

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4

Wednesday 15 October 2008

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

TRANSPORT, ILLAWARRA

The Committee met at 9.15 a.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. J. A. Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. M. R. Mason-Cox
The Hon. G. S. Pearce
Ms L. Rhiannon
The Hon. P. G. Sharpe

The Hon. R. A. Smith
The Hon. H. Tsang
The Hon. L. J. Voltz

PRESENT

The Hon. D. A. Campbell, *Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Illawarra*

Ministry of Transport

Mr J. Glasson, *Director General*

RailCorp

Mr R. Mason, *Chief Executive Officer*

State Transit Authority

Mr P. Rowley, *Acting Chief Executive Officer*

Sydney Ferries Corporation

Mr G. Smith, *Chief Executive Officer*

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 this hearing for the inquiry into Budget Estimates 2008-09 open to the public. I welcome Minister Campbell and the accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of transport and the Illawarra. Before we commence I will make some comments about procedural matters. In accordance with the Legislative Council guidelines for the broadcasting 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 photographs. 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 at the table at the door.

Any messages from attendees in the public gallery should be delivered through the Chamber and support staff or the committee clerks. I remind the Minister and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers while at the table. I remind everyone to please turn off mobile phones. The committee has agreed that we will deal with the Transport portfolio and the last 45 minutes will be allocated to the Illawarra. There will be a brief morning tea break at 10.30 a.m. The House has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided within 21 days, or as otherwise determined by the committee. The committee has not varied that 21 days. The transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning.

All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. I remind the Minister that he does not need to be sworn as he has already sworn an oath to his office as a member of Parliament. I ask all other witnesses to each in turn state your full name, job title and agency and swear either an oath or an affirmation—the words of both the oath and the affirmation are on the cards on the table in front of you.

PETER ROWLEY, Chief Executive Officer, State Transit Authority,

JIM GLASSON, Director-General, Ministry of Transport and

GEOFF SMITH, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Ferries, sworn and examined:

ROB MASON, Chief Executive Officer, RailCorp, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of transport and the Illawarra open for examination. As there is no provision for a Minister to make an opening statement before the committee commences questioning we will begin with questions.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I will start with questions about the North West Metro. You would be aware of the Coalition's strong support for a north-west rail link. Will you explain why your Government as dumped the north-west heavy rail link for the metro?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The decision around that was about operational efficiencies, I understand. You will appreciate that that decision was taken prior to my time as the Minister but the alternative is simply using an alternate form of delivery, a different system to the traditional heavy rail system.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What were the operational efficiencies that justified the dropping of the heavy rail link?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In terms of the North West Metro it is probably better that I make these comments.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I would prefer if you would just answer the question.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Government as we sit is delivering the biggest transport infrastructure program in Australia's history. The North West Metro is a major project for Sydney and for the people along the proposed corridor including the north west. The Government has announced a massive \$5.9 billion investment in transport during the 2008-09 financial year. However, the mini budget will require a review of the Government's—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Point of order: I asked a direct question in relation to the north-west rail link rather than the North West Metro.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: To the point of order: There is actually no point of order how the Minister chooses to answer your questions.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is a point of order in relation to answering the question I actually put rather than answering a question he would like me to put.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Minister is entitled to answer the question in the way he sees fit.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: He is entitled to answer the question I put to him rather than answering a question I did not put to him.

CHAIR: Will you address the question which was about the north-west heavy rail link?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will endeavour to do that in the context of information which may, in fact, mean that some other question will not need to be asked. I need to point out that the mini budget will require review of the Government's forward capital program, and that includes transport. At this stage no decisions have been made. In the meantime, finalisation of the product definition study for the North West Metro is continuing. The metro line would carry up to 30,000 or 40,000 people per hour, which is significantly greater than the capacity of the heavy rail line originally planned for the north west. So on that point it can actually carry more people under that form of delivery than under the Coalition policy we just heard about.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, I warn you not to verbal—

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The total budget for North West Metro includes all land acquisition costs and I can assure you that all costs have been factored in. The 2008-09 budget includes a major commitment to the North West Metro. The North West Metro is forecast as a \$12 billion project and the Government has allocated \$106 million in this budget with an additional \$132 million for property acquisition between Rouse Hill and Epping. The North West Metro team is currently focusing on completion of a product definition report and is preparing to commence procurement of the major components of the project. The major areas of expenditure this year will be the establishment of the project team and associated advisory services, preconstruction activities such as geotechnical investigations, and land acquisition.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: So they are the reasons why you dropped the north-west heavy rail link?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As indicated, the significant reason is that the Government at the time took a decision that there is capacity to carry additional people on the metro style than traditional heavy rail style delivery.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What was the amount of people that could have been carried on the north-west heavy rail link?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will have to take that on notice. As I said, I was not the Minister for Transport at that time. I have figures that say what the Metro might carry.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Perhaps Mr Rob Mason might be able to answer that detailed question?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I said, I will take it on notice. I want to make sure that the Committee gets the exact figures. Mr Mason may well be able to answer it, but I will take it on notice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you care to answer it, Mr Mason?

Mr MASON: The precise capacity of the North West rail link? I think we should take it on notice to get the precise, accurate answer. However, the traditional double-deck fleet with 20 trains now, which is not what was proposed for the north-west rail link in the initial stages, would carry some 20,000. That is what we carry on our existing CBD rail link.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: So there may have been a difference in the order of about 10,000?

Mr MASON: That is our current capacity running through the CBD on individual lines.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Depending on the number of trains that are running and what sort of scheduling you have on the track?

Mr MASON: Yes.

CHAIR: Are there any reasons, apart from the capacity difference you are putting between the North West Metro and the north-west heavy rail link, for the dumping of the heavy rail line?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I think has been made clear publicly by the then Premier, there was an opportunity to pick up some additional passenger load through what I will broadly call the Victoria Road corridor. The heavy rail link would not have had that opportunity.

CHAIR: Did the Government carry out feasibility studies on the north-west heavy rail link?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I would have to take that on notice.

CHAIR: You do not know?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What I said is that I would take it on notice and get the accurate information for the Committee.

CHAIR: In getting that accurate information, can you provide the Committee with information about what feasibility studies were carried out and when; when was the EIS completed for that project and what were the results of it; and how much has been spent to date on feasibility studies?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will seek to answer those questions on notice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Can you give us a feeling for what the cost differential is between a heavy rail line and a north-west metro line? Which one was more expensive and by what order of magnitude?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will give you that information.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Mr Mason, you would be familiar with the detail, would you not, in relation to the relative costs of those options?

Mr MASON: Not the precise detail because, as the Minister said, we need to cross-reference what the rail link was and the metro.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you be able to make a judgement about which one was more expensive?

Mr MASON: It would be incorrect for me to mislead the Committee, I think.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I put it to you that the heavy rail link was a lot more inexpensive than the North West Metro. In fact the North West Metro I think, from information put to me, is something in the order of twice or more expensive than a heavy rail link to the north-west?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: If you would like to provide us with all the detailed studies that you have—you just said you have had some information put to you—we can give the Committee some comment on that.

CHAIR: It is common knowledge, is it not?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am just surprised that you have no inkling at all about which of those options is the most expensive. It is quite extraordinary. I know you are a new Minister, but I think it is a pretty basic issue.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not going to base answers to this Committee on common knowledge, I am going to base answers on fact. You just said that it has been put to you, so I assume it has been put to you in a factual way, certain information. If you provide us with that information we can give commentary on it back to the Committee.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am asking you for information.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: So you do not have it?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You are just taking that on notice, are you?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: So you do not have that information?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am asking you, Minister.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No, you asked for a comparison between information you have and information that others may have. It is not possible to compare it if you do not give us the information and the documentation that you have. Other than that we will answer on notice the questions that we have undertaken to answer on notice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: So you have no information about the relative costs to hand?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not have any answers in terms of relative costs on "information" that you have been given because you have not given us that information.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am asking you for information, Minister, but we might move on. Given that heavy rail was the Government's policy for 10 years, we must remember that the north-west heavy rail link was announced in 1998, so it has been the policy of your Government for basically 10 years. Given that you have dumped it in favour of North West Metro, why did it take you so long to change your policy on this?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I think that most reasonable people would understand in relation to that question that I have been Minister for about five weeks now and I was not party to those decisions and did not have access to those decisions.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You were party to the cabinet room that made some of those decisions, were you not, Minister?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The decisions to change from a heavy rail project to a Metro project were, to my understanding, made in budget committee of cabinet and I was not a member of that budget committee.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Perhaps Mr Mason might be able to enlighten us as to why after 10 years of promising a heavy rail link to the North West you dumped it in favour of a North West Metro.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The other thing to add here is that the Government took a decision based on information at the time to change the method of delivery from heavy rail to Metro. The overarching policy of delivering a public transport solution to the North West remains in place.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: We have heard the reasons you have given in relation to dumping the north-west heavy rail link as being operational, which obviously depends on just how many trains you run down a line. Clearly a heavy rail link to the North West could match a link similar to the North West Metro if you had more trains. It is fairly self-evident. You cannot tell me whether there is any cost differential although evidence has been put to us, which we may provide to you separately, which suggests that the cost differential is in favour of the heavy rail link. In the absence of any real reasons you have put to us I put it to you

that the real reason behind all this is that you simply do not trust RailCorp to deliver on a north-west rail link. Is that not true, Minister?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: To my mind that is a ridiculous notion. It is the sort of political posturing that we have come to expect in a forum such as this. I can say nothing more than that.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is that not basically the real reason that RailCorp itself—

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Madam Chair, the Minister has already answered the question.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am asking another question, Henry. Is that not really the reason behind the change in the structure of RailCorp from a statutory organisation to one that is now responsible to you? That is what the unions wanted, was it not?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In fact it has moved to a statutory organisation. It was a State-owned corporation, and remains so because—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is no longer responsible to a board, it is responsible to you.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As we sit here today it is, because although the Government has made a policy decision and announcement, as was made clear in that policy announcement there is a need for a legislative change to effect that. Parliamentary Counsel has been given drafting instructions to prepare a bill so that a legislative change can be put into effect. It is important to point out that it is moving from a State-owned corporation to a statutory authority rather than the reverse, which was the premise of the question.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It has been put to me, based on your own costings, that heavy rail to the north-west has been costed at \$8 billion while the cost of the Metro, as we know, is \$12 billion. Can you confirm that?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I said, if you want to give me the details of where you are getting that from and that underpin it, rather than some scrap of paper from someone in the gallery, we can assess it and give you some comment on it. On the basis of those scraps of paper that have been delivered up, I do not think I can place much veracity—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: We are looking for scraps of information, Minister, and the reality is you are giving us nothing. You are simply closing the door on providing any transparency or accountability to this committee on issues that are of fundamental importance to the people of the North West. It is about time you gave us some answers.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: That is not a question to the Minister, it is a statement. The member knows full well he should be asking questions.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, would you level now with the committee and share with us the real reasons your Government has dumped the north-west heavy rail link?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Chair, the question was asked and has been answered. I have undertaken to take further questions on notice and provide information. I have asked several times for the committee to undertake to give me the information on which the questions are premised and the committee has refused to do that. In the absence of that information from the committee we will do our best to answer the questions on notice.

CHAIR: Minister, it has been commonly put in the public domain for some time that the relative cost difference between the north-west heavy rail line and the proposed North West Metro line is about \$4.2 billion. Could you take that question on notice and confirm whether that is a reasonable estimate of the difference between the two projects and provide us with the information that goes to the specific reasons for that, in addition to the one you have put to us about capacity. Were there any other reasons for the dumping of the north-west heavy rail project? That would be appreciated.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, do you stand by former Premier Morris Iemma's claims that the Metro will be opened to the public by 2015?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: This project, as has been subsequently stated by the current Premier, is subject to review as part of the mini-budget process and in the absence of the mini-budget having been announced to date—the decisions around it will be announced on 11 November, as we know—you will appreciate and I am sure you will agree it would be wrong of me to give that commitment in this forum.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Has the Premier not said that the project will be funded from New South Wales finances rather than Federal money?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Premier has said that this project was not included in a list of projects to go to the Commonwealth on the basis that it was and is intended, if it goes ahead subject to the budget process, that it will be funded by New South Wales. I again make the point that it is a project that is under review, like many other capital projects, as part of the mini-budget process.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Why was it not on the list of priority projects for New South Wales that were sent to Infrastructure Australia by the New South Wales Government?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As the Premier said publicly, and you seem to be keen on public information, and as I said—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am keen on any information, Minister.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: —a minute ago, it was and is the Government's intention that if it proceeds it will be funded by New South Wales.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is there any truth in reports that the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer made the observation that there were no marginal seats on the proposed routes of the North West Metro and therefore that is why they were not prepared to fund it?

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Point of order: How could the Minister answer questions on the Federal Government—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: There are public reports to that effect. I think it is a valid question.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have not had a conversation with the Prime Minister or the Treasurer about the project.

CHAIR: You have not had a conversation with the Treasurer about the project?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Commonwealth Treasurer or the Prime Minister.

CHAIR: Are you pushing the New South Wales Treasurer for the project to go ahead?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The project is being considered by the Government in the context of preparation of the mini-budget and as the Premier has said publicly and as I have said publicly several times nothing has been ruled in and nothing has been ruled out in the context of preparing a mini-budget.

CHAIR: Are you an advocate for the North West Metro to go ahead?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am an advocate for improving and expanding public transport across New South Wales.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Can you explain to us some of the detailed recommendations of the report by Jim Steer in relation to the North West Metro that was commissioned by your Government? Are you familiar with the report?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have not read it. I am aware that it exists. As always, information is sought by the Government as it works through the decision-making process. Different people have different

points of view and that is how a Government comes to a decision, by gathering different pieces of information, putting it together and making a judgement based on that information.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In this new era of transparency and accountability will you release that report to the public?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I think that is a question you should ask the Treasurer. As I understand it, the Treasurer prepared that document.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is it a report that you think should be released, given your knowledge of it?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I said, I have not read it. What knowledge I have of it is fairly esoteric.

The Hon. ROY SMITH: Minister, I would like to ask you about the development of the University of Sydney Western Sydney train station near Werrington. I know that nothing is in and nothing is out, but can you tell me what progress has been made? This promise, which was originally made to the people of Western Sydney in 1987, was repeated in 1994, 1999, 2003, and again prior to last year's State election. As it is a key piece of infrastructure for the area from which I come I would like to know what developments are occurring.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: My predecessor commissioned former Deputy Premier Andrew Refshauge to review the project. Mr Refshauge prepared a report that is under consideration by the Government.

The Hon. ROY SMITH: Will we know more about it on 11 November?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Soon.

The Hon. ROY SMITH: I refer to another service out my way—not the North West Metro but the South West Rail Link. I believe that the Premier previously announced that a number of parcels of land had already been purchased and that more were to be purchased this year to enable the construction of that rail corridor. How much has been purchased, how much remains to be purchased and when can we expect the commencement of construction on the corridor?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: My note does not detail how much land has been purchased and how much remains to be purchased. However, I am confident from discussions I have had that the land-purchasing program is continuing. The Minister for Planning granted project approval for the Glenfield north flyover and for part of the Glenfield south junction. The Minister for Planning has also provided concept plan approval for the Glenfield station redevelopment and for the remainder of the South West Rail Link corridor. I am aware that the Transport Infrastructure and Development Corporation is preparing an environmental assessment for final project approval. The allocation of capital funds for a possible commencement is part of the mini-budget process.

