We provide shoulders on most roads. We also provide telephone bays. The policy on the provision of telephone bays has changed as more and more people have mobile phones. On some roads we have provided fixed emergency telephones in a bay even though there is a shoulder. People with mobile phones tend to use them as well—they pull right off the road and stop to make a phone call. There is benefit in providing occasional bays in addition to a shoulder, but it is not uniform across the network. Motorways are built at different times and the policies might change slightly over time.

CHAIR: Vehicles have hit bike riders travelling in groups. Is there a policy covering situations where 10 or 20 riders are travelling together on an expressway? That seems to happen more frequently these days. Should they be prohibited from doing that or should they be encouraged to use other roads? Usually there is an alternative, although it may have more hills and bends, but that would not affect the bicycle rider.

Mr BUSHBY: There has been a growth in the number of bicycle riders travelling in groups—I think it is called a peloton. They ride long distances at relatively high speeds. That is why they choose to use the flatter roads with better grades offered by motorways and higher order roads. There is a problem with very large numbers of cyclists in a peloton. The line of riders can become very long and that can make it difficult for motorists to pass and they get trapped. There have been problems, whether they be crashes or interaction with other road users.

A similar issue was identified in Victoria and guidelines were provided about how cyclists riding in groups should behave. We have picked up on that approach and have been working with the New South Wales Police Force to provide a brochure with similar guidance. I think it is about to be released. We are very close to being able to provide similar guidance to bicycle clubs and so on to identify how best to ride in a peloton.

CHAIR: Is there any requirement for cyclists who intend to travel in a large group to advise the Roads and Traffic Authority or the New South Wales Police Force?

Mr BUSHBY: I do not think we ask that, but we do suggest that they limit the size of the group so that we do not end up with long lines of cyclists who can effectively take over a lane.

CHAIR: Has the department developed any policy supporting increasing the restricted drinking age from 18 to 21 in an effort to reduce road accidents?

Mr BUSHBY: It is probably worth noting that L and P-plate drivers are not allowed to have alcohol in their blood. We already have a zero blood alcohol content policy for them. Motorists cannot be off P-plates before they turn 20, so that covers most of that age group. The rules are already in place and we depend on the police to enforce them and to ensure that those people are best protected in a road safety sense by not driving when they have blood alcohol content.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: An Auditor-General's report released earlier this year dealt with truck safety, and I understand that it raised concerns about how the laws are being enforced. Can you detail what your response has been to that report and what the department is doing to ensure there is a decrease in truck accidents?

Mr BUSHBY: Given that the heavy vehicle industry is fairly specific, I will ask Mr Halton to address that issue because he has extensive knowledge of that industry.

Mr HALTON: In short, the Roads and Traffic Authority accepted all of the Auditor-General's recommendations. Our response included dates on which we would execute a set of actions. In some instances that was a commitment to move to full implementation of a particular measure and in other instances we committed to testing the feasibility of certain techniques by a particular date. There were 12 recommendations in total and at the moment we are on path to respond to all of them either by the date to which we committed or very shortly thereafter.

The recommendations contained some proposals about enhancing the operation of the Safe-T-Cam system. There was a recommendation about equipping speed cameras in one location on a 110 kilometre section of a roadway to distinguish a truck, which is limited to travel lawfully at 100 kilometres an hour, from a car, which could legally travel at 110 kilometres an hour. More broadly, there were some propositions about enhancing our computerised detection system so that we increase the sensitivity of our ability to detect an at-risk vehicle and intercept it at a facility such as a rural or other checking station. That work is all in train.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I was particularly interested in areas of western New South Wales where the roads are very narrow and were not built for use by big B-doubles. I am thinking particularly of the areas around Greenethorpe in central western New South Wales where there has been a shift in freighting grain from rail on to trucks. Those drivers clearly are under pressure to get to their destination as quickly as possible and the quickest route is along one of these smaller back roads. I have seen them on these roads and I have received a number of complaints about the practice. In those sorts of areas where I do not imagine the Roads and Traffic Authority has a big presence, how do you deal with those increasing trends in some places in the number of trucks using roads illegally?

