

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 1

Friday 26 October 2007

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

ROADS, COMMERCE

The Committee met at 5.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

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

The Hon. D. J. Gay
The Hon. K. F. Griffin
The Hon. D. T. Harwin

Dr. J. Kaye
The Hon. L. J. Voltz
The Hon. I. W. West

PRESENT

The Hon. E. M. Roozendaal, *Minister for Roads, and Minister for Commerce*

Roads and Traffic Authority

L. Wielinga, *Chief Executive*

B. Skinner, *Director, Finance and Commercial Development*

M. Bushby, *Director, Network Management*

Department of Commerce

J. Lee, *Director General*

P. Hopkins, *Deputy Director General, NSW Procurement*

A. Marsh, *Deputy Director General, Office of Public Works and Services*

CORRECTED

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**

LES WIELINGA, Chief Executive, Roads and Traffic Authority, and

BRETT SKINNER, Director Finance and Commercial Development, Roads and Traffic Authority, sworn and examined:

MICHAEL BUSHBY, Director, Network Management, Roads and Traffic Authority, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Roads and Commerce open for examination. Minister, do you wish to make a brief opening statement?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I would like to do that. I would like to introduce to the Committee Mr Les Wielinga—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Is there a five-minute limit, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR: No, we have not set a limit at this stage. Most Ministers have been within the five minutes.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I have only said about four words and you are already interrupting me, Duncan. That must nearly be a record.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: Most answers have been limited to five minutes.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: All right, within five minutes. I will introduce to the Committee Les Wielinga, Brett Skinner, Director of Financial and Commercial Development, Roads and Traffic Authority, Mr Michael Bushby, Director of Network Management, Roads and Traffic Authority, Mr John Lee, Director General of the Department of Commerce, Mr Paul Hopkins, Deputy Director General of New South Wales Procurement, Department of Commerce and Mr Alan Marsh, Deputy Director of the Office of Public Works and Services, Department of Commerce. I ask that you direct your questions through me and I will allocate them to the appropriate public servant to respond.

The Iemma Government has delivered a record \$3.6 billion roads budget, the State's biggest ever roads budget, investing in road construction, maintenance and safety improvements across New South Wales. This budget is meeting our commitment to build new road infrastructure, improved traffic management and road safety. Record funding will see work progress on major roads around New South Wales, including the Pacific Highway, the Princes Highway and the Great Western Highway. To meet State Plan priority S7, safer roads, funding for road safety initiatives has increased to \$124 million. The program is targeting speeding, fatigue management, drink-driving, cyclist safety, seatbelt usage and school and youth programs as well as specific road safety works, and will be overseen by the new New South Wales Centre for Road Safety.

A total of \$1.5 billion has been allocated towards road construction and \$933 million to maintenance of the State's roads in 2007-2008. Almost three-quarters of the roads capital and maintenance program budget will be spent outside the Sydney metropolitan area, with \$2.6 billion, or 72 per cent, committed. The budget also provides significant funding to encourage public transport use, meeting the commitment to improve public transport reliability made under the \$660 million urban transport statement. Councils across New South Wales will also receive an increased allocation of \$146 million under the repair program and block grant scheme for regional roads.

Today the New South Wales Government announced a new hotline, which allows the public to report the abuse of the mobility parking scheme for people with disabilities. I can advise the Committee that the Roads and Traffic Authority's hotline number is 1300 884 899, and it was up and running from early today. The mobility parking scheme is designed to make life easier for people with a disability, not for parking cheats. People who abuse this scheme need to get the message that we will not tolerate the rorting of a legitimate and important scheme for helping people with disabilities. The Disability Council of New South Wales suggested the hotline, and I thank it for its work on this

important issue. The hotline will make it quicker and easier for the public to raise their concerns with authorities.

Before being asked to provide full details of the complaint callers will be reminded that some disabilities that entitle people to use the mobile parking scheme may not be obvious. I can advise the Committee that new rules designed to improve the integrity of the scheme came into force today. These rules allow the Roads and Traffic Authority to collect information on disabilities suffered by an applicant for a mobile parking scheme card. This will ease the burden on people with genuine disabilities, who only need to provide a medical certificate of their disability once, and it will help identify people who may not be genuinely disabled. A new offence has been introduced for mobile parking scheme. Cardholders who intentionally lend their cards to other people face a maximum penalty of \$2,200. There is now an appeal provision against a magistrate's decision to revoke a mobile parking scheme card to protect legitimate users.

These reforms, introduced last year, mean New South Wales has the highest fines in Australia for motorists illegally using disabled parking spots and for those who fraudulently use their mobile parking scheme cards. I can advise that crackdowns during the 2006-2007 year in Sydney city, North Sydney and Parramatta local government areas saw more than 300 fines issued and 54 mobile parking scheme cards cancelled by the Roads and Traffic Authority. The Roads and Traffic Authority and the Government remain committed to working with various peak disability and community groups, including the Disability Council of New South Wales, on further reforms of this scheme. Do you want me to go on? I think I might leave it there because I have a few things. The chief executive might have a few things he would like to say. I am conscious of the time of the Committee.

Mr WIELINGA: I could go on to talk about some of the major construction projects that we have got underway at the moment but we can deal with that in questions if you wish. I could talk a little bit about the functions of the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] and the major activities that we undertake. Again we could deal with that in questions, if you wish.

CHAIR: We will leave that for questions. Thank you for your offer. The Committee has agreed that the Opposition will start with questions.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, I note that on pages 556-562 in the Infrastructure Statement, Budget Paper No. 4 of the 2007-08 Budget Papers, there is an extensive list of road projects for the State. However, I note that a considerable number of these projects are jointly funded by either the Federal Government or by the private sector. Will you undertake to provide to the Committee a detailed breakdown of how much the State Government, the Federal Government and the private sector are contributing for each of these projects?