The Hon. ROY SMITH: Thank you, Minister. Could you take on notice my question regarding how much land has already been purchased and how much remains to be purchased and the time frame for that?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will be happy to get you that detail.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is there a risk of that being deferred as part of the mini-budget?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Again the answer is the same: it is a capital project. As has been made clear by the Government, capital projects will be reconsidered as part of the mini-budget process.

The Hon. ROY SMITH: As an aside, I catch the train to the city daily and I have noticed a number of rats running around Town Hall station. Could somebody look into that? It is very unsightly and no doubt it is a health hazard.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Certainly. Coming back to your question regarding what land has been purchased for the South West Rail Link, I am advised by the Department of Planning that land acquisition for

the South West Rail Link project is progressing, with 17 parcels of land now settled. To date, that land is worth approximately \$60 million in acquisitions.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, is Mr Brian Garnham still employed by CityRail, or in any aspect of rail services in New South Wales?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not aware whether Brian Garnham is employed. I understand that Barry Garnham is employed, but I am not aware of Brian Garnham. There may be a Brian Garnham, but I am not aware of him.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I apologise; it is Barry Garnham. Is he still employed?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I understand that he is.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is he still Group General Manager, Train Services? What is his position now?

Mr MASON: No, he is not; he is Group General Manager, Product Development.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Could you outline what that covers?

Mr MASON: The product development area covers all areas of current and future long-term planning for the CityRail and country network. Primarily at the moment it is designing future timetables, identifying the future capacity requirements of the network based on the proposed growth of Sydney, and defining user specifications to allow engineers to design future infrastructure to deliver capacity for Sydney.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Does that mean that the Western FastRail proposal, on which Mr Garnham was previously working, is still alive within transport services?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Can I seek clarification of what you mean by "transport services"? That is not a term I have heard used before.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Within rail services. Are you still considering whether or not to implement a Western FastRail service, and is that something on which Mr Garnham is working?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I refer to an unsolicited proposal by the private sector known as Western FastRail consortium to develop a fast rail service between Western Sydney and the central business district and I make these comments. I am advised that the last two proposals that were considered did not stack up and they were both rejected. Last year the Western FastRail consortium, comprising Leighton contractors and ABN AMRO Australia, revised and resubmitted the Western FastRail proposal to Government. I am advised that the Office of the Coordinator General, which is part of the Premier's department, established an interagency working group to review the latest proposal in accordance with the Working with Government guidelines. I am advised that the Government has yet to consider advice from the Coordinator General as part of that process.

Preliminary advice to me is that this proposal may improve travel times for relatively few people at a cost to the thousands of commuters who use the CityRail network. As I understand it, under the fast rail concept the fast trains would not stop at all between Parramatta and the central business district. Between Penrith and Parramatta trains would stop only at St Marys, Seven Hills and Blacktown, so nine stations west of Parramatta would miss out. Passengers would not have access to fast rail from Kingswood, Werrington, Mount Druitt, Rooty Hill, Doonside, Toongabbie, Pennant Hills, Wentworthville or Westmead or, as I already mentioned, at any stops between Parramatta and the central business district.

If the fast rail proposal got the "green light", CityRail services from Penrith to Parramatta would have to become all-station services, and express CityRail services could not operate because two of the four rail tracks between Penrith and Westmead would have to be dedicated to the fast rail. The dedication of two of the rail tracks to the fast rail would also lead to major congestion problems on the rail network as the intercity western line, Cumberland line and freight services would all be forced to operate on the remaining two rail tracks. I am advised that passengers who wanted to use the proposed fast rail would also have to pay a \$3.80 premium—that is an extra \$38 on top of a weekly ticket for Western Sydney people who commute five days a week.

For people who could not afford the extra \$38 a week their only option would be to stay on the all-stations CityRail train that would take up to 30 minutes longer than their current trip. That is 79 minutes instead of the current 49 minutes for Blue Mountains passengers, and 65 minutes instead of the current 40 to 45 minutes for Mount Druitt passengers. The Western FastRail proposal would not improve services on the western line; it is a proposal to improve services for some of the people on the line—those who have access to the five stations west of Parramatta where the train would stop and those who can afford to pay an extra \$38 a week for the privilege. An unsolicited proposal is being considered by the Office of the Coordinator General.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When will that decision be made and will it be released publicly?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That is a question best put to the committee that reviews the Department of Premier and Cabinet, but I will seek some advice. Essentially I will take it on notice. The Office of the Coordinator General does not report to me, that is the point I am trying to make. I will see if I can provide some information to the Committee.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: An article in the Newcastle *Herald* on Monday this week about the heavy rail service in Newcastle states, "Community input on removing the rail line will be sought." Could you inform the Committee what are the Government's plans for Newcastle?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Could I ask who that quote is from?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: It is not actually a quote; it is in the body of the article. The article is by Jacqui Jones. It is not attributed to the Government—I certainly acknowledge that—but it is stated.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: We are talking about the rail line into the central business district [CBD] of Newcastle?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, right into Newcastle.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Government has looked at this issue over a long period with the local community. It has come to a position supporting the community's view that the heavy rail line should remain. There are some issues around common activity between the CBD and what I would call the honeysuckle precinct. There is some continuing work around that. I am aware that General Property Trust [GPT] is now saying that it is not going to proceed with a significant redevelopment in Newcastle if the rail line remains. Notwithstanding that statement from GPT, as far as I am concerned the Government's position remains that we have worked with the community and we have come to a landing that says the heavy rail should remain. That is our adopted position. I see no reason why we should change that, why we would go into another major review of that position. But there needs to be continuing work about those common activity issues between the different parts of Newcastle across that run.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: In summary, you are saying that you are totally ruling out removing the rail line; it is just about how we improve moving from one side of the track to the other without removing the track?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That is the Government's position and I do not see any reason to change it.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The previous Minister for Transport, I understand, met with EcoTransit about a proposal to extend light rail to Dulwich Hill. Could you inform the Committee if you have been briefed on this issue and what the Government's plans are for light rail?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have been briefed on the issue. There is a freight line that goes from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill, in broad terms. Because of a change of industrial uses, it is about to be not needed. It is my view that we should move as a Government to get that freight line back from the Australian Rail Track Corporation, which runs freight lines, and make sure it remains as a corridor potentially for light rail.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you would agree with Mr Watkins' statement that a light rail extension is "sensible"—as he described it?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have not got to the detail of it, and that is why I was careful in my previous answer to say that from what I have seen to date it is my view that we should reserve the corridor as a

potential light rail route. As I work through this issue I will come to a greater understanding of it and a greater position. From what I have seen to date, it is something that we should certainly continue to work on.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: My next question is about the Port Botany expansion. I think you would be aware of the controversy about how containers will be moved and the possibility of increased congestion in the area. Do you expect the Government will meet its target of getting 40 per cent of expected freight increase onto rail?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The target has been set and the Government will be working towards that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: How will you achieve it?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It will be achieved by getting someone to load the containers onto the trains.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: If only it were that easy. Are you arguing that the present rolling stock and the present arrangement is adequate to take it up to 40 per cent?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The target is 40 per cent and there may well be investment needed to get there, but that is the target. The freight effort—running the freight trains—rests with others, not with RailCorp. But that remains the target: our effort to work with others to get there remains, and it is what we intend to do.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: With the third terminal, I spoke with Mr Tripodi the other day and certainly he envisages a massive increase in containers coming into the port. He sees this as an important part of the future economic growth of New South Wales. So 40 per cent is not a static figure, it is going to go up considerably. I appreciate your answer, but it seems to be quite vague about what is going to be put in to develop the rail services in that area. This development is huge.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Part of the approvals for it has infrastructure around rail freight transport, and the aim is to meet that target.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Can you take on notice the question of how you plan to meet the target? I am after detail and I appreciate that you do not have all the details immediately to hand. Perhaps someone beside you might answer it, but if you do not have the information to hand, could you provide the details of how that 40 per cent that is growing clearly in actual quantity is going to be met?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Sure.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I refer now to CountryLink services. There is growing concern about how CountryLink services increasingly are becoming coach-based services and not rail-based services. Could you provide figures on the percentage of coach-based services compared with the number of rail-based services?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not believe I have those specific percentages here, but I will take it on notice and make sure that the Committee gets that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As well as the break-up between coach and rail services, I am interested in figures on the use of CountryLink overall. Are the numbers using CountryLink increasing or decreasing?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Over the previous couple of years there has been decreasing patronage by about 7 per cent.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Did you say decreasing?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Over the past couple of years, but in the last financial year that decreasing patronage was minimised to 4 per cent. So there was still a decrease, but not to the same extent. The advice I have, and it is also personal experience, that with the reduced cost of airfares people are taking air travel rather than CountryLink services. I know of people who buy an air ticket for their pensioner parents rather than having their pensioner parents take a CountryLink train, for example. That has been part of the issue. But in the last financial year, the rate of decrease was arrested, and not quite halved.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Going back to the coach-based services, I appreciate you do not have the figures, but is there a policy to move more of the CountryLink services to coaches? Is that actually a position? So often we are not seeing trains pull up at country stations, but only coaches. That seems to be happening increasingly. I acknowledge that that is anecdotal information, but I am interested in the position.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What we need to do is give the best possible service to passengers in the country. If a coach can give them a more flexible and better service, we should not rule that out.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, do you recognise that many elderly and many sick people cannot catch rail—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order. The time for crossbench questions has expired.

CHAIR: Order! That is true.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, can you advise the Committee of the benefits of the School Student Transport Scheme?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is some years since my kids used it, but from a personal perspective it certainly was an advantage when they were at school. The School Student Transport Scheme simply provides an opportunity for parents to have confidence in the transport arrangements for their children and to have the broader community support it. The New South Wales School Student Transport Scheme indeed is the most generous form of school transport in Australia. It brings substantial benefits to the people of the State by ensuring that all New South Wales School students who do not live near their school have access to education through the provision of free or subsidised travel.

Through the scheme, some 600,000 eligible students receive the benefit of free travel between their homes and school, irrespective of whether they travel on bus, train, ferry or, in some cases, long distance coach services. Where there is little or no public transport, parents may receive a subsidy towards the cost of using their own vehicles to transport their children, so that is an added benefit of the scheme. The New South Wales Government will spend approximately \$465 million this financial year on transporting children under the scheme.

The School Student Transport Scheme has simple distance-based eligibility tests. Primary school students, who are those in years 3 to 6, are eligible if they live a straight-line distance of more than 1.6 kilometres from their schools, or 2.3 kilometres or more by the most direct and practical walking route. For high school students, the distances are up to 2 kilometres radial or 2.9 kilometres walking. Infants in kindergarten and years 1 and 2 however are automatically eligible for subsidised travel. In situations where there is no public transport available for all or part of the journey to school, the private vehicle conveyance subsidy is available to assist parents to convey their children to the nearest bus stop or the school, provided that the walking distance is more than 1.6 kilometres. I am sure the Committee would agree that education is a key priority of the New South Wales Government. The School Student Transport Scheme provides necessary assistance to parents to ensure that all students are able to travel to the school of their choice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am a regular user of this particular service, but I would like you to provide some more information on the 131500 Transport Infoline website.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have become a quite frequent user of it. I have to tell you that I use the 131500 number in my capacity as a mystery shopper. My personal experience is that it is a very effective service. It provides an outstanding service to intending public transport passengers, not only through the website to which you have referred, but also through the 131500 number I mentioned.

By taking advantage of either of the services, the web-based or the call centre based service, passengers may freely access timetable information for services offered by CityRail, the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries and metropolitan private bus operators, as well as for major events and service disruption updates. The website features the popular trip planner, which helps passengers to plan a door-to-door trip for their entire journey. Using public transport and walking, it provides a breakdown for the time allocated for each leg of the trip, and full travel particulars are provided.

The Transport Infoline commenced in 1994 as a call centre alone, but the complementary website has been in use since its launch in 2000. The Transport Infoline website had more than 6.6 million unique website users in 2007-08, which is an average of 520,000 users each month. Website visits increased 35 per cent from 2006-07, with website downloads enjoying a similar percentage increase of 36 per cent. We recently upgraded the Transport Infoline website to make it more user-friendly and intuitive. We will continue to work hard to improve this passenger information service.

One thing that is most important is to continue to listen to people and get their feedback about these types of services to continually improve and enhance them and expand access as more and more people become comfortable using the Internet. It is not so long ago that using the Internet was the realm of relatively young people, but older people are beginning to feel more comfortable about using technology. The feedback I receive from my constituents, who three or four years ago were not comfortable using technology, is that they are now taking it up. That is perhaps reflected in some of the figures I have mentioned. That strong growth is important and will probably help to support the growing number of public transport users.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Would you be able to advise about the outcomes for the public transport system as a consequence of World Youth Day?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: World Youth Day was an extremely significant event for the city. It enhanced the international reputation of Sydney and New South Wales and, in my view, the success of the public transport system certainly added to that. In line with the absolute success of the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Sydney was indeed again on show as the host to World Youth Day. Interestingly, it is the largest youth event in the world. World Youth Day in Sydney this year coincided with the first visit to Australia of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. A great deal of preparation and hard work was committed to our public transport plans to meet that important transport task for World Youth Day.

I understand that more than 200,000 pilgrims visited Sydney and that approximately 500,000 people attended the single largest event, which was the final Mass said by Pope Benedict at Randwick Racecourse and telecast in Centennial Park. The transport task obviously was enormous, but I am pleased and very proud to say that our public transport systems excelled. Each day the city hosted hundreds of thousands of travellers, moving them from major train stations through to Barangaroo, East Darling Harbour and other parts of the city. To cater for the anticipated crowds, the Roads and Traffic Authority implemented special event clearways and road closures to deal with the huge number of visitors and security arrangements.

Special event clearways extended as far as North Ryde and Randwick to help traffic to avoid the central business district and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Registered World Youth Day participants were issued with a pilgrim passport, which included free travel on suburban trains and most services, both private and government. CityRail provided services in four peak periods during the day throughout the celebrations. For example, approximately 500,000 extra passenger journeys per day were experienced on the rail network. State Transit operated almost 17,000 additional trips during the World Youth Day celebrations, carrying an additional 820,000 passengers. Private bus operators also operated additional services during the period.

A package of central business district bus priority measures also was introduced to support road closures and complement additional rail and bus services. The four key elements to the CBD bus priority package were extended bus lanes in George Street and Elizabeth Street, new bus lanes and a new interchange in Park Street, a new bus layover in the domain car park forecourt and the reintroduction of east-bound buses in Druitt Street. The measures put in place worked well. Bus and rail services operated without major incident. The World Youth Day bus priority initiatives continue to benefit public transport users in the CBD. Checks show that Elizabeth Street buses were on average 38 per cent more reliable, George Street buses are on average 16 per cent more reliable and buses returning to Druitt Street were on average five minutes faster.