Mr HALTON: There probably are four things I would say to you. We are not an economic regulator. We are not involved in determining how the marketplace chooses to send freight from a farm, factory or any other land use to its end point. That is a commercial in consideration.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I was just saying that to explain why I understand this was happening.

Mr HALTON: Indeed. But I am conscious that in Australia some 30 years ago agencies such as ours were involved in such things. I just wanted to comment that that is not part of our remit. In terms of our regulatory role, there would probably be three further things to say. A vehicle like a B-double, as you describe, in our language is a restricted access vehicle. It is not lawfully permitted to drive down any road it chooses. The routes that are approved for a vehicle like a B-double are individually assessed for their fitness to take that vehicle safely. All of our evidence is in fact that a B-double is a materially safer vehicle than a single semitrailer or a medium rigid vehicle principally for two reasons. The quality of driver that you get in a B-double is of a high level; it is a superior grade of licence that requires a more experienced driver to get a B-double licence. And then quite significantly they are simply a lower exposure. A B-double moves 1½ times the freight of a semitrailer. If you minimise the number of heavy vehicles on the road for a given freight task, that is a safety benefit.

For the aspects of increasingly large trucks, you expressed interest earlier in the GPS technology. The RTA uses GPS technology in a compliance and enforcement role. So, for new generation heavy vehicles that are in service in western New South Wales—that is, a B-triple and an AB-triple, vehicles of that kind—we require them to be fitted with a satellite tracking system known as the Intelligent Access Program, which gives us live reporting of when one of those vehicles is off its approved route. For things such as pressures facing drivers to hurry their delivery or work an excessive period of time, Parliament has approved the introduction of chain of responsibility laws into this State. Those laws attach both a legal liability and, in the instance of fatigue and speed, an affirmative duty on parties throughout the supply chain, that is from the customer who sends the freight through—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: But is it not the case that that mechanism has not been used with regard to grain handling that is moving illegally on small roads?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Well, that is a loaded question!

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Well, he is here to answer it. Are you looking after the Government now, Mr Khan?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: No, but it is fair that a reasonable question be asked.

CHAIR: Let the witness answer the question.

Mr HALTON: To date in fatigue and speed matters we have a number of inquiries on hand. We have not yet brought a matter before the court. However, our experience is that the chain of responsibility legislation is having a material effect on the level of compliance that we see not just in the trucking industry but throughout the supply chain. In the grain sector, particularly in relation to the loading of vehicles, we have seen very substantial positive movement in the loading patterns of the industry.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When you emphasise the loading, you mean not within the actual movement from one place to another?

Mr HALTON: Yes. To be particular, that would be correct. We have closely examined whether vehicles are overloaded. Our general observation is that when it comes to route compliance, which is our term for what you are describing, it would be unusual for a B-double driver to actually desire to go down a particularly narrow road. As you described earlier, they are interested in travelling to their destination, sometimes almost unhelpfully interested in travelling to their destination. To go down a winding country road is something that will increase travel time, increase the labour in the driving task—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: With all due respect, what they are doing is going that way rather than that way on the legal route. You can go there and see them doing it. Even if the road is a little winding and a bit narrower, the shorter route, rather than the longer route, is very attractive to them. That is why they do it.

Mr HALTON: Yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: And nobody is doing anything about that.

Mr HALTON: Where that occurs we are very happy to deploy enforcement resources and where we get intelligence of that we actually deploy the inspectors, sometimes even in a covert capacity to pick it up.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Mr Bushby, did you want to say something?

Mr BUSHBY: No, that is fine.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I will refer now to the Newell Highway. A report entitled, "The Newell Highway Safety Review" was issued recently?

Mr BUSHBY: Earlier in the year.

Dr JOB: That is right, in May this year.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Section 4 of it dealt with road safety issues?

Mr BUSHBY: Dr Job led the review that was undertaken on the Newell Highway.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I take it that section 4 of the report dealt with the key road safety issues, is that correct?