The Government has committed to hold a mobility forum, which will examine whether aspects of the World Youth Day transport initiatives can be permanently retained to improve mobility in and around the CBD. The co-location of key transport agency staff and transit security personnel in the joint operations centre at the Transport Management Centre also helped to coordinate this important transport task. Finally, and most importantly, I must extend congratulations to the thousands of workers and volunteers who went the extra mile during the week, as well as the everyday commuters who heeded the World Youth Day transport advice and gave their patience and understanding. Indeed, the transport effort would not have been pulled off without not only proper, detailed planning and changes to services and arrangements, but also the cooperation of different agencies, the effort of staff and the cooperation of travellers and pilgrims in particular.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What action is the Government taking to improve access to public transport for people with disabilities?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: You will agree—I anticipate that the whole of the Committee will agree—that providing equitable access to public transport is a key policy objective for public policy makers; it certainly is for the New South Wales Government. To meet this objective, barriers to access are being progressively removed to meet the travelling needs of people with disabilities and elderly people with mobility constraints. Young parents also fit into this category of needing improved, better services. The New South Wales Government is committed to the removal of barriers in line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and its disability standards for accessible public transport.

I am advised that physical accessibility at CityRail stations now exceeds the 25 per cent target set by the Disability Discrimination Act, with 108 of the 304 stations accessible. The Government has already invested more than \$465 million to upgrade these stations, with projected estimates indicating that 73 per cent of passengers will be using accessible stations by June 2009. More than \$25 million in funding has been allocated to the design, planning and construction of accessibility upgrades, known as easy access upgrades, across the CityRail network during the 2008-09 financial year as part of a \$127 million program. These easy access upgrades typically include lifts and/or ramps, closed-circuit television coverage and improved lighting, tactile ground surface indicators, accessible toilets and, in some cases, accessible car parking spaces.

All CityRail stations also have a portable platform ramp to assist passengers, including those who use wheelchairs or electric mobility scooters to board or alight from a train safely. Passengers who require the portable ramp simply need to advise staff at their departure station of their travel plans so that staff can be ready to assist. In the 2008-09 financial year RailCorp expects to complete works at Eastwood and North Sydney and begin construction on the Emu Plains, Lindfield and Burwood easy access upgrades. Indeed, tenders have just been called for the Burwood project, with the expectation of tenders being assessed and construction starting towards the end of the year.

Works undertaken at Auburn, Bulli, Belmore, Bowral, Carlton, Helensburgh, Lakemba, Meadowbank, Merrylands, Mortdale, North Wollongong, Penshurst, Seven Hills, Turrumurra and Werrington are now complete. A further \$28.6 million is being provided for the completion of the major upgrade at North Sydney station and \$6.5 million for the continuing upgrade of Hurstville station. A platform levelling program is also underway to make station platforms safe for people in wheelchairs. The New South Wales Government will keep working hard to upgrade existing train stations to ensure that passengers have safe, modern and accessible facilities.

Bus operators in the Sydney metropolitan and outer metropolitan areas are required to meet Disability Discrimination Act compliance timeframes as a condition of contract, and have provided assurances that they either meet or are working towards meeting the Disability Discrimination Act requirements for accessible services. I am advised that approximately 42 per cent of all buses in the Sydney metropolitan and outer metropolitan areas are accessible, and that 30 per cent of all routes are timetabled as accessible. The New South Wales Government is also purchasing more than 1,500 new buses over the next seven years for State Transit and private bus operators in the Sydney and greater metropolitan area. All these vehicles will be air-conditioned, wheelchair accessible and equipped with the latest driver and passenger safety systems. This plan to improve and expand Sydney's bus services is the biggest in Australian history.

As for ferry services and wharf infrastructure, I am advised that 46 per cent of commuter wharves in Sydney Harbour are currently accessible and that 100 per cent of Sydney Ferries vessels are accessible via the use of direct assistance from staff. Currently, it is not considered feasible to dispense with the use of direct assistance for persons using mobility devices as there will be times when the ramp angle will not be suitable for independent access due to tidal variations. Where possible, Sydney Ferries has installed large format on-site timetable information, including contact details for special needs and travel tips alongside redesigned large format network maps which provide service information, including wheelchair accessibility at wharves serviced by Sydney Ferries. This information is also available at the Sydney Ferries information office and all Sydney Ferries ticket offices. Referring to an earlier question, the transport information line, 131 500, and the website, www.131500.info, also provide information about services for people with mobility issues.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: What is the Government doing to improve access to buses in rural and regional New South Wales?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There has been a great deal of effort by the Ministry of Transport, working with the private sector. In April 2008 the Government approved the introduction of new contracting, funding and service planning arrangements for rural and regional bus services in New South Wales. New contracts are being rolled out over a 12-month period commencing in July 2008, with the majority of contracts expected to be issued by December 2008. The new bus contracting, funding and service planning arrangements provide improved sustainability of services, transparency in funding and reduced administration. The new arrangements also include the introduction of pensioner excursion tickets and concession arrangements in country towns.

The package also included a 7 per cent driver wage increase. That achieves bus driver wage parity across New South Wales and assists in the retention of drivers. The key aspects of the arrangements include plain English contracts with a seven-year term to improve certainty in the industry; removing perpetual rights and replacing them with a first right of refusal for a further contract; emphasising corrective action where appropriate under the contract, rather than enforcement that may threaten the continuity of services; financial viability reviews enabling early detection of any sustainability concerns—in that context, that is sustainability in an economic sense—stronger reporting performance and customer relations requirements; and consolidation of existing contracts where practicable.

The new arrangements incorporate regular service reviews requiring community consultation in service design and coordination with neighbouring operators. They will also ensure increased flexibility in service delivery and enable service changes at the Government's request. The Government is committed to improving transport outcomes for people in rural and regional areas. We need to continue to work cooperatively with local operators and the local communities that those operators serve.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Will you provide the Committee information on changes in bus patronage?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I can provide some detail, but off the top of my head it is increasing which is very pleasing. Patronage increases have been achieved in the metropolitan and outer metropolitan contract areas. Whilst some of the increased patronage can be attributed to rising fuel prices the positive effects of their new contracting arrangements should not be underestimated. As a result of the new bus contracts in metropolitan and outer metropolitan areas pensioners now have access to the \$2.50 pensioner excursion ticket. Consistent concession treatment for TAFE and university students is also being rolled out, and it is likely that this initiative has also resulted in increased patronage.

In addition, from 1 October the Government commenced a rollout of a new bus weekly ticket in the metropolitan area. Features of that new ticket include that it can be purchased on any day of the week. It can be purchased for seven consecutive days from date of issue, valid to midnight on the day of expiry, travel valid to and from the origin and destination for the bus route printed on the ticket, and the weekly ticket is discounted by 20 per cent compared with the cost of 10 single trips. The patronage impact of this initiative will be monitored very closely by the Ministry of Transport.

I am advised that under the metropolitan bus system contracts, patronage for the 2007-08 financial year was \$194 million. This represents an increase of 2.9 per cent over the previous financial year 2006-07. Patronage on bus services provided by private metropolitan bus system contract holders grew 6.6 per cent during the same period. I am sure that most people here will agree that this is a great result when it is considered that patronage had been declining in that particular area over the previous 15 years. Patronage growth has also been strong on Sydney central business district bus services. For instance, patronage on city-based services using the M2 have increased by 14.3 per cent and patronage on Forest Coach Lines routes, 270 and 194 services to the city, had a 6.6 per cent growth rate.

I am also advised that between November 2007 and June 2008 more than 1.075 million passenger journeys have been reported on the North West T-way. Not only have private bus operators performed well, I need also to point out that the State Transit Authority contracted services in Sydney reported an increase of 2 per cent during the 2007-08 financial year when compared with 2006-07.

CHAIR: That is very interesting but time has expired. The Committee is happy if you want to put the rest of the written answer on the record. We can get back to that later if you would like to.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will just note that the Committee is not prepared to celebrate the increase in bus patronage but I certainly do.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I would say we were not celebrating, Minister, but again I want to ask a question in relation to the north-west heavy rail link. Earlier you said we should put information to you in relation to the costings for the heavy rail link into the north west because you could not provide any costings to us. I have that information and I will read it for you and then I will pass it to you. I have a briefing note from the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation, dated 9 May 2006. It is addressed to the Hon. John Watkins, Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport from Chris Lock the chief executive officer at the time. The subject is the accelerated completion of the north-west rail link and Redfern to Chatswood rail link. It says by way of background, on 9 June 2005 the Premier of New South Wales announced that the Government would invest \$8 billion over the next 15 years to develop the metropolitan rail expansion program.

The metropolitan rail expansion program consists of three projects. Firstly, the south-west rail link. Secondly, the Redfern to Chatswood rail link and, thirdly the north-west rail link. Minister there are rail links that comprised the \$8 billion and I am informed that the petitioning between those three projects is: \$3 billion was allocated for the north-west heavy rail link; \$4 billion for the Redfern to Chatswood rail link; and \$1 billion for the south-west rail link. I misled you when I suggested it was something in order of half of the proposed costs of the North West Metro. In fact, it is a quarter of the cost of the North West Metro. I will pass the briefing note to you so you can refer to it. It is important that you are fully briefed on these matters by your own department. I ask you again in relation your case that you put this morning against the north-west heavy rail link, I put it to you that it is questionable at best Minister. You have mentioned, if I may just put that to you, the operational reasons which I have indicated are flimsy at best. The cost differential, is it not, in favour of the heavy rail link is overwhelming? Is it not a quarter of the cost Minister of the North West Metro?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I indicated if the Committee was able to provide this information I will come back with detailed advice around it, and I will do that. It is important to point out that this document is dated May 2006 and there would be cost escalations since then. I do have some advice from the Office of the Coordinator General that the north-west heavy rail line is approximately \$4.5 billion to \$7.5 billion. It does need, under that original heavy rail link, a second harbour crossing and that is approximately \$6 billion. So if you take the midpoint between the \$4.5 billion and the \$7.5 billion, and add it to the \$6 billion, you have about a \$12 billion project.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is that second harbour crossing part of the central business district rail link, which has been axed by your Government?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: If you want to build your policy position—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: We just want to know your policy position, Minister, not the Coalition's.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The very first question was about the Coalition's policy position and you have followed the same line of questioning.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, just answer the question.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will check the transcript.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The point is the central business district rail link has been axed by your Government. That is the second harbour crossing to which you are referring, is it not?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The understanding that I have is that if you want to build and run the north-west heavy rail project you have to build a second harbour crossing. I will stand corrected on that but that is my understanding. So if that is the case you have got to factor in the cost of a second harbour crossing.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If we going to compare apples with apples, we must compare the north-west heavy rail link costing—a costing which you have just given us but you could not give the Committee previously, which is worth noting—of \$4.5 billion to \$7.5 billion. We suddenly have a costing of approximately \$4.5 billion for a heavy rail link to the north west. In that regard you must compare it to the North West Metro. which is also not envisaged to have a second harbour crossing. So in that regard, comparing apples

with apples, \$12 billion versus \$4.5 billion which is really a factor of three in favour of the north-west heavy rail link, based on your own figures?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not going to base any answers on your calculations. I have indicated that I will take on notice and provide the accurate information, and that is what I will do.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I think you are being rather obstructionist; all I am asking you is to level with the Committee, stop being loose with the truth and deal with the facts of this matter and put to the Committee your response so that the people of the north-west can get the facts. That is what the Committee wants to know.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: That is not a question to the Minister; it is a statement. We should be confining questions to the Minister in this Committee.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: By all means. Have the people in the north-west—

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Point of order: The Minister has already said he will provide an answer on notice and that should be sufficient.

CHAIR: I think the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox has got another question.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Have not the people of the north west suffered long enough under your Government for 10 long years with promise after promise to fix their public transport issues by building a north-west rail link? Has your Government consistently failed to deliver them anything except empty promises?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will take that as a rhetorical political statement, which is clearly what it is.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Take it as a question, Minister, and do your best to answer it.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is clearly a rhetorical political statement.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is clearly a question that you can answer, Minister.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: The question, such as it was, has been answered.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, your competence—or lack thereof—is pretty much on display today.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am totally intimidated by that comment.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I would love to hear a straight answer from you, Minister.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Well, I—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I thought we were entering a new era of transparency and accountability?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Point of order: Mr Mason-Cox has now interrupted the Minister on several occasions. He is not asking any questions; he is making long political statements. I would ask that he be confined to asking questions of the Minister that are relevant.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: To the point of order: The problem is I am getting no answers from the Minister. He refuses to answer the questions I am putting to him except to say, "I don't know, I will take it on notice", and really, for any Minister of this Government, that is just not good enough.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Further to the point of order: You may not like the answers you are getting, but you are getting the answers to your questions. You cannot say the Minister is not answering the questions. You want accurate information and he has undertaken to take that on notice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: To the point of order: I asked the Minister the question when is he going to give a straight answer to the people in the north-west of Sydney and he said in answer to that question, "That is a rhetorical statement". That is not an answer to a question.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It is a rhetorical statement. He has given you straight answers; you just don't like the answers.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The question was very clear: What is he going to do to fix the problems of north-west Sydney? Rhetorical statements are not what I am making. It is a valid question and I think the people of north-west Sydney deserve to have it answered.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It is not a question, and you know very well it is not a question.

CHAIR: I think I will resolve this by asking a further question of the Minister myself. In the deliberations leading to the mini-budget, are you plumping for the North West Metro to be in the mini-budget or out of it?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What I am arguing for is an enhancement of the public transport effort in New South Wales.

CHAIR: Which may or may not include the North West Metro?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Government will announce its policy position on its capital program in the mini-budget.

CHAIR: But as the transport Minister you must have a position going into the mini-budget on this huge project. Do you have a position?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I have just answered, and answered previously, I am arguing the process and debating the process of preparation of the mini-budget for enhanced public transport across New South Wales.

CHAIR: So you are not specifically pushing for the North West Metro to be retained on that list of items to go ahead in the mini budget?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: You can try as hard as you wish, but you are not going to put words into my mouth in an attempt to get a policy position out of this process. The Government's policy position will come out when the mini-budget is announced. The Premier has made that clear publicly; I have made it clear publicly and I will repeat it here. The capital projects across Government are for consideration as part of the preparation of the mini-budget.

CHAIR: And the transport Minister does not have a position on the North West Metro?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That is not the case. What I have said is that as part of the preparation of the mini-budget I will be arguing for improved public transport services across the State.

CHAIR: But not specifically to the north-west sector?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Again, you can try as many times as you like to put words into my mouth, to interpret, to misinterpret. The facts are that the Government is reviewing its capital program and the outcome of that review will be announced as part of the mini-budget.

CHAIR: In accordance with my previous statement, we will have a break for 10 minutes.

[Short adjournment]

CHAIR: Returning to the North West Metro, can you advise the Committee how much money has been spent on advertising in relation to that project, including television, radio and print?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: To ensure accuracy I will take that on notice.

CHAIR: So you do not have any idea how much has been spent so far on advertising?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Again, to ensure accuracy I will take it on notice.

CHAIR: It will be interesting to see whether such expenditure is worthwhile if the whole project gets junked on 11 November, will it not?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Again, the Government will make a policy announcement about this project as part of the mini-budget.

CHAIR: Can you advise the Committee whether any money is being spent at the moment on the North West Metro project and, if so, can you give us a breakdown of how much?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In my earlier answer I indicated that work is underway. There is planning work as part of the project definition phase and there has been some work on geotechnical core sampling and those sorts of things. I have made that point publicly and I am happy to repeat it here. Work is proceeding on planning and is part of what is called the project definition phase. That work is being used to inform the Government's decision-making on the project as part of the mini-budget process.

CHAIR: Can you give us an estimate of how much is being spent on a monthly basis?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As part of the 2008-09 budget there has been an allocation of \$106 million with an additional \$132 million for property acquisition between Rouse Hill and Epping.

CHAIR: Have any of those property acquisitions gone ahead?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not yet have an update on whether they have settled but I will get confirmation by way of taking it on notice.

CHAIR: Can you give us an indication of how many people are employed on the project at the moment, directly or indirectly?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The work is being done through the Office of the Coordinator General. I have to search my memory but I think there are in the order of 30 to 50 employees. I will stand corrected on that.

CHAIR: Is that all up, including contractors?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have in my mind from a previous discussion that there are in the order of 30 to 50, but I will confirm that so it is accurate. As I said, I will stand corrected on that.

CHAIR: Your predecessor was fond of telling the Committee that he liked to use public transport every working day. Do you use public transport every working day?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No I do not. I have said publicly that I am a frequent user of public transport and that remains the case since my appointment as Minister for Transport and will remain the case in the future. I have not traditionally been a daily user of public transport and I will not be committing to being a daily user of public transport.

CHAIR: Why do you not want to use public transport every working day?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is not that I do not want to; it does not always suit my travel patterns. I am not going to suddenly become someone I am not just to suit some political whim that you might have.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It will not get you where you want to be on time reliably. Is that the problem, Minister?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That is not the case.

CHAIR: Which rail line do you use most often?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Most often I would use the South Coast line as someone who commutes from Wollongong to Sydney.

CHAIR: What about using the buses? Which bus route would you use more often than others?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I use bus routes in the CBD. I use the Dion's bus route along the Princes Highway between Woonona and Corrimal and between Corrimal and Wollongong. I use State Transit Authority [STA] buses in Sydney.

CHAIR: Which STA bus route do you use in Sydney?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Some routes in the CBD. I take some travel journeys in the CBD by bus.

CHAIR: Do you know which route numbers they are?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No, I do not. They are so good that when they pull up at the bus stop I get on and I get off at the end of the journey.

CHAIR: What about the ferries? Do you use the ferries and, if so, which ones?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not use the ferries as a commuter but I use the ferries as a tourist.

CHAIR: As a tourist?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I use the ferries for recreational use from time to time but I do not have a commuter use for them.

CHAIR: Have you been out on the ferries since you became Minister to have a look at how they operate?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have had a number of discussions with people from Ferries.

CHAIR: But you have not been on a ferry?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have not been on a ferry since I became the Minister.

CHAIR: Was there a formal handover between you and Mr Watkins when you became Minister for Transport?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No.

CHAIR: Have you had a meeting with Mr Watkins to discuss the portfolio?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have had discussions with Mr Watkins but to my knowledge there was no formal handover.

CHAIR: Have you met Mr Watkins face to face since you have been transport Minister?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have.

CHAIR: Did he hand on to you any advice about transport matters?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: We had a broad-ranging private discussion about it, absolutely.

CHAIR: Can you share with the Committee the main message that he gave to you for dealing with the portfolio?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The message he gave me was that a lot of dedicated people make a big effort to deliver public transport solutions for Sydney and that those people work hard and continuously to do so. I have observed that and I believe that to be the case. My observation tells me that there is a need, as there is in any large organisation, for continuous improvement. I will focus on and seek to deliver those improvements.

CHAIR: Going back for a moment to the North West Metro, you mentioned the \$106 million allocation in the current budget. On what has that been spent so far and how much of it has been spent?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will get those details. As I indicated, it has been spent on salaries. There are some geotechnical people in the field who are employed on a contract basis, so there have been some salaries for contractors and consultants' costs.

CHAIR: And possibly some land acquisition?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Land acquisition comes out of a separate amount of \$132 million. As I indicated, \$106 has been allocated for planning and land acquisitions and \$132 million has been allocated this financial year for the Rouse Hill to Epping route.

CHAIR: One of the Government's themes since the radical changes in the Cabinet relates to the of transparency of its affairs. Can you explain why the Ministry of Transport and other transport agencies have refused to provide access through freedom of information processes to matters of critical public interest?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As you would appreciate, under the freedom of information legislation the Minister gives no directions one way or the other in regard to freedom of information applications. That is the answer that I give to your question to me.

CHAIR: I will return to that later.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, I return to the issue of accessibility. As 16 per cent of Marrickville residents live with a disability—and that percentage does not include all the elderly, the sick, pregnant women and people with strollers—could you tell us why none of the 12 stations in Marrickville has disability access?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Earlier I gave quite a comprehensive answer relating to improving easy access programs. I will provide information to you relating to specific plans for the Marrickville program.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I want to ask specific questions about that issue as I expected you to have information available. I hope that you have some information available. Ms Tebbutt, the local member, nominated Newtown as the first station to achieve disability access.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Planning is underway to identify the best way of improving access for Newtown. That planning is underway.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The promise was that it would be delivered by 2011, but there is no concept plan. Sydenham station, which was not due to have its access upgraded until 2012, has already moved past that stage and now has a finalising option. The local committee has already seen the access plans. Why is Sydenham station, which is not due until 2012, so far ahead of Newtown station? What is the problem?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I can only repeat that planning is underway for Newtown and planning is underway in a number of locations. I am not aware of the specifics relating to Newtown, but often there is a need to negotiate with other organisations because of the public domain and access might have to be integrated with work that a local council wants to do. I am not saying that that is the case at Newtown; I am just giving that as an example. I reiterate that Newtown is on the program and planning for it is underway.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Does the hold up relate to where the lift will be put? There is a tram-shed site on the south side of the station and I think that is why many people thought you would be able to get on with this project. Are you under pressure from developers to access that land?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: We always need to look at options when determining where to put infrastructure at a railway station. I know from experience as a local member, before being appointed as Minister for Transport, that easy access projects are being undertaken at stations in my electorate. Options are

available. A whole range of things have to be taken into account, for example, where you put the infrastructure and how it might impact on pedestrian flows on the platform. Again, that is a general statement. It is important to consider different locations and the way in which those services are delivered at a particular location, for example, Newtown. I had no knowledge that there was any pressure from a third party at Newtown.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yesterday I received some complaints about a sniffer dog operation at Newton rail station. Obviously, I appreciate that that falls under your previous portfolio. What I am interested in is whether there are any protocols in place between the police and departments that fall within your responsibilities that require the police to inform station staff when they will be conducting these searches?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The police and rail security, for example, the transit officers, work closely together. We have seen Operation Vision 1, Operation Vision 2, Operation Vision 3 and now we are up to Operation Vision 4; those operations have seen the transit officers and the police work very closely together. They are about enhancing and improving security of the rail network, and cracking down on criminal behaviour on the rail network. Because the statistics are kept by police, I just do not have them in front of me, but I recollect from my previous portfolio that those vision operations were extremely successful in issuing fines, making arrests—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I did not want a police answer; I was actually after a safety answer for passengers because the complaints were that all the passengers exiting Newtown station at around 5.30 p.m. were filed past eight police. As I think you would be aware, crowding on Newtown railway station has been a serious problem and specific measures have been taken to try to separate people through the painting of white lines on the platform. People believed this was a backward step in that minimal people were caught, which we know is the case with sniffer dogs, and also it was a real serious setback for the safety of people on the station because of the funnelling that occurred.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Questions about policing operations clearly should be directed to police.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: They will be, but you are saying that apart from talking to transit officers there are no protocols in place. You are not saying, "This station is overcrowded, move your operation down there" or something like that. Are you proactive in looking after your passengers when it comes to police operations on your stations?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What I know is that overwhelmingly passengers want a safe and secure journey. I make no apologies in this portfolio for having transit officers and police work together, having collected intelligence, to determine where they might best deploy their resources to ensure the security of the network.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Moving to the Maldon to Dombarton rail line, do you support its completion?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do, and I have said that very publicly.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you support it as both a freight and passenger line?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am pleased this question has been asked about the Maldon to Dombarton rail line because I think it is important to point out that it was commenced under a previous Labor Government to carry coal from the western coalfields to Port Kembla. One of the first decisions of the Greiner Government in 1988 was to cancel the line and pay huge compensation to contractors. But let us be clear, the current Government has maintained the corridor to ensure that if there is a business case, the project can be revived. To date there has not—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So does that mean you only support it for freight; you do not support it for passengers?

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Point of order. Let the Minister give his answer. He is answering the question.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: No. The Minister now is about to take up heaps of my time. I do not have much.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: You asked the question. You have to let the Minister answer it.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: To date there has not been a business case that can stack up to use the proposed line for coal from western coalfields or for any other product to or from the port of Port Kembla, bearing in mind that the Moss Vale line remains in use for some freight movements. Another factor to bear in mind is that in 2003 the Commonwealth-owned Australian Rail Track Corporation [ARTC] agreed to lease and operate for 60 years a section of the interstate rail network that passes through New South Wales. It is important to point out, therefore, that if the Maldon to Dombarton rail line were to be built today as a freight link, it would link to sections of the rail network operated by the Commonwealth Government's ARTC. Therefore, decisions in relation to its future construction are a matter for the Federal Government. To this end, it is well known that as a pre-election commitment the Rudd Government committed \$300,000 to a pre-feasibility study of the Maldon to Dombarton line. I recall that this year's Commonwealth budget allocated this money.

It is my understanding that the pre-feasibility study has not yet commenced, but it is intended to investigate the current and future rail freight transport needs along the line, the capacity of existing networks to meet demand and the construction requirements to complete the line to service future demands. For me as a local member, as the Minister for the Illawarra or as the Minister for Transport, the political task would be very easy if someone waved a magic wand and made that money available. However, the policy and funding realities do not align with the populist political wish. For this portfolio I will make the tough policy and budgetary decisions on issues such as these. Nevertheless, the Government remains prepared and, indeed, is assisting the Commonwealth to ensure the corridor remains by supporting the pre-feasibility study and by arranging for the Port Kembla Port Corporation to manage the contract of the \$300,000 consultancy.

I would have thought that at a budget estimates committee a question such as this would support the notion that governments make decisions on projects based on fact rather than emotion. Notwithstanding that, the decision to construct a rail freight line in New South Wales rests with the Commonwealth's ARTC. I have not seen any information that would suggest there is a passenger load for such a route.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You would be aware that a forum organised by Arthur Rorris from the South Coast Labour Council on infrastructure projects for the Illawarra discussed the Maldon to Dombarton rail line and that participants including local Federal members of Parliament recommended that the Maldon to Dombarton rail line project be included in the New South Wales project list to be submitted to Infrastructure Australia. It was disappointing to see that 8 out of 10 of those projects are motorway projects and that the Maldon to Dombarton project was not included as a freight and passenger line. Considering that forum was held in your area, the strong support from your colleagues and that you clearly support this rail line, did you advocate to the Premier that the Maldon to Dombarton rail line deserves support by Infrastructure Australia?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I understand it, the list of projects submitted by the New South Wales Government were projects for which the New South Wales Government would have responsibility. As I just pointed out, as a freight link the Maldon to Dombarton line would be a Commonwealth responsibility. So, in arguing for a share—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: But you know that Infrastructure Australia is not just about New South Wales projects controlled by New South Wales; it is about projects within New South Wales, irrespective of whether it is looked after by the Feds or the State?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I can only repeat my previous answer as to my understanding that the list was about projects that the New South Wales Government would be involved in constructing.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is the line from Newcastle to central station still the poorest performer of punctuality of all inner-city lines?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I think you are talking about the northern line?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The line to Ryde, is it?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The line from central to Newcastle.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Via Ryde.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Are you talking about the northern line?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes. Your figures have shown that it is the poorest performer in on-time arrival. Is that still the case? Do the latest figures show that—I do not have them?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The northern line has had some disruptions to its service because of the construction of the Epping to Chatswood link—that is the advice I have had—and that has impacted on its reliability. Of course, there will be improvements to northern line services, as I understand, once the Epping to Chatswood line is completed and fully operational.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you are saying that the cause of the delays is because of that new rail—

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Some of them.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is it true that the other causes are because of breakdowns to freight rail? The report at the time put the responsibility onto freight.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will ask Mr Mason to add to that.

Mr MASON: On the northern line trains that originate from Hornsby would go down the North Shore, across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, through the central business district [CBD], out the inner west and then up the northern line. That is a complete loop. The trains have impact as they come through the central business district. We have 27 trains in 90 minutes coming through, across the bridge and then through the central business district. They are heavily affected by patronage in Wynyard, Town Hall and Central, which is why we have been doing what we call the dwell-time trials at those central business district stations. As the Minister says, there has been a small impact from the Epping commissioning works. We lost one platform, which gave us less flexibility, and freight does go up that line, but that would not be a significant part of the performance.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: In a report in May, freight was targeted as the main problem. An Australian Rail Track Corporation [ARTC] spokesperson at that time said he was unaware of the problem and that CityRail had not raised its concerns with the ARTC. Are you saying that you would have identified the delays were not caused by freight line movements, or was it that you just failed to sit down and talk to the Australian Rail Track Corporation about the problem?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: First and foremost, can you tell us what the report is?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: It was a report that was carried in the *Newcastle Herald* on 23 May, and they are figures we picked up from some of your websites. I want the latest detail. I really want clarification because the impression you are giving is that delays due to freight rail are minimal coming to Newcastle.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In terms of the report in the newspaper you are quoting from, I am seeking to understand who made the quotes. Was it again just in the body of the report, or is it a quote from somebody?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: They are quoting. It is not stated who the Australian Rail Track Corporation spokesperson is.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No, but as I understand it, you also said that the article says that somebody said it is because of freight.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: No. The article attributes it to freight.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: So it is not attributed to RailCorp or City Rail?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As I said, it is a report. The freight one comes up in June, and it was from RailCorp:

RailCorp figures show peak hour CityRail passengers services on the Newcastle to Central Coast line have been delayed because of engine failures, overloading and defective break gear on freight trains.

The article refers to figures from RailCorp. I am just trying to ascertain if it is freight, and if you have sat down with the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

Mr MASON: It sounds, from the way you have clarified that article, as though you are referring to the Central Coast rather than the Northern Line. The Central Coast going up to Newcastle has freight trains coming down there. Certainly if one freight train fails, the morning peak or the afternoon peak can be heavily affected—around the Hawkesbury River and Cowan Bank, for instance—but it has nothing to do with the Australian Rail Track Corporation because they are not responsible for that part of the infrastructure. They are responsible for the Hunter line.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: What you are saying is that it could be freight because the Australian Rail Track Corporation does not look after that part of the line, and you do not have to work it out with them.

Mr MASON: There will be no need for us to talk to the ARTC about freight trains breaking down on the intercity line from Newcastle to Sydney.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You take responsibility for those trains breaking down on your line, even if they are freight trains?

Mr MASON: We certainly do not take responsibility for freight trains breaking down.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is important to point out—I am happy for Mr Mason to nudge me, or bludgeon me, to correct me if I am wrong—that the Australian Rail Track Corporation is responsible for freight lines. Freight trains are operated not by RailCorp but by private sector freight operators. On the line we are talking about, between the Central Coast and Hornsby, for the sake of narrowing it down a little, the Australian Rail Track Corporation does not own and operate that line; RailCorp does that. The Australian Rail Track Corporation, on my understanding, does not run any trains. They run lines, but not that one. They do not run any trains. If a freight train breaks down on the length of line we are talking about, the operator of that freight train is the person to whom commuters should express their angst, as opposed to RailCorp.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: That is what I am trying to ascertain. The operators are responsible because it is the locomotive and rolling stock. What we are doing about that? It appears that rail freight delays are causing passengers heading to the Central Coast and Newcastle lengthy delays. Are you having discussions with these operators? What are you doing so that they do not break down so often?