Dr JOB: I do not recall the number of the section.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I take it that you are ostensibly the author of the review?

Dr JOB: There were a number of authors. I was one of them.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I take it that you were the one who signed off on the review?

Dr JOB: Many signed off on it, including me.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: See if I can jog your memory with this question. Section 4 on page 14 of the report has this statement:

Several features of casualties in reported crashes continue to be overrepresented compared to New South Wales country State highways. These include the proportion of crashes including fatalities and injuries, fatigue involvement, heavy vehicle involvement, interstate resident involvement and older driver involvement.

Do you recall that?

Dr JOB: Yes, I do.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Is that a fair summary of the key road safety issues relating to the Newell Highway?

Dr JOB: It is a summary of the ways in which the Newell Highway is different from other highways. Therefore, it is not actually a summary of all of the critical road safety issues on that highway. It is a summary of the ways in which the Newell Highway appears to be distinct from other rural highways.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is, it is overrepresented in the categories of, for instance, fatigue, heavy vehicle involvement, interstate residents and older drivers?

Dr JOB: Correct.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: In addressing the issues relating to the Newell Highway as far as fatalities are concerned, the key issues are fatigue involvement, heavy vehicles, interstate drivers and older drivers, is that not right?

Dr JOB: No, that is not right.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Why not?

Dr JOB: Because, and I expect what you are getting to, speed is not listed there as one of the major behavioural factors.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are very insightful, Dr Job.

Dr JOB: We are planning to reduce the speed limit.

CHAIR: Do you have a copy of that report handy?

Dr JOB: No, I do not, but I am comfortable to answer these questions.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You knew where I was going?

Dr JOB: Mr Khan, could I outline to you why this oddity turns out, that is, speeding is not identified as the main factor? It is actually one of the major factors, but it does not stand out on the Newell Highway as a factor but not another highway. Speed is a factor in fatal crashes on many of our highways. So that is the reason for that statement. In addition—and this is a bit tricky—speed means excessive speed for the conditions. Say you had a curve with an advisory sign at 75 kilometres an hour and you try to take it at 100, even though you are within the speed limit, you are speeding.

In addition, what we believe is 110 is wrong for the highway. So, if you are doing 110 kilometres an hour and you have a crash, part of the reason for having a crash is that you are doing 110, but it will not be identified as a speeding crash because you are within the speed limit. So, you miss speed as a factor because the speed limit is so high that crashes that are due to that speed are not designated as speeding because you are not above the speed limit. In a way, what it says is if you have a lot of crashes that are occurring on straight roads, it may be due to speed but it is not speeding, that indicates that the speed limit is wrong, so what you are defining as speeding is wrong.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Let us deal with that issue, because plainly you knew where I was going. What you have on the Newell Highway is that a lot of the accidents that are occurring are head ons?

Dr JOB: Quite a few, yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: It is one of those causes of accidents that are identified. People are doing overtaking manoeuvres in the wrong spot, is that right?

Dr JOB: No. Again, it turns out that less than 1 per cent of our fatalities are due to overtaking. The large majority of head-on crashes or, more broadly, wrong side of the road crashes, are not overtaking manoeuvres. They are people who are going so fast that they cannot control the vehicle for that section of road and, especially, when they face a left-hand curve, their speed is so excessive they cannot stay on that side of the road; they drift to the other side of the road. Some of them are of that form and some of them are fatigue. We know in particular they are of that form because if you look at the amount of the Newell Highway that is curved versus straight and the number of severe crashes that occur on curved versus straight, curves are very much overrepresented in those severe crashes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Let us just deal with on the wrong side because of the excessive speed. Those accidents would be identified in the statistics as an excessive speed accident, would they not?

Dr JOB: It depends how you define "excessive". I think in some instances the problem is the 110 limit is excessive but it will not be defined as a speeding crash because you are within the speed limit.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: If that is the case, that it will not be defined as excessive speed because you are within the speed limit, then it would follow if you are going around a curve with an advisory speed of 60 and you are going around at 90, within the 110 speed limit, it will not be identified as excessive?