Mr MASON: We certainly have regular discussions with all the major freight train companies who operate on a network and endeavour to make sure that they bring in extra locomotives, if needs be. In very damp weather we insist on extra locomotives, or we would prevent the trains coming through Sydney if there was going to be very heavy rainfall, which means the trains would be slowed.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As well as having the discussions, what actual changes have been made operationally so that the difficulties faced by the rail passengers in the Hunter and the Central Coast can be reduced? What has changed?

Mr MASON: We are talking to the freight companies and we make sure the trains are on par as they come through the Sydney metropolitan area. That is in the very early morning, before the morning peak. If a train is not running to time, we would prevent that train coming through so that it does not disrupt passengers coming to Sydney in the morning. We insist on certain freight companies having extra locomotives to make sure they can pull up things like the Cowan Bank in wet weather. They are the sorts of discussions we have been having with freight companies.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: What investments are you making to improve reliability and running time of Sydney Ferries?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Take that on notice if you like, Minister.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: No, I would like to hear an answer.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Sydney Ferries has undertaken a range of measures to improve on-time running and reliability as well as customer service and communication with its commuters. For example, Sydney Ferries has launched a wide-ranging internal change program called Ferries 2010, which is designed to deliver improvements to work practices to improve safety, service and performance. Sydney Ferries has also

made significant improvements with its timetables integration. It has also implemented a range of improvements to signage and customer information. Sydney Ferries has also updated its website to ensure that passenger information is ready and available in line with National Disability Services Standards for accessible public transport.

Sydney Ferries also has put in place customer service officers who have been assigned to work alongside group control staff in peak periods to advise passengers of emerging cancellations and delays. Indeed, I am pleased to inform the Committee that Sydney Ferries is also piloting a new workplace communication course to ensure effective communication between operational and front-line staff. It is a comprehensive package in Sydney Ferries to focus on passenger services, achieve a sense of continuous improvement, develop the interface, improve communications and achieve better outcomes for its passengers.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Safety on the harbour is a very important issue. What measures have been taken by Sydney Ferries to improve safety on the harbour?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As you appreciate, safety generally is important, but it is of particular importance and focus by Sydney Ferries. The 2008-09 capital budget is \$21.19 million and the major periodic maintenance budget is \$9.144 million. Both figures have been approved by Treasury and provide for a number of projects and initiatives that are designed to improve safety and service reliability.

A very important safety investment is the project that has had funds allocated in the 2008-09 budget to purchase forward-looking infrared navigational aids. They will help ferry masters to see smaller vessels during darkness or fog. This technology effectively can turn night into day for people who are operating ferries. It will mean that ferry drivers will be able to see small vessels. What we have noticed is the increasing use of the harbour by people in kayaks and small tinnies. As well, although not so much in ferry lanes I suppose, many more people are starting to row on the harbour. This particular project of forward-looking infrared uses navigational equipment to give the master of a ferry greater information and simply—as it has been explained to me and I have seen it in context—turns night into day.

Sydney Ferries is also in the process of investing \$3.2 million in a new ferry operations and customer information system. This will see visual displays installed at wharves alongside audio equipment, which will see commuters get swift, up-to-date information about the estimated time of arrival of ferries. Sydney Ferries is also investing \$440,000 for the upgrade of closed-circuit television [CCTV] on wharf infrastructure. This will see the number of CCTV cameras boosted from 189 to 284—an increase of cameras on wharves that will grow by up to 50 per cent. In addition, a further investment of \$578,000 is being allocated for the Circular Quay jetty No. 3 operations control room and office upgrade. Sydney Ferries is also spending \$314,000 on gangway repairs and replacement.

Some other recent safety initiatives have included Sydney Ferries' self-imposed maximum speed limit of 15 knots for its vessels in the vicinity of the Sydney Harbour Bridge—this significant safety initiative was subsequently adopted by maritime regulators and is now mandatory for all vessels—new crew resource management training, which is in place to boost emergency management skills of vessel-based staff; the ongoing participation of masters in a high-speed vessel training program at the Australian Maritime College to reinforce legislative responsibilities and the effective use of radar; new fleet standard monitoring arrangements to improve safety and service standards; and the progressive installation of black box data recorders on all vessels.

It is important to point out that the installation of black box recorders is being done progressively as vessels go in for their major maintenance overhaul, rather than disrupting services by taking the ferries out of service. It is being done in a coordinated and planned way, as is the overall package of investment being done in a planned and coordinated way so that safety and reliability outcomes can come at the same time as ensuring that these activities do not disrupt the normal services of Sydney Ferries.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How successful has the introduction of the 14-day payday rail ticket been?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: This is another initiative to try to improve the outcome for passengers. The 14-day rail pass was launched on 21 May 2008 as a trial to reduce queues and alleviate congestion at selected station ticket windows. The ticket trial was initially implemented at 25 priority stations where Monday morning ticket queues were known to be the longest. The initial trial proved successful, with 22,000 tickets sold in the

five weeks to 26 June. As a result, ticket queues at those hot spot stations were reduced. In response to customer demand, the 14-day ticket trial was extended to 190 stations across the network on 26 June; all stations equipped with ticket windows were able to sell this product. Since that time more than 120,000 tickets have been sold.

More than 18,000 tickets on average are now sold each fortnight. This means that 9,000 fewer customers are queuing for tickets each week. In addition, more than 30 per cent of tickets are sold on Wednesdays or Thursdays, suggesting that the payday concept—the Hon. Penny Sharpe referred to this in the question—of the fortnightly ticket is also reducing Monday morning queues by spreading more purchases through the week. Sales of the 14-day ticket equate to a 12.5 per cent conversion rate of all rail pass customers on average. At certain stations switching from the seven-day rail pass to the 14-day product has been significantly higher, with more than 20 per cent being achieved at all CBD stations and major centres such as Bondi Junction, Hornsby, Chatswood, Sutherland and North Sydney.

A flow-on benefit of the 14-day ticket campaign has been increased awareness of the discounts offered by all rail passes relative to daily fares. Since June sales of rail passes have grown at a faster rate than daily singles and returns, suggesting that the 14-day ticket may have contributed to further reduced queues in this way. This initiative has come from the sense of continuous improvement that I have referred to a few times and it is paying dividends in terms of reducing queues as more and more people use the rail network for their journey to work.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you advise the Committee of the results of the latest CityRail customer service conducted by the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator [ITSRR] is playing an important role with regard to safety and reliability. This survey is helpful. The 2008 survey, which was the fifth annual survey undertaken by ITSRR, involved random telephone interviews conducted between May and July this year, with 2,759 train users from suburban Sydney and regional areas covered by CityRail train services, such as the Central Coast, the Blue Mountains, Wollongong and Southern Highlands. The questions covered 37 separate aspects of service, including crowding, journey time, punctuality, cleanliness and information. The survey found that the best aspects of service related to the provision of information, the CityRail website and the transport information line that we talked about earlier.

It is pleasing to note the improvement in the survey results about the knowledge and attitude of CityRail front-line staff. Over the past 12 months there were statistically significant improvements in meeting customer expectations for punctuality—up from 68 per cent of customers whose expectations were met in 2007 to 73 per cent of customers whose expectations were met in 2008. Obviously there is more work to do but it is pleasing to see that 5 per cent lift in customer expectations being met with regard to punctuality. Another area where there was a statistically significant improvement was in staff visibility on platforms in the evenings—up from 51 per cent to 56 per cent in meeting customer expectations. Station information on arrival and departure times was up from 79 per cent to 84 per cent. That follows investment in infrastructure and on-station displays. Again, that is a pleasing statistical improvement and a continuous improvement but, as always, more work needs to be done.

Quality of information about delays and cancellations was up from 68 per cent to 74 per cent and clarity of announcements on the platform was up from 64 per cent to 69 per cent. The areas where there has been a reduction in customer expectations were the removal of graffiti, which was down from 62 per cent of customers whose expectations were met in 2007 to 58 per cent in 2008, and directional signage at station, which was down from 85 per cent to 82 per cent. In four years since the survey was conducted there have been improvements. I take the opportunity to thank front-line staff who have been putting in a great effort to improve information to customers.

The first survey in 2004 found that the aspects of train services with the lowest proportions of customers whose expectations were met were punctuality, 44 per cent; delays and cancellations, 41 per cent; and crowding in trains, 38 per cent. This year the corresponding results show a real improvement; 73 per cent of customers say their expectations about punctuality are being met, 66 per cent of customers expectations are being met in relation to delays and cancellations, and crowding is at 35 per cent.

While there have been substantial improvements in 2004 with respect to punctuality and delays in cancellations the aspect of greatest concern in 2008 is crowding in trains at peak times. In recent years CityRail has been seeing significant patronage growth. I am advised that CityRail patronage in 2007-08 was \$296 million

passenger journeys, an increase of 5.2 per cent compared to 2006-07. But the important point about these surveys is that it helps us know where improvements need to be made, and there is no doubt that we need to deliver more for CityRail customers. The work done by the Independent Safety and Reliability Regulator provides us with information we need to help focus on the job.

In terms of creating capacity, it is important to point out that additional services have been added, particularly to the western line in the p.m. peak, which has been a particular issue. I think that we can look forward with continued effort, as I have said a few times, continuous improvement to some of these survey results continuing to improve in the future.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: As a former bus conductor Minister would you tell the committee about the latest metro buses that started operating on the Sydney bus network?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Metro buses are a new concept. They introduce entirely new services on a new route through the city, Kingsford to Leichhardt. The service commenced last Sunday. Thirteen vehicles have been allocated to the service in different configurations. Those 13 vehicles are part of a 12 months trial to establish, following consultation with passengers and drivers, the best configuration to provide this particular level of service. It provides a 10 minute service in the a.m. and p.m. peak, a 15 minute service during non-peak periods on week days and a 20 minute service on weekends. It does not run to a timetable. It continues along that route.

What is important for me is that it links the central business district to the suburban locations via Park Street and certainly links the major hub of Central Railway Station, and also significant transport generators, being the University of Sydney, the University of Technology, Sydney, and the University of New South Wales that are located along the route. There is an opportunity for students at those universities to have a frequent service to and from university. Students who travel to the University of New South Wales from the western suburbs, for example, need to change from a train and this frequency of service will make that easier. These are high-capacity and high-frequency services, an entirely new service on that particular link.

At the end of the trial, following consultation with drivers and passengers, I would anticipate standardising the type of vehicle that is used on such a service and look at options to expand similar services in other parts of the Sydney. The high-capacity buses on this route include two three-door Volvo bendy buses to two-door Volvo bendy buses and one two-door Scania long bus, along with some more standard type of vehicles. Each of these five high-capacity buses has a different layout, as I indicated, and the trial will determine which is the best way to carry this out. The use of these high-capacity metro buses is a cost efficient option for meeting current and future demand on heavily patronised routes to and from Sydney's central business district at a time of exceptional growth in patronage demand. I need to point out that the metro bus is a concept for higher demand short trips.

New route 10 buses will travel along the high-volume corridors of Parramatta Road, Anzac Parade via the new mid-city transport interchange precinct in the city. The metro buses are in addition to current timetabled services and, therefore, offer additional capacity on those two major road corridors. The new route boosts transport services to some of Sydney's major shopping areas, transport hubs, entertainment and sporting venues and to those universities I have already indicated. Of course, in the precinct and in the corridor also is the University of Notre Dame Australia. Because of the regularity and frequency of the service, customers do not require a printed timetable. The new metro bus service aims to maximise passenger comfort and safety as the buses are all wheelchair accessible, airconditioned and, importantly, feature digital closed circuit television for enhanced security. The new metro buses feature the latest in environmental technology, and run on clean and cost efficient fuel.

During the trial State Transit will evaluate the effectiveness of the service and that will include an evaluation of the different models of buses I indicated, their varying seating arrangements, and standing room capacity, as well as the operational effectiveness of the service and customer response. Early indications and feedback from customers—it is very early and very anecdotal, given that services only commenced last Sunday—is that there is a welcoming of this new initiative and, importantly, this new capacity.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Would you provide the committee with an update on the Epping to Chatswood rail line?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Epping to Chatswood is the single largest infrastructure project under construction in New South Wales. It has an estimated cost of \$2.35 billion and will put approximately 12,000 extra people a day on the CityRail network. There is no doubt that as a modern transport option it will be a welcome addition to the commuters of Sydney, as it will bring extra capacity onto the network. The Epping to Chatswood link is about reducing pressure on the neighbouring lines, and increasing reliability and capacity. I can inform the committee that the Epping to Chatswood rail link will provide capacity on the western line, increased capacity going into the central business district and, most importantly, the new rail link will take rail services to new parts of Sydney.

CHAIR: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Government has allocated \$148.3 million to the project in the 2008-09 budget and we have seen the project forging ahead and now nearing completion.

CHAIR: Will the Minister put the remainder of that answer on the record? We need to move to the next round of questions.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: He has finished other answers to questions from members that have gone over time. The Epping to Chatswood rail line update is very important.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Tunnel construction and track line—

CHAIR: Order!

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: are complete. Overhead wiring and signalling system construction are now well advanced. Extensive track work was carried out on the rail link over the long weekend a couple of weeks back, with more than 400 workers on site at Epping for more than 4,500 work hours. The track work allowed for the commissioning of Epping Junction, which means that work on the Epping to Chatswood rail link is full steam ahead. I note that the criticism in some quarters of that work and one can only anticipate the criticism came from the New South Wales Liberal Party in terms of whinging and wining about a project such as this.

CHAIR: I refer to the T-card. Exactly one year ago the committee asked Mr Watkins a question about the total cost incurred on the T-card project. Will you provide an update on the total cost of the T-card project that has been expended to this point?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is important to point out to the committee that some aspects of this are subject to litigation. I want to make that point and the other point is that there is also an expression of interest out to progress the concept. So comments need to take both of those aspects in mind in order to make sure that the litigation proceeds unhindered and that the expression of interest is not hindered, or some people's perception of it is not hindered by my comments.

In January 2008 the Government's Public Transport Ticketing Corporation [PTTC] made the decision to terminate the contract with the Integrated Transport Solutions Limited and to seek damages through the court with the aim of recovering taxpayers' money spent on the project. Proceedings were commenced by the PTTC in the Supreme Court on 21 February 2008. Now this matter is before the courts it is inappropriate for the New South Wales Government to give a running commentary on the events or proceedings. The Government remains confident in its legal position and, as the matter is currently before the courts, it is inappropriate to comment in too great detail. I am aware of ERG's counter-claim and its statements to the stock exchange. The financial position of ERG is a matter for the company and its shareholders. The Government will, of course, monitor the impact of any company restructure as we seek to recover taxpayers' funds via the legal process. I think it is important to be careful about public comments in regard to this issue to ensure that the legal action proceeds without hindrance.

CHAIR: Notwithstanding that, can you answer my question, which was how much money has the Government spent to date on the terminated Tcard project contract?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I have indicated, this is a matter in litigation and I am not going to place myself in a position where I make further public comment than what I have just said and then perhaps have someone make—

CHAIR: All I am asking for is information about actual expenditure by the Government; I am not asking anything to do with any court case.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The court case is very much around issues, the subject of the question, and I am not going to—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You have to be joking, Minister. That is clearly incorrect.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not going to make comment in a public forum that may impact—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: How much taxpayers' money the Government spent on this project is a very valid question.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That may impact on the Government's effort to recover public funds from the company that has failed to deliver on its contract.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, there is no relationship to the court case with a simple question about how you expend public moneys. I ask you to answer the question.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: The Minister has already explained the relationship between the court case and public moneys.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: And we have heard that.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Yes, he has already explained that.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: To the point of order: The Minister has explained quite clearly that there is no relationship between this question and the court case. I think that is self-evident from his answer.

CHAIR: Minister, the Committee has previously been told by Mr Watkins that as at 30 June last year the Government had incurred \$65.64 million in expenditure on this project. How much more money has been spent to date?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am going to give the same answer to the same question.

CHAIR: Has the Government learnt any lessons from the failed contract; if so, what are they?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What the Government has done is terminated the contract and initiated legal action against the contractor. The Government has now gone to expressions of interest to progress the concept of electronic ticketing. That expression of interest process is underway with proponents having an opportunity to put in bids.

CHAIR: What sort of debrief process has gone on to learn some lessons from the failed Tcard project so that the same debacle does not happen again?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The aim of the expression of interest process is to get in place an electronic ticketing system that can work to the benefit of the passengers of the transport network.

CHAIR: Will the Government do anything different in trying to get this show back on the road?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There is an expression of interest process underway where there is clearly information available publicly and information available to the Committee as to the requirements of that expression of interest and that process has the focus of getting in place an electronic ticketing system as quickly as possible.

CHAIR: What is the estimate of legal fees that the Government will be up for in relation to the current court action?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I think again, with a court case underway, it would be less than wise to speculate about those things—

CHAIR: But you must have a budget estimate for your legal costs in relation to this major case?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: And flag potential issues to opponents in that legal case.

CHAIR: So you cannot provide the Parliament with an estimate of legal costs in relation to this matter?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have answered that I am not going to be drawn into making ongoing public commentary about an issue that is the subject of litigation.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What is the closing date for the expression of interest process?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is in the near future. The exact date I do not have committed to memory.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The actual Tcard contract and the whole integrated ticketing issue has been a process "in the near future" for the last six years.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There is a current expression of interest process underway with a date for submissions in the near future and, as I have said, I do not have the date of closure committed to my memory.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Will you provide that to the Committee on notice?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Absolutely.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You would be familiar with expression of interest processes and in order for private sector participants to respond to an expression of interest process you would have to outline the basic fundamentals of what they would be bidding in respect of, so can you please outline to the Committee the basis upon which integrated ticketing will go forward as documented in that expression of interest document?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The basis of it is to say to the private sector: Come with a system that is a best practice; come and offer a system that is in use and that can be put in place across the various modes of public transport in Sydney.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What sort of response have you had from the private sector to that expression of interest process?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: You will appreciate that it is a commercial process and you will also appreciate that, in order to ensure probity, I am not sitting down on a daily basis and being part of that. Equally, given that it is an expression of interest process, it would be wrong to again be making daily commentary on it. It is important to ensure that there is probity in that process and, given my experience of tendering, normally the number of people who have lodged a proposal—and who they are—is maintained in some confidence until after the date of closure of that process, and I would anticipate that we would protect the integrity of this process in a similar way.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Given the track record of your Government in dealing with the private sector, indeed in respect of this project, are you concerned that there may be nobody in the private sector who wants to deal with your Government in respect of ticketing?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not have a concern in any way, shape or form that the private sector will not respond to the expression of interest.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: This Committee certainly has a concern, given your track record in dealing with these issues. Minister, can you elucidate as to whether or not light rail will be part of integrated ticketing?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I cannot answer that question.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Was it part of the EOI that was sent out?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will undertake to get that information to the Committee.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you undertake to provide the Committee with a copy of the expression of interest document?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am sure equally the Committee could download it from the Internet.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: We would be happy to have that; that would be terrific. Is the Government going to change its existing range of fares and products, and calculation of fares, due to the failure of Tcard as part of the expression of interest process?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What we will do is respond to the issues that come out of the EOI.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Can you also explain why your Government failed to include integrated ticketing in its State infrastructure strategy document?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The State infrastructure strategy document is not something I was involved with. As to why the integrated ticketing project is not in it, if it is not—I have no reason to doubt that you would ask an accurate question—I will take on notice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You were part of the Cabinet that signed off on the State infrastructure strategy document, were you not?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have answered that. I will undertake to take that on notice and explain.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In that response could you make it clear—I presume that integrated ticketing will be a priority of your Government and that it will be introduced as soon as humanly possible in the interests of the community of New South Wales.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is a priority for the Government and it will be introduced as soon as it is humanly and technically possible. We are talking about technology here as well as human endeavour.

CHAIR: What is the Government's estimated delivery time of a new project for integrated ticketing? What is the ballpark year when you think it should be operational, approximately?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: To my recollection it is estimated for 2010.

CHAIR: 2010?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In 2010 or in the decade 2010 to 2020? You cannot be serious, Minister, given the—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: Are you going to ask questions or are you going to make statements? You have asked a question about the time and he has given an answer about the time. Now you are asking about decades.

CHAIR: So 2010 is the expected delivery year?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I said, my understanding is that it is estimated for commencement in 2010.

CHAIR: Is that when it will be operational?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Given that we are asking the private sector to provide this option, it will be clearly reliant on the expression of interest process and the ability of the private sector to deliver.

CHAIR: Is that your preferred position, that you want it delivered in 2010?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That is right. That is the answer I have given.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: How long have we spent so far trying to get an integrated ticketing solution for Sydney?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The current expression of interest process has been under way for a couple of months.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: No, I am talking about from the first time that this proposed integrated ticketing was put forward as a solution. How many years has it been since the move towards integrated ticketing with the contractual obligations and the dispute you have with Integrated Transit Solutions Ltd?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Let us just take that as a rhetorical comment because you have made—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is not, it is a question. Let us not take it rhetorically at all. Let us take it as a question. How long have we been seeking to have an integrated ticketing solution in Sydney?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Let us take it as a rhetorical statement because—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: No, let us take it as a question, Minister. It is a clear question and I ask you for an answer.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Let us take it as a rhetorical statement because if we refer to your earlier questions you made assumptions and statements about it. I am sure that when the Committee looks at the transcript it can look at your earlier questions to get the information you wanted.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am asking the question of you, Minister. Perhaps one of your advisers can provide me with the exact period of time that we have been in search of this Holy Grail.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: The Minister has answered the question and it is appropriate that the Minister answer the question.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is appropriate that the Minister answer the question.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: He answered the question. I know you do not like the answers you get but the Minister has answered the question.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is it not a fact, Minister, that we have been searching for six years for an integrated solution to ticketing in Sydney?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Again, it is a rhetorical statement. It is also undeniable, and the Government has never walked away from it, that it has been a tortuous process and it has not got the result that people wanted.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: How can you reasonably and realistically expect to have a system in place in less than two years when we have been fighting for more than six years with a company that has not delivered anything because of the problems faced in relation to delivery of the system?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Because we are not dealing with the company any more other than in the legal action before the court and there is an expression of interest process under way, which closes at 9.30 a.m. on 16 October for submissions to be lodged.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Minister, your position is just not credible, is it?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: It is hardly a question. I wish the member would stop making those kinds of statements. You are making statements, not asking questions.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: They are very specific questions and I am getting answers that simply make no sense at all.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It is not a specific question to ask if he is credible. The Minister is here as the Minister; of course he is credible.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Is that a rhetorical statement?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: No, that is an answer to your question.

CHAIR: Order! Minister, can you tell the Committee why the much-vaunted mobility summit was postponed?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The decision was taken to postpone that following a substantial change in the Ministry. It is as simple as that.

CHAIR: What sort of substantial change?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It was scheduled for a date immediately after a change of a number of Ministers and it was felt that more justice could be done to the forum if it was held a little later to give Ministers some opportunity to understand the issues more fully.

CHAIR: What is the date for the summit now?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Efforts are being made to get it in place within the next couple of weeks.

CHAIR: Have stakeholders been advised of that?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: They have not been advised of the date yet.

CHAIR: So it is in the next couple of weeks?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There is effort underway to get it in place in the next couple of weeks.

CHAIR: Can we help them by giving them an estimated date?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have answered that question. You can ask it as many times as you like and I will give you the same answer.

CHAIR: With respect to community transport it is a concern that funding in terms of real increases over and above the consumer price index [CPI] has not increased in the past decade. Are you aware of that and are there any plans to address what seems to be a growing problem in many parts of the State in terms of a shortage of community transport?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am advised that the Community Transport Program is wholly funded by the New South Wales Government through the Ministry of Transport and provides funding to address transport disadvantage to target groups beyond the Home and Community Care program target group of the frail aged, people with disabilities and their carers. The New South Wales Government has maintained the funding level of the Community Transport Program and increases the funding each year in line with the CPI to assist with meeting increased operating costs. However, we are aware of community calls for growth funding and as is the case with all calls for additional resources across government this must be considered in the light of requests for funding and the priorities of government. I point out that it is a CPI increase to the program.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, you may be aware that Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria have an integrated transport authority that manages both road and public transport services. Has your Government considered amalgamating roads and public transport? Have there been any discussions? Do you recognise that there may be efficiencies in doing that?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Government has a structure that comprises the Roads and Traffic Authority, which provides the road effort, and the Transport portfolio through a number of agencies provides the

public transport effort. There is a great deal of interaction between those two agencies in planning and coordinating delivery of services. In the short period that I have been the Minister for Transport my observation is that the transport agencies and the Roads and Traffic Authority have a strong working relationship in an effort to coordinate the delivery of services.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Can you describe how often your agencies meet with the Roads and Traffic Authority and what are they coordinating?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It would not be hard to imagine that people from the transport agencies and from the Roads and Traffic Authority are probably meeting on daily basis at a number of different levels.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: That does not really say anything, Minister, so let us narrow it down at the top level with the people sitting beside you. How often are they meeting with people like Mr Les Wielinga and other senior officers from the Roads and Traffic Authority?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will ask Mr Glasson, Director General, Ministry of Transport, to respond to your question.

Mr GLASSON: There are a number of formal forums including our chief executive officers group that oversees the implementation of the Urban Transport Statement, a chief executive cluster [CEO] group, as well as some other groups within the Government. We would be meeting formally at least once a month, sometimes more frequently.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are those meetings with the Roads and Traffic Authority or is that the CEO cluster?

Mr GLASSON: These are chief executives collectively meeting.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I appreciate that you have CEO cluster meetings, but I am narrowing it down.

Mr GLASSON: To transport?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, to transport. How often are senior transport people meeting?

Mr GLASSON: Normally on a monthly basis. Sometimes, depending on the rescheduling of meetings, that gap is a little longer. There is regular dialogue outside those meetings.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, further to your earlier answer about bus services, could you inform the Committee whether the 80 individual bus priority works pledged by your Government by 2012 to create 43 corridors with bus lanes are on track, and are they showing an increase in patronage?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Sydney CBD Bus Strategy and an accelerated strategic bus corridors program were announced in 2006. The Sydney CBD Bus Strategy is designed to reduce bus travel times between Central and Circular Quay, improve reliability of CBD buses and protect CBD buses from gradual increases in surface traffic. The \$20 million strategy extends the number of bus lanes, rationalises bus lane hours, introduces a new mid-city interchange in Park Street and a new bus layover in the Domain car park. A number of initiatives, along with the reintroduction of buses in Druiitt Street, were successfully trialled during World Youth Day.

Those initiatives will remain in operation until December 2008 pending further discussion. Preliminary analysis of the effectiveness of the extended World Youth Day bus lanes shows that, since World Youth Day, Elizabeth Street buses are, on average, 38 per cent more reliable, George Street buses are, on average, 16 per cent more reliable, and returning buses to Druiitt Street have made services on that corridor an average of five minutes faster. These initial results suggest that the CBD bus initiatives are helping to make public transport a more attractive option, which in turn will help to address mobility and congestion issues.

The New South Wales Government has committed significant funding to improve bus priority not just in the central business district but also across metropolitan Sydney and, in particular, on the 43 strategic bus corridors linking key regional centres across Sydney. This commitment includes \$235 million to introduce bus priority measures on strategic bus corridors by 2011-12, with \$135 million of works already completed, and a

further \$25 million committed annually until 2011-12. The program includes infrastructure options to target key choke points which limit effective bus speeds, including dedicated red bus lanes on approaches to congested intersections, dedicated bus bypass lanes such as left-turn only buses accepted, bus signals that give buses the jump at traffic lights, and the introduction of more transit and no stopping lanes.

The Government is also progressing the Sydney-wide implementation on the RTA's \$50 million public transport information and priority system [PTIPS]. PTIPS, as it is known, will use satellite technology to identify late-running buses and communicate with the RTA's traffic management system to prioritise those buses at traffic lights. PTIPS is scheduled to be introduced on State Transit buses by 2009 and on private buses by 2010. In addition to these projects the Government has completed the \$524 million north-west T-way, and announced upgrades to key bus corridors such as the \$156 million Victoria Road project and the \$48 million-dollar Spit and Military roads project.

The Government is committed to improving bus reliability and performance across Sydney to provide an attractive and efficient service for customers. These bus priority measures will play a crucial role in helping us to meet the State Plan target of 25 per cent of journey to work trips across Sydney being by public transport by 2016. Funding is committed and a number of projects are in place and in the planning and are continuing.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: My question, which was quite specific, requested a report on progress on the 80 individual bus priority works pledged by your Government to create 43 corridors with bus lanes. When you give an answer like that we start to feel that you are not meeting your own targets which were announced in 2006, in some detail in the State Plan, and then later in the Urban Transport Statement. Could you take that question on notice and give us a progress report on how you are going with those bus priority works?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The answer that I have given indicates that work is underway. Some projects have already been put in place, others are underway and others will flow as the money becomes available.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Will you take that question on notice and give us a progress report on those 80 bus priority works, which is what the Government promised?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The answer that I have given indicates that progress has been made and is continuing to be made. If the Committee seeks more detailed information on specific projects I am happy to provide it.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are you taking that question on notice to provide us with an update on progress achieved in delivering those priority works?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: That is not what the Minister said in answer to the question. He said that if the member wanted to ask about specific projects he would take the question on notice.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The member just exposed her own Government as being unwilling to give the public an update on an important commitment.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: I resent the member's statement. The Minister gave the member a detailed answer about progress. The Minister said that if the member wanted answers to specific projects he would be happy to take the question on notice.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am entitled to ask questions. I asked that question—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Not four times.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So my question will not be taken on notice. Will the Minister take on notice my question relating to whether there has been any increase in patronage on the bus priority works? Will the Minister answer that question now or take it on notice?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will take it on notice and, as I indicated, I will give some additional information relating to that project.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Within the State Plan and in the Urban Transport Statement there is recognition of the need to get people out of their cars and onto public transport as a key way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Could you outline the specific measures that are being taken to ensure that you are actively pursuing the aim of the State Plan and the Urban Transport Statement so that you can successfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a greater rate?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In November 2006, as a result of the Urban Transport Statement, the then Premier released a \$660 million package of new and accelerated initiatives to arrest Sydney's present and future transport needs. That statement, which is an action plan, responds to the growing transport challenges in Sydney as the population of 4.1 million is forecast to grow to more than five million within 20 years. It outlines the Government's priorities and current and future investment in the key areas of road and rail. It addresses the State Plan's key priorities of easing traffic congestion and increasing public transport use. The initiatives contained in the Urban Transport Statement dealing with increased transport demands across Sydney include establishing a new centre for transport planning and product development.