Dr JOB: Yes, I understand. I have misled you.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I am sure you have not intended to.

Dr JOB: Thank you. If there is an advisory there, it would be but in some instances there is not an advisory because, under perfect conditions in the right vehicle you might manage to get around there at 110 but under any other conditions you will not. The problem is what we face, especially on a highway like the Newell Highway, very often you have single vehicle crashes or two vehicle crashes with no witness alive or in a state to tell you anything about what happened. So, the police come out to this difficulty and they are asked was speeding involved. None of us could answer that question.

So, in a way, what we find is that speed is a difficult thing to estimate. I believe, from very good evidence, that we underestimate speed's involvement in fatal crashes. This is one of the reasons. Police are not well-equipped to determine whether someone was speeding or not. That is not a criticism of the police, none of us is. If we looked at two vehicles that hit head-on and they were both doing 100 versus 120, I doubt whether any of us could tell the difference. So, we could not tell whether speed was involved from the horrific scene in place.

The reason I believe we underestimate the role of speed is this: The best estimate of the role of speed is what happens if you remove it or largely remove it from the problem area. If we look at studies where it has largely, not completely, been removed—for example, where point-to-point enforcement has been installed, we see around a 50 per cent reduction in severe crashes and fatal crashes, whereas our estimate is always that it is lower than 50 per cent as to its involvement. That says to me we are underestimating the role of speed, and the most likely places for us to underestimate it are in isolated areas like the Newell Highway, where we are not likely to have many witnesses on hand who are not involved.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Do I conclude what you say is that whilst speed is not clearly identified in the statistical data you have on the Newell Highway, you have a gut feeling that it must be speed which is a significant factor that has to be addressed?

Dr JOB: No. I think that would not quite accurately reflect it. The data say that speed is a significant factor in serious crashes on the Newell Highway.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: But far less than fatigue?

Dr JOB: At the moment it is less than fatigue in serious crashes. In fatal crashes, I believe you will find it is much more similar. The section you are quoting from is the way in which the Newell is distinct from other highways. It is not distinct from other highways in speed because speed is a problem on all of those highways.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Yes, but one of the differences between the Newell and other highways is, for instance, it has generally a 110 limit as compared to other highways that have a limit of 100, yet what your report identifies as the differences do not include speed. The differences are fatigue involvement, et cetera, but not speed. That is in your own report?

Dr JOB: They do not include speeding, not that they do not include speed. Speeding is excessive for the conditions or above the speed limit. The problem is if the speed limit is wrong you will miss many of those crashes that involve speed because it is not defined as speeding.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: But, by your own definition, you can be within the speed limit and still be travelling at an excessive speed?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Am I not right?

Dr JOB: Yes, you are correct but that will not cover all the instances. There will be other instances where it will not be seen as inappropriate to condition because it is within the speed limit.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Am I not also right that where there is a fatal accident, even in western New South Wales, a trained traffic accident investigator from New South Wales Police will attend the accident site and prepare a report for the coroner?

Dr JOB: You are not right.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Sorry?

Dr JOB: That is right.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is right?

Dr JOB: No, you are right to say you are not right.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You are saying that a traffic accident investigator does not attend a fatal accident and prepares a report for the coroner?

Dr JOB: What I am saying is—well, it depends on your definition of "extensively trained". Someone who has some training will go out and investigate for the coroner, but more extensive and comprehensive investigations are conducted by police where there is a reasonable chance that someone will be charged with a serious offence. So, that means if it is a single vehicle fatal accident, the person who could possibly be charged with an offence is now deceased, so that comprehensive investigation will not occur. That type of crash is much more common on the Newell Highway than the average for the State, so that very comprehensive investigation is less likely to occur for some of these crashes than the rest of the State.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: A report is prepared for the coroner and, irrespective of whether the person is travelling within or without the speed limit—above or below the speed limit—the traffic accident investigator will, amongst other things, identify whether in his or her opinion the driver is travelling at an excessive speed for the conditions. Will he or she not?

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: That is part of the normal approach of traffic accident investigation, is it not?