To achieve improved coordination, in particular improved upfront transport planning, the Government has established the Centre for Transport Planning and Product Development led by an executive director based within the Ministry of Transport. As I say, that project is up and running. The centre is carrying out independent transport research and modelling that advice and direction of the CEO cluster group for use by Cabinet in making decisions on transport policies and projects. Planning phases of all major transport projects and product development concepts will be undertaken within the centre prior to the project transferring to an appropriate delivery agency.

Another project I can refer to is the Victoria Road upgrade. The Government committed to fast-track the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge to provide three general traffic lanes and a bus lane, with an extension of the bus lane from Iron Cove Bridge through to Darling Street, Rozelle. This is to assist general traffic flow on this congested bottleneck and to improve the efficiency and reliability of Victoria Road bus services. The Government recently has endorsed the scope for the Victoria Road upgrade and the project will now proceed to the environmental assessment stage. The scope comprises the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge, the introduction of bus priority, tidal flow, and improved cycling and pedestrian connections.

There was also a \$100 million pinch point road network strategy, and around 20 pinch point projects across the network will be undertaken by 2012 to ease congestion at locations including Parramatta Road, Spit Road, Windsor Road and King Georges Road. This will improve travel times and reliability for motorists and bus passengers. In addition to pinch points the Government recently announced a \$48 million package of initiatives to improve traffic flow in the Spit and Military roads corridor.

Another project is the acceleration of bus priority on strategic bus corridors. The Government committed to fast-tracking for completion by 2012 more than 80 individual bus priority works across the network. This is to improve bus travel times and reliability on 43 strategic bus corridors, improving links between major centres and health, education and employment facilities, and relieving road congestion. A further \$100 million has been added to the already allocated \$135,000 for bus priority works on the strategic bus corridor network. The expansion of park and ride facilities has received an allocation of \$45 million and the Government will increase the number of commuter car parking spaces at railway stations in Sydney's west to encourage public transport use. Completion of commuter car park facilities at Wentworthville is to be brought forward to 2009. It is proposed that by 2011 commuter car parks will be expanded at Seven Hills, St Marys, Glenfield and Blacktown. Investigations are proceeding to plan, with scoping studies and design of options for identified sites already underway.

The Sydney CBD surface transport strategy already has been introduced and a number of initiatives to improve traffic flow in the Sydney CBD are in place. The improvements include new CBD bus lanes on Druiitt, Liverpool, Park, Elizabeth and Chalmer streets and operational improvements near Wynyard, saving north-east and north-west region bus commuters about eight minutes of travel time. The Urban Transport Statement provides a suite of further measures to improve bus travel times in the CBD, especially between Circular Quay, Town Hall and Central. This includes plans to rationalise bus lane operating hours on all current CBD bus lanes from 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m., a new mid-city interchange around Town Hall and a bus layover facility at the Domain car park.

These initiatives aim to deliver reductions in travel time for city bus commuters by up to 13 minutes in peak periods. The revised bus lane hours were introduced in October 2007 and government agencies, including

the Ministry of Transport and the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] are continuing to work with stakeholders to progress this work. As I mentioned earlier, the success of World Youth Day bus priority measures has highlighted the benefit of examining further measures for the CBD.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I would like an update on the northern rail line. Do you have plans to restore the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line? Are you looking at local commuter rail services on that section or other sections of the rail line? Are there any talks about linking the rail line in New South Wales on the coast with the rail line in Queensland that now comes down to the border?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I understand that expert estimates were made in 2006 that restoration of services on the Casino to Murwillumbah line would cost \$150 million over five years. New South Wales and Queensland formed a cross-border transport task force to investigate possible future heavy rail links to Coolangatta. I am aware that submissions to the task force highlighted the importance of links to south-east Queensland and between towns and centres in the area of work, school, social and other purposes. I look forward to considering the recommendations proposed by the task force to better meet the local transport needs of the area.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You spoke briefly about park and ride facilities. At any of the stations where those facilities are provided or being expanded, are you trialling a system to charge commuters to park their cars?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not aware of any trial of that nature.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Can you take that on notice?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Well, I do not believe there is a trial.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So are you saying no or are you saying you are not aware because if you are not aware, we need to check?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am prepared to say there is no trial of charges of the nature you have talked about. If there is, then I stand corrected.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are you aware that some motorways have been converted to light rail and bus transit ways—this may have occurred in Frankfurt? Considering the decrease in patronage of the Cross City Tunnel and the Lane Cove Tunnel, have there been any talks about considering or committing to expanding services by putting public transport services on those motorways?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not aware of any discussions. I have certainly not been involved in any discussions of that nature.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: What Sydney bus services have been cut in their frequency in peak periods? Could you give a list of the bus services that have been cut?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I think you and even Mr Matthew Mason-Cox would not expect me to have every single bus service timetable committed to memory.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Take it on notice.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I take it that you agree with me, Mr Mason-Cox.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Considering the number of services that have been cut, and because you have gone to great pains in answering my questions and Government questions to make out that you are expanding the frequency of bus services—we know they are being cut—on what basis was that decision made? Is it because they operate in peak periods and when it gets to point that only a couple of passengers use the bus service over a period of time you decide to cut it? How do you make that decision?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Overall on State Transit Authority [STA] buses patronage is increasing—that is the advice I have. I think that is important. If there is an alteration to a timetable, it would be very clearly based on the level of patronage.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: We always know that peak services largely assist shift workers and they are really important for people to be able to get to work and manage their lives. Clearly, they are not well patronised, but it has always been part of the service you have provided. You seem to be wiping out those people and just saying the service is not going to be there. If you cut those early-morning services, it will be really tough for people.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am not aware of wholesale cuts to early-morning services.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The 324, 325, 378, 311 and 361 bus services have all had peak services cut. I guess it is happening in other areas too. That is what I am trying to ascertain. That does not sit easily with the commitment you have just given about bus priorities.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Again I make the point that there is a statement of fact of increase in bus patronage across STA buses. It is an undeniable statement of fact. Moving available resources to respond to demand is important.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Those buses are actually sitting idle in depots of a morning because you are not sending them out to do the services they used to do. It is not as though the 324 that left the Waverley bus depot at 5.45 a.m. was going to make any difference to bus services provided at 9 o'clock.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I say, making sure that the resources are available for when they are needed is an important decision that is made operationally all the time across a range of areas of government, whether it is buses or all other aspects of government.

CHAIR: In accordance with the Committee's advised arrangements, we will now examine budget estimates for the Illawarra portfolio.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I ask the leave of the Committee for senior officers to withdraw. I will be answering questions in relation to the Illawarra portfolio. I place on the record my thanks for the support of senior officers who have attended the Committee's hearing today to assist me.

CHAIR: The Committee joins the Minister in thanking all officers who attended today.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Campbell, you will recall that one of the key concerns I have about the Illawarra is the very high level of youth unemployment. We both participated in a couple of forums last year and this year designed to try to work out what was happening in relation to youth unemployment, particularly in regard to the numbers. You will recall that the Instruction, Research and Information Services [IRIS] report in June found:

The 15 to 24 year age group suffers from a disproportionately high unemployment rate relative to the adult (24-65yr) population. According to the December 2007 figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, while the overall unemployment rate in the Wollongong Statistical Region was 6.8%, the youth unemployment rate was 21.6%. This was primarily fuelled by the 15 to 19 years age group, with an unemployment rate of 28%.

What action have you taken to address the youth unemployment problem in the Illawarra?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have certainly continued to encourage investment in the region, and you have taken part in the seminars. The Government also has announced reductions in payroll tax and has delivered reductions in workers compensation premiums. These reductions were demanded by the business sector of Government, indicating that they would then be in a position to employ more people. The Government has responded in those areas. The Government also has supported the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands Regional Apprenticeship Project, which has placed over 30 first year trade apprentices with local employers in the region.

The Government will continue to invest in apprenticeship courses delivered by TAFE NSW through the Illawarra institute. The project has the double benefit of addressing trade skill shortages as well as generating local job opportunities for young people. The Government will continue to work to seek investment in the Illawarra and will continue to use, for example, the Illawarra Advantage Fund to support new investment.

I will continue my round of talking to individual businesses, encouraging them to take on more young people, and I will seek to convince them to invest in the region, hence further developing the region's economy.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Can you give me any examples of successful investment in the region that you have helped to attract?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: How long do you have? The Illawarra Advantage Fund, for example, has given support to an expanded tourism project known as Illawarra Fly, which has resulted in 15 additional jobs being established. The Illawarra Advantage Fund has supported an expansion of a local business called Skydive the Beach, which is another project in the tourism sector that is expected to assist in generating 20 additional jobs in the region. We have witnessed the establishment of the GAB Robins Australia national customer service centre in Wollongong with 50 additional jobs. The fund has also assisted Capital Aircraft Services, Aero V Australia, Total Aerospace Solutions, Airag Aviation Services and GoJet to relocate to the airport, creating 55 jobs.

I do not think that anybody would dispute in any way, shape or form that David Campbell in his various roles has strongly supported the expansion of the port of Port Kembla and the increasing jobs through expanded trade through that port, notwithstanding the best efforts of the New South Wales Opposition in the lead-up to the 2007 election in undermining that investment and that jobs growth. The list would go on and on of the projects, the local companies and the initiatives that the Government and I have been associated with to encourage investment, and that is before we start on the Government's own capital infrastructure expenditure in the region, which is at record levels in delivering projects accompanied by employment opportunities—for example, road projects such as upgrading the Princes Highway south, the Northern Distributor, and the list goes on.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: If your Government is doing so much, could you explain to the Committee why unemployment in the region as at the last June quarter has increased by up to 8.1 per cent in the recent past?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Even you will appreciate that an individual Minister, or indeed the New South Wales Government, does not have absolute responsibility for the way the Australian economy reacts. What we can do is spend taxpayers' money on infrastructure in the region to generate its own jobs. We can then establish jobs in response to that. The Government has invested in health services and that has resulted in jobs being expanded. For example, on Friday you were at the Property Council Illawarra Chapter's presentation by Bernard Salt at the iC Central building on the innovation campus, and that building was funded by this Government. You would not have been at that function or in that building if the Government had not made the investment. The New South Wales Government has made, and continues to make, investment, has employed and continues to employ people directly and has encouraged and continues to encourage the private sector to invest. A factor in the overall world economy comes into play in relation to this as well.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I intended to refer to that very interesting presentation we both attended on Friday. Information that Mr Salt gave us for the projected growth in employment indicated it should be much greater, based on the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures. Do you think the current regional plans need upgrading to reflect those figures, or how does your Government intend to respond to much larger growth in the New South Wales population?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is only in the last 18 months to two years that the regional strategy was finalised and released. I think it remains a useful and current tool, not only for the Government but also for the private sector in planning for the future of the region. As I say, it was released 18 months to two years ago under my administration. It was received extremely favourably in the region and remains a road map for the future development and prosperity of the region.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have asked before about the development levy for the Wollongong central business district and expressed the view that I did not think it was a very sensible idea. Do you know whether any funds have been collected towards that levy?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: To my knowledge, no funds have been collected.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are any projects actually proceeding in the Wollongong central business district at the moment?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There are some small construction projects underway.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Is it of concern to you that the Wollongong central business district has again stalled?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Certainly if you look at the world capital markets, if you look at the fact that Wall Street has just about gone belly up, that one country has gone bankrupt and that the major European countries are bailing out the banking sector, anybody who picks up a newspaper—and you would not have to even look at the financial papers—would understand there is a problem with credit globally. I do not think it would come as a surprise to anybody that construction projects by the private sector are a bit slower than any of us would want.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That is certainly all true. However, the problem in Wollongong seems to be that no projects are proceeding, just as they have not proceeded over the past decade. Why is Wollongong so poor—

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: You need to visit more frequently than just show up at the Property Council lunches, because there have been construction projects in the Wollongong CBD in the past decade. It is wrong of you to say that there has been no construction.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The question still is: Why does Wollongong have such a disproportionately low level of development, particularly in the CBD, compared to other centres and regions around the State?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No doubt for a long time the planning instrument for Wollongong was ineffective and under review. In conjunction with the regional plan I referred to, this Government, under the leadership of the former Minister for Planning, also put in place a central business district planning instrument that was much more contemporary than the one that operated previously. The previous one was called LEP1990. Why was it called LEP1990? Because that is when it was adopted. This Government dragged the CBD process out of the council's hands and updated it.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Were you the mayor for quite some time during that period?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I was the mayor between 1990 and 1999. Indeed, I was the Lord Mayor of Wollongong between 1991 and 1999. If you go back and look at the last two business plans of Wollongong City Council in that period you will see that I initiated a CBD review as part of those plans. The subsequent councils did not proceed with that, did not conclude it, and that has led to a hiatus.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Can you bring us up to date on what is happening with the Wollongong harbour development process?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: A couple of years ago the Department of Lands went through a detailed public exhibition and consultation period about the future shape around Wollongong harbour. More recently the Department of Lands called for expressions of interest from the private sector to put up some concepts. In the past few weeks the Minister for Lands announced the establishment of a community consultation group to work with the Department of Lands to progress those issues.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are you aware of concerns expressed by the Reclaim our City Campaign Committee? A letter we all received this morning from that committee stated:

The most audacious aspect of the Government's action, however, in the wake of the recent ICAC proceedings regarding corruption in Wollongong, is their steadfast refusal to allow the citizens of Wollongong to view any of the 6 proposals currently before the NSW government to sell off and redevelop [Wollongong] Harbour."

Would you like to comment on that proposition by the Reclaim our City Campaign Committee?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As I indicated, my understanding is that in the past month the Minister for Lands has established a community consultation group around the issues arising from a plan of management that was put in place a couple of years ago after comprehensive public consultation.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are there six proposals currently sitting with the Government?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That is a question for the Minister for Lands.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Obviously one key driver of the region is tourism. Are you aware of the latest June quarter figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that show that the region's accommodation sector is on a downward trend?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not know the statistics you are referring to but I know that in the past three or four years, as part of a construction program in Wollongong CBD—that brings us back to an earlier answer—there has been a significant boost in the number of beds available. Off the top of the head, there have been projects at the golf course in Kembla Street, in Market Square, on the corner of Market and Corrimal streets and in Gladstone Avenue. So all sites within the CBD have had major construction projects that have added to the number of beds available in Wollongong.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Considering the embarrassment suffered by the people of the Illawarra and the Government because of the donations that you, Mr Brown and Ms Hay have accepted, do you now support a ban on political donations?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The Government has made it clear that it will work through the issues of political donations, and I suspect that that process will change the law. Indeed, we have introduced legislation to do that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: But as the Minister for the Illawarra—clearly, there is a lot of work to repair the damage that has been done in that area—are you advocating for this? On 22 March Mr Iemma made a clear statement that he supported political donations and is now working on it. Mr Roozendaal, in his first speech in Parliament, indicated a similar commitment. Also, the previous Premier, Mr Carr, spoke about it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Point of order: The Minister is here to answer questions to do with his portfolio responsibilities as the Minister for the Illawarra. His personal view about the political donations issue is irrelevant to this Committee.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: To the point of order: I was not asking the Minister for his personal view. I clearly asked him in his capacity as the Minister for the Illawarra. Surely even Labor members recognise the need to work out how assistance can be provided to improve the image of Wollongong in light of the damaging reports that came out of that area.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: Now Ms Lee Rhiannon is making reflections on persons who are here.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: ICAC has already done that. Labor members are just making it look worse for the Government by trying to cover up.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, we are not. I was in the room yesterday when Ms Lee Rhiannon went through this issue at length with the Premier, who indicated that he has the Toomey report and is looking at it. Questioning this Minister on the matter is irrelevant to the examination of the estimates for the portfolio of the Illawarra.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: To the point of order: It is relevant to the people of the Illawarra, and that is why I asked the question.

CHAIR: I think it is a fair question, given the regional impact of the issue. The Minister may answer the question.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Let me say this: In terms of my personal campaign support, I have complied absolutely with the law and have had no questions whatsoever in terms of the way that I have recorded, accounted for and allocated electoral support that I have received. In terms of the ICAC inquiry, I was never spoken to by ICAC. To the best of my knowledge, I was not mentioned in any of the public hearings by ICAC about the issues at Wollongong City Council. In terms of political donations, as I said, I have complied absolutely with the requirements of the law. Recently there have been changes to the law, and I have complied

absolutely with them. If there are subsequent changes to the law I will comply absolutely with them. With regard to the recent changes to the law, I have supported them, and I believe that this area of public policy needs and will receive continuing reform. As an individual I will welcome that. The work on it will be undertaken by others, not by the Minister for the Illawarra.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: In decades past the Illawarra area gained many jobs from the coal industry. I am sure you are aware from the figures that coalmining is no longer a jobs growth area, and even though productivity is increasing at a huge rate the number of jobs is dropping. Has the Government plans to diversify industry to ensure jobs growth in the Illawarra because of the lack of jobs growth in the mining area?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There may not be a substantial jobs growth in mining and related industries but there is significant employment in mining and related industries. I will support those jobs continuing because they make a significant contribution to the region. In terms of diversification of the economic base, again I will stand by my personal record and the Government's record in efforts to do that. For example, the expansion of product through Port Kembla is something to which I referred in an answer earlier. Ms Lee Rhiannon may not have been in the room when I answered the question but no one can ever question my involvement in driving that investment in the port and the expansion of the port, therefore, the diversification of the region's economy or, for that matter, the Government's commitment to that.

The growth of the University of Wollongong and the establishment of the Innovation Campus, as I mentioned earlier, is supported absolutely by this Government. As recently as June, the former Premier announced at the official opening of the first building to be occupied on the Innovation Campus, that the Government would allocate \$15 million over five years to support the construction of a Medical Research and Development building on the main campus of the University of Wollongong—another indication of a preparedness to support the growth of the university and, therefore, the economic diversification of the region. The list of alternative types of industries that are being supported through the Government's Illawarra Advantage Fund goes on. I refer the Committee to my earlier answer for examples of that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are you aware of an application to explore for coal in a 6,000 square-kilometre area off the coast of New South Wales stretching from Stanwell Tops, which I think is in your electorate, up to Port Stephens? Considering that offshore drilling has a bad record of environmental damage and considering the pristine quality of many of beaches in the Illawarra, have you acquainted yourself with this issue? Do you have any concerns that it could potentially be damaging to the Illawarra?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: To assist the Committee, Stanwell Tops is not in my electorate—the Keira electorate does not extend to it. Stanwell Tops certainly does form part of the Illawarra region, for clarification. I am sure questions around this issue would be better put to the Minister for Mineral Resources.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: But as the Minister for the Illawarra you are supposed to advocate for the Illawarra. People often think that the portfolios of the Illawarra and Hunter are just to get more media in the Hunter and the Illawarra.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Only very cynical people think that, surely.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I wish Hansard could record the smile on your face when you say that. If this portfolio is to be beneficial to the people of the Illawarra you should advocate and give some balance to government projects that may come forward that could have a detrimental impact on the Illawarra. That is why I ask are you acquainted with the project? In Cabinet will you argue or will you just come out against it, as periodically Ministers do speak up for different areas? Will you take such a stand?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Questions on the progress of the project referred to should be put to the Minister for Energy.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: We have put it to the Minister for Mining—it is a Federal matter as well. It is disappointing that you are not out there advocating for the local environment of the people of that area.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: That is verballing.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It has been going on all morning.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, I know.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Jobs are important too.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am happy the issue of jobs has been raised. Minister, in answer to an earlier question you said that nobody could question your record in working on projects that bring benefit to the area.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No. I said no-one would question my record in supporting the expansion of the port of Port Kembla—they were the specific words that I used. It would be inappropriate to misquote me. I do not think anyone would question my efforts to attract investment to the region, either, but if you are going to actually refer to my earlier answer I think that it is better referred to with complete accuracy rather than to misquote me.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I apologise. My notes were not clear on that. I imagine you are proud of your record as Minister for the Illawarra? Considering that the Illawarra has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the whole country, particularly for young people, is that something of concern to you? You have been the Minister for the Illawarra for a long time and you do not seem to be delivering for the majority of people in that area.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It might be easier and take less time of the Committee if I refer to my previous answer to almost the same question from the Hon. Greg Pearce. I am not trying to be critical or smart: it is just a statement of fact. You may have been taking a call, and that is fine, but it is almost the identical question and I could give almost the identical answer. I do not take a step back from work I have done in the past to encourage investment both by government and by the private sector in jobs growth. I will not take a step back from continuing that work because I do understand that the issue of unemployment is a fundamental one for the community that has nurtured me from birth and has given me the opportunity to sit in a role such as this. I will not take a step back and shirk the efforts of seeking to attract investment, even in the face of criticism by such an organisation as the Greens.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As the Minister for the Illawarra and the local member, how often do you meet with members of the South Coast Labor Council?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I do not have a regular schedule of meetings. As is always the case in Wollongong I meet with people on a needs basis. I take a phone call from them. I make a phone call to them. I have a chat to them when I am in the supermarket or over at the bowling club, the movies, the football, the basketball or at similar events.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When was the last time you met with Mr Morris either formerly or had a phone call or a chat in a supermarket aisle or anywhere else?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It would have been only in the last few weeks that I last ran into Mr Morris.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you think you can do the work of the Minister for the Illawarra satisfactorily in a supermarket aisle or at the footy? Should there be a formality to these meetings?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: There is a formality on issues but in a community such as Wollongong a lot of work is undertaken at those types of events.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you think the present arrangement is satisfactory and there is no need for a proper meeting?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have no hesitation in picking up the phone and talking with the South Coast Labor Council, the Illawarra Business Chamber or anyone else when needed. They have no hesitation in picking up the phone and talking to me. We have no hesitation in organising a meeting around issues as appropriate.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Having no hesitation is quite different from having a meeting.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Is Ms Rhiannon trying to arrange a meeting between the Labor Council and the Minister? I think it would be quite easy for them to get in touch with the policy adviser.

CHAIR: That is up to Ms Lee Rhiannon.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are you satisfied with your answer, Minister? We have dealt with the South Coast Labor Council. Have you had any recent meeting—a proper meeting—with any local union officials?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Which union officials have you met with?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have spoken recently with the TWU, I met recently with the Labor Council in the Premier's office.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: New South Wales Labor Council? I am talking about the Illawarra.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Yes, so am I, I am able to put it in context. I come from the Illawarra; I have lived there all my life and know it well.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So were they—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Point of order: I think it is our turn for questions.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: Minister, can you elucidate on the Government infrastructure investment you have for the area?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: This year's capital budget allocation of \$423 million for the Illawarra is a major commitment to local infrastructure projects. Last year's investment reflected the significant capital spend at the port of Port Kembla. It has now become Australia's leading car import centre and a major driver of our local economy. This year's budget shows an increase of more than 78 per cent or \$134 million from the Illawarra's allocation of just four years ago. Once again the Illawarra has received its fair share from the New South Wales Government. This investment will build new roads, increase energy capacity, secure water supplies and provide vital health, education and transport infrastructure.

It delivers significant capital works programs to the Illawarra, which will benefit residents for years to come, projects like the continued upgrade of the Princes Highway to dual carriageway between Oak Flats and Dunmore and the \$101 million northern distributor extension from Bellambi Lane to the Princes Highway at Bulli. It provides \$6 million to start work on the Princes Highway-Lawrence Hargreave Drive intersection upgrade at the foot of Bulli Pass, which will be welcomed by residents of the northern suburbs of Wollongong. A further \$11 million will be spent upgrading Port Kembla as it gears up to become the State's car importing hub. Health will benefit from \$1.79 billion in funding for the South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service, which is an additional \$76 million over last year.

Our commitment to securing the region's growing energy needs will continue to be served with a \$73.4 million capital works program to upgrade and increase the capacity of substations. The Rees Government is also spending amounts on key services, such as funding for nurses and teachers, more police and new technology in schools. The Illawarra has been well served in this budget and this investment allows our region to get on with the job and deliver on our commitments.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Did you say \$4 million on ports?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: No, I think it was \$11 million in this budget for the port of Port Kembla.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: What specifically is going into the ports infrastructure under that expenditure?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The \$11 million in this year's budget is for the commencement of some work on the outer harbour development, so it is further expansion. It is important to point out that, as part of this, \$167 million has been spent—some of Government, some of private sector. That will see an additional 400

ship visits, 30,000 containers, 240,000 cars and potentially 1,000 direct and indirect jobs. Cars began to arrive in October last year and more car companies will relocate in November 2008. The port gears up to be the State's major car import centre. We have seen the construction of a new 200-metre berth and that will be similar in design and structure to a third berth and will offer maximum flexibility for port operations. The Government is also spending \$30 million on a fourth berth, which will play an integral role in handling the expected increase in ship movements. The master plan for the major development of Port Kembla's outer harbour was unveiled in July 2008. Continued development of that planning is subject to the \$11 million budget allocation this year.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: I still cannot walk into Wollongong stadium without being sad at the loss of one of the greatest dog tracks in New South Wales, although it was good to go there and see Wests beat St George-Illawarra this year.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I would not say that was good at all.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It was a good day. I also went recently to the women's basketball final at the WIN Entertainment Centre. I understand it has been 10 years for the entertainment centre since the conversion of the dog tracks. Can you give an update on the stadium and the entertainment centre?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I can indeed. It is the 10th anniversary year of the construction of the Wollongong entertainment centre, now known as the WIN Entertainment Centre. Its official opening was on 3 October 1998. I remember it well. Over the past several weeks there has been quite a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Wollongong entertainment centre. It might be interesting to some people in the room to know that the first performance there was by Bob Dylan. As you will appreciate, it was a great performance. Over the years there have been all sorts of events in the Wollongong entertainment centre including women's basketball and, now known as the Sandpit, home of the Wollongong Hawks NBL team—and the less said about their last home match the better, but they have played there continuously for 10 years. There has been Federation Cup tennis in the venue. I think the Hon. Greg Pearce has probably been at an Illawarra Business Chamber function there. The major business dinner of the year in Wollongong seats about 1,000 people and it is held at the entertainment centre. The ACTU has had a national congress there. There has been a significant State Aboriginal reconciliation conference there. The Local Government Association conference has been held at the Wollongong entertainment centre as well.

There have been a myriad of performances. One of the most spectacular things that I attend there on an annual basis is the Southern Stars Spectacular, which is a celebration of the dance and music of students in the public education sector across the Illawarra region. There can be up to 3,500 to 4,000 students performing and it is a pathway for some of those students into the Schools Spectacular, which members might be aware is held in the Entertainment Centre in Sydney.

The entertainment centre, without a shadow of a doubt, has been an absolute success in providing a key indoor venue for the region. Since it was built the Government has also invested in a northern grandstand to the football field, which hangs off the southern side of the entertainment centre and provides a connection to the two and adds greater flexibility, hence greater capacity for the Wollongong Sportsground Trust to operate the two grandstands for the football fields and the entertainment centre in a commercially viable way, and they do that in a significant way.

As part of the tenth anniversary celebrations for the entertainment centre, the Government allocated some \$20,000 in funding so that the celebrations could proceed. One of the projects was a work commissioned called *On Common Ground*, which is a written history of the Wollongong showground, which became the Wollongong sportsground, which became the WIN sports and entertainment complex. Gerry Doyle, a former high school teacher at Woonona High School, was commissioned to write the work. Gerry is something of a local amateur historian. The work is fantastic. It talks about the ground and its different uses starting as an agricultural showground. It has a chapter about greyhounds being run—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: It was a great track.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It has a chapter on the greyhounds and it talks about some of the personalities and some of the people who have acted as chair of the trustees and what have you. It has been well received and I was delighted to have the privilege to launch that book at the request of the author and the sportsground trust, which commissioned the work.

I can say that in the last 12 months the Government has looked to the future of the ground in conjunction with the Sportsground Trust by allocating \$80,000 to a feasibility study to look at options as to how we might improve, replace, rebuild or knock down and build a new western grandstand. The whole site plays an important part in the sporting, cultural and artistic life of the community and the Government looks forward to working with the community to ensure that that continues to be the case in the future.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: With Kogarah oval reopening next season—it has been under renovation—I assume Illawarra is still fine for the home matches.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have to get this right because sometimes I call them the Illawarra St George Dragons, but the St George Illawarra Dragons have—

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: You can call them Steelers.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That would be waving a red flag. The Dragons play matches at both Kogarah Oval and Wollongong Sportsground and a couple of matches at ANZ Stadium at Homebush. There is an ongoing contractual arrangement to continue to play those six or seven matches at Wollongong and I am not aware of any proposals to change that, notwithstanding that an upgrade is about to be completed at Kogarah.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: The western stand is the old one that is still there at the dog track and has not been replaced, is it not, the one that you walk through underneath?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The one that Mr Costa said no way would we fund it.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: He is not here to defend himself.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The western grandstand is known as the Sid Hayes stand after someone who put in a great deal of effort for sport in the region as a volunteer. It has been in existence since my first ever visit to Wollongong Showground, which is a long time ago and scares the hell out of me. It is a bit old and tired and the Government is working with the Sportsground Trust to look at opportunities.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: There is a lot of concern about the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's [IPART] draft recommendations for increased rail fares particularly to the Illawarra. You were quoted as saying it is a draft report and you would encourage IPART to restructure its recommendations. Have you actually done anything to encourage IPART to look again at those recommendations?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I believe that is something that needs to be looked at. I am having some work done internally to submit to IPART but it is not completed.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In relation to the Illawarra or generally?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In relation to the increase proposed by IPART to the weekly fares for the longer distances—Illawarra, Central Coast, Western Suburbs and Macarthur.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When are we likely to see something on that?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: IPART is due to hand down its final determination at the beginning of December.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, for your assistance at this hearing today. We appreciate that.

The committee proceeded to deliberate.