Dr JOB: Yes, it is.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: So the conclusion that the traffic accident investigator comes to is not dependent on the speed limit that applies but whether the speed at which the vehicle was travelling at the time was, in the opinion of the investigator, excessive?

Dr JOB: No, I do not agree with that.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: You do not?

Dr JOB: No, I do not. Because we have to come back to how the investigator will judge that. The investigator will see a 110-kilometre an hour speed limit and judge that, unless there is some particular feature of the road that says you should not be doing that, such as an advisory sign. If that driver was doing 110, then that will not be identified as a speed-related crash. But, if the correct speed limit for that road was 100 and it had been speed limited at 100, and that same driver performed the same manoeuvre at 110, it would be identified as a speed-related crash. So, even though in some instances it will not be related to the speed limit, in many instances it will be related to the speed limit. Even though in some cases you will get people who are below the speed limit identified as a speed-related crash, in many instances you will not, due to the nature of the speed limit itself.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: If your assumption of what the traffic accident investigator is doing vis-à-vis the speed limit that applies is wrong, would you agree with me that the whole basis for your assessment of the speed limit on the Newell Highway is based on a false premise?

Dr JOB: No.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: All right.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I refer to speed cameras and want to take you back to the announcement by former Premier Mr Carr in January 2003 when he said that speed cameras would be installed around 10 New South Wales schools to raise "more than \$20 million for research on spinal cord injuries and extra services for people with physical disabilities". I understand that in September this year the money raised from speed cameras around schools was going into consolidated revenue. Is that the situation at the moment? Can you clarify that?

Mr JOB: I understand that it is.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Could you clarify more for me when that first started to occur—the money going into consolidated revenue?

Dr JOB: I would have to take that question on notice. I know that for a number of years it went into spinal cord research. I do not know to what extent any still does. Mainly that time, which you are quoting for Premier Carr's announcement, is prior to my time in this role with the Roads and Traffic Authority.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I ask you to take that question on notice. Could you also take on notice and clarify how much money went into research on spinal cord injuries—

Dr JOB: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: —and where that money was directed specifically? That would be excellent.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And how much the Labor Government is putting into spinal cord research.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: No, but if you want to ask him that question, you are most welcome. Thank you very much, Dr Job. I again turn to a couple of projects, if I may, Mr Bushby. You might be aware that yesterday a sod was turned for the duplication project of Lanyon Drive, near Queanbeyan. Are you aware of that?

Mr WATTERS: Yes. I am aware that Lanyon Drive—did you say "cyclist"?

Mr BUSHBY: No, a sod was turned.

Mr WATTERS: I thought you said a cyclist was on the ground, sorry.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: There was an announcement yesterday that a sod was turned on Lanyon Drive by local members, Mr Steve Whan and Dr Kelly, to commemorate or to start the next part of that project, which is the duplication of that road through to the Australian Capital Territory border or the Monaro Highway. Are you familiar with that project?

Mr WATTERS: Yes, I am.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you be able to clarify when that project was originally announced, the timeline for that project and the original cost estimate?

Mr WATTERS: No, I am not.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Will you take that on notice?

Mr WATTERS: I am not aware of when it was originally announced or the original cost. I am aware that in the past few years there has been a significant delay in getting the project started mainly because the project has been managed by the Australian Capital Territory and it straddles the border. Only recently the Australian Capital Territory Government called tenders and the project has started. But in relation to when it was originally announced, I do not know.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If you could provide that information on notice, it certainly would be appreciated. Are there any reasons why the Australian Capital Territory Government has been slow in commencing that project? Obviously you are part of the group that is making this decision; it is a cross-border issue and the Australian Capital Territory has the carriage of elements of it. I understand that you are in contact with the Australian Capital Territory Government. What is the reason for the significant delay in that project?

Mr WATTERS: The majority of the project is in the Australian Capital Territory, and only a small part of it is in New South Wales, so it is appropriate that the Australian Capital Territory Government should call tenders and manage the contract. It did that in its own good time. I do not know for what reason.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Obviously, you have been in contact with the Australian Capital Territory Government to accelerate that?

Mr WATTERS: New South Wales has had its money on the table, so to speak, for some years to complete that project. We have been cooperating with the Australian Capital Territory Government, or its agency. However, the management and the progress have been at its call, and not ours. Whether or not it had any funding difficulties, I do know. I do not know the reason.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Are you familiar with the Queanbeyan City Council's 2031 transport strategy?

Mr WATTERS: No.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It deals with the whole cross-border region and the roads in that region. I draw your attention to a couple of those roads. What level of priority is there within the Roads and Traffic Authority in that respect? Are you familiar with the Edwin Land Parkway, which essentially is the Queanbeyan bypass? This has been on the drawing board for 30-odd years. You might recall that former Premier Bob Carr made an announcement in 1995 to fund that road, but nothing has happened. The other major roads proposal is for another road through the suburb of Jerrabomberra as well as to the south of Jerrabomberra, which is Dunns Creek Road. In general terms, what strategic planning has the department done relating to the whole cross-border road issues for the Queanbeyan-Australian Capital Territory area? What priority do you see for that?

Mr BUSHBY: I might kick off on that if I could. Certainly through our regional office we have been working with the council in that area and looking at forward requirements for the road network, including doing some work with them in relation to traffic modelling and the requirements going forward for traffic within Queanbeyan. The Edwin Land Parkway is one that we are aware that council is keen to build. Council is using development in that area as part of moving forward with doing that work. Within New South Wales, we have put in place an alternative route to the north of Queanbeyan for heavy vehicles, which is probably a lower trafficked route that allows heavy vehicles to go to the north of Queanbeyan. But I acknowledge that it is probably not the best alignment for heavy vehicles to use to be able to avoid Queanbeyan.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is not.

Mr BUSHBY: When a community Cabinet meeting was held in Queanbeyan recently the locals raised with the former Minister for Roads the issues associated with the traffic on the main road through Queanbeyan itself and the other issues associated with the Kings Highway heading east from Queanbeyan and the Edwin Land Parkway. Those issues were all raised at the time. We have been working with the Queanbeyan City Council on traffic modelling to try to finalise the outcome and what the needs are in that area.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In that case you would be familiar with the safety issues in the main street of Queanbeyan caused by the huge traffic loads there as well as the trucks that have to come through Queanbeyan as a result of there being no effective bypass?

Mr BUSHBY: I am aware that the main road is used by trucks and, as I understand it, there is a quarry south of the city whose vehicles are using the main street. The traffic volumes within Queanbeyan are relatively large for a country site, but in the overall scheme of things it is one of the things that has to be taken into account in setting priorities across the State.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: With regard to relative priorities, does your department have a view in relation to what priority the Queanbeyan cross-border area has?

Mr BUSHBY: Clearly the development of joint headquarters on the Kings Highway has been the major priority with the increase in traffic that is anticipated going out to the site east of Queanbeyan. The work we have been doing most recently has been to improve the Kings Highway and the intersections, the installation of roundabout and improvements over that section.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Did you have any interaction with the NSW Infrastructure Co-ordinator General so far as submissions to Infrastructure Australia for any of the major roadworks in the cross-border region?

Mr BUSHBY: Is that as part of the Infrastructure Australia bidding process?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Yes. Was that on the table for any of these major roads that have not seen any funding for 30 years?

Mr BUSHBY: No. My understanding is that it was not included as part of any submission.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It was not included, I am aware of that. Did your agency have any discussions with or put in submissions to the NSW Infrastructure Co-ordinator General to make a bid, if you like, for these major infrastructure items in the cross-border region?

Mr BUSHBY: My understanding is no, but I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What is your advice sought by the co-ordinator general for submissions into the New South Wales submission? Were you consulted in that process?

Mr BUSHBY: We had discussions with the co-ordinator general's office in the lead-up to providing a submission to Infrastructure Australia, but the submission was prepared by them.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If you could just clarify whether you have actually put forward anything in relation to the cross-border region that would be appreciated.

Mr BUSHBY: I do not think we did, but I will confirm that.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In terms of the Kings Road improvements, can you also give us some indication of the time line for completing those improvements and the likely cost of finalising the improvements? You can take that on notice if you like.

Mr WATTERS: I have some information here.

Mr BUSHBY: We should be able to give you some advice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am particularly interested in utilisation of the road reserve that splits the Kings Way estate.

Mr WATTERS: There is a new realignment, which is expected to commence in January. Would that be the work you are thinking of?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: A number of works are going on.

Mr WATTERS: There are a series of projects on the Kings Highway.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: There are. There are the Weetalabah works.

Mr WATTERS: The Weetalabah works are completed and the Captains Flat Road was opened in October. There is the Ridgeway intersection and there is also the new realignment, which is the next more significant project that is about to commence.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: That is the one. But all the others are pretty much done from what you have said and the next stage is the realignment, if you like, through the road reserve. Is that correct?

Mr WATTERS: It is about to start in January. Is your question: When is it likely to be completed?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Yes, and at what cost, and what consultation you have done with the community in that regard.

Mr WATTERS: I think we will take all three questions on notice, if you do not mind. We are expecting it to be completed in November 2010 but I do not have the cost with me.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Are you familiar with the project itself?

Mr WATTERS: Not very familiar. I have seen the plans, I am aware of the general geometry of the proposal but I have not walked over the site, if that is what you mean.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Let me describe it to you. They are putting in a road straight through the middle of a residential estate and bisecting it, which, whilst there was a road reserve that has been there for many years, is a dramatic change to the landscape that will have major implications for the residents of that estate. You are familiar with those aspects, I trust.

Mr WATTERS: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If you can clarify what interaction you have had with the local community in that regard it would be appreciated.

CHAIR: Do you mean what consultation is taking place?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Yes, what consultation. I understand you are not familiar with the Queanbeyan council 2031 transport strategy. Mr Bushby, are you familiar with that?

Mr BUSHBY: Not by that name. I did attend public sessions after the community Cabinet at Queanbeyan but I do not remember it being raised by that name.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is a fairly recent document. It has brought together the analysis and linked into the developments in southern Jerrabomberra and Googong—if you like, a whole strategic look at the cross-border area—so it is a fundamental way forward that the council has adopted. What is the normal process in that regard so far as the Roads and Traffic Authority's involvement, given that you control the existing roads through the main street, which is the real problem in the community? What is the next step from your organisation's point of view?

Mr BUSHBY: As I said before, we work with local councils through our regional offices, and our regional office in Wollongong, I think, is the one that would be dealing directly with the councils and would be part of the work that has been done for modelling. We would be looking at the justification that has been put forward in relation to improvements in the area. We would be identifying potential works that would be relevant to the State road network that could be included for future consideration as part of the program formulation. The regional advice would come back to some of the people here to actually consider at a statewide level as to whether there was a justification for trying to fit them into the forward program.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In that regard, do you then go through the bidding process with Cabinet in terms of the other priorities of the agency?

Mr BUSHBY: It is across the areas of responsibility that the Roads and Traffic Authority has from the regulatory side, customer facing activities and weighing that up against the road construction and maintenance responsibilities.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You mentioned the northern route for the heavy truck bypass for Queanbeyan and that it was perhaps a little unsatisfactory—I hope I am not verballing you. I wanted to understand that a little bit better. You would be aware of the large number of complaints from heavy users of that road—truck operators and the like—who think it is inappropriate and simply not fit for use.

Mr BUSHBY: I have actually driven that route to have a look at it and to understand how it operates. There is an extensive use of existing roads to connect up. The concern that I had when I drove it was that there are quite a few intersections and some of those are on grades that, I understand, heavy vehicle drivers prefer not to have in terms of having to take off on grades at intersections. But it is still a workable solution and it is certainly signposted for heavy vehicles even if they do not prefer to use it as it is.

CHAIR: Thank you for attending our hearing. We appreciate the information you have conveyed to us. All the best for your important work for the people of New South Wales.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