CHAIR: Do you want to take that question on notice?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No, it is not a tricky question.

CHAIR: Each individual one?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Yes.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No. Mr Chairman, this was not a question to put on notice. It was a question that needs an answer. Minister, will you undertake to provide the Committee with a detailed breakdown of each of these projects? The budget papers are meaningless to the people of New South Wales unless we actually understand which part you fund, which part private enterprise funds and which part the Federal Government funds. The question is: will you undertake to provide a detailed response on this? You are able to go away and provide that response—I am perfectly happy for that—but, Minister, we deserve an answer on whether you will do that or not.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, information in relation to public-private partnerships [PPPs] is already on the public record. Information on joint funding between the

Australian Government and the New South Wales Government, as governed through AusLink, is also on the public record.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: So it should not be hard.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: And information in relation to the record Roads budget of the New South Wales Government is on the public record at this point in time and it is not my job to correlate that public information for the shadow Minister for Roads. I would have thought that it was quite within his capabilities to gather that information together as it is all on the public record.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: With due respect, these are the public records of your ministry for the people of New South Wales. A simple delineation of what is your money and what is someone else's is not beyond what the people of New South Wales should expect. Further, you indicated to the Committee that these details are on the public record. That will make it easier for you and your department to actually come back with an accurate record for the people of New South Wales in what is a State budget on what you are actually spending and what others are spending. Will you undertake to provide the people of New South Wales a clear breakdown on how much money you are contributing to these projects because, Minister, I have got to tell you that if you do not undertake to do that, you are deliberately trying to deceive the people of New South Wales into thinking that you are spending the money when someone else may well be.

CHAIR: When do you want the Minister to supply the information?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: In the usual time frame.

CHAIR: That is 21 days.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Yes.

CHAIR: I thought he said he would take it on notice.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No, he did not. He said he would take the question on notice, not the provision. Mr Chairman, you are a decent man; you have to understand that this is a very tricky Minister.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: With respect, this is a very lazy shadow Minister. All of the information that he seeks is on the public record. AusLink One is a public document, clearly delineating the different funding between the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government. I can understand why he really does not want to talk about the failure of the Federal Liberal Government in its failure to fund appropriately projects in New South Wales. I can understand why he feels embarrassed by the deliberate reduction in maintenance from the Federal Government to maintain roads in New South Wales.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We do not know this if you will not produce the figures, Minister.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I do not believe it is my responsibility or the responsibility of the hardworking officers of the RTA to obtain information that is on the public record. If the shadow Minister can cite information that is not on the public record, then I am more than happy to get that for him, but he knows that all of the PPPs that the RTA is involved with are on the public record. He knows that AusLink One is on the public record. He knows the information he seeks is all on the public record and his grandstanding and pomposity does not make his question any more genuine than a pathetic attempt for us to do his research.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Chairman, the Minister quite properly indicated that I need to indicate what is not on the public record and he would be happy to produce what is not on the public record. Minister, what is not on the public record is what New South Wales is spending. These are the New South Wales budget papers. Will you produce how much New South Wales is actually spending in each of these projects?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I have responded to this question.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No. Minister—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I have responded to the question.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Yes or no.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am not about to ask the RTA, with its extensive workload, to do research that is in the public arena. You may be lazy but my staff are hardworking and I think you can do your own work because, as you well know, you cannot cite a single project or a single thing. You are just going on a little fishing expedition and grandstanding. Do your own research, Duncan.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, this is the budget of New South Wales.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: If you want to discuss specific projects, let us discuss specific projects.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is the budget of what should be an open, accountable Government.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: And it is, and we have a record Roads budget.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is a very simple question.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The highest Roads budget in the history of this State—\$3.6 billion.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The question is: Will you give the details of what New South Wales is spending on projects that are listed in the budget papers? I know your background is from Sussex Street where you like to cover things up but you are now a Minister of the Crown. You have a responsibility to produce for the people of New South Wales an open, transparent set of figures. You indicate that this is hard work for the RTA yet you indicated that these are very public and easy figures to find. Why do you want to cover these figures up?

The Hon. IAN WEST: Give him a project.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I will pick a project. I refer to page 5-60 of the infrastructure statement, South Nowra to Jervis Bay Road safety upgrade, where you refer to State and Federal funding and give the estimated cost. What is the estimated cost to the State, Minister? That \$19 million figure is not the estimated cost to the State, is it? The estimated total cost is \$19 million. You correctly say "State and Federal funding" under the description of the program. That \$19 million is not a cost to the State of that project, is it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: On my advice, the total cost of the project is \$19 million.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That is not what I asked. I asked: That is not the total cost to the State's taxpayers, is it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will have to take that question on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I come up with one project, and I demonstrate to you that it is not on the public record how much the State is spending—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I do not have that information here today. I am happy to take the question on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You cannot answer, which is why the Hon. Duncan Gay's question is totally legitimate. Why will you not give an infrastructure statement that talks about what the State is spending, rather than what the State Government, the Federal Government and the private sector are spending?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: May I ask a question through the Minister to Mr Skinner? Mr Skinner, I remind you that you are under oath. Does the document you have before you, which you were just consulting together with the Minister, set out the information I was requesting?

Mr SKINNER: No, it does not.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: What would it have as a break-up for the piece of road my colleague referred to?

Mr SKINNER: It does not have a break-up between Federal funding and State funding.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Within the Roads and Traffic Authority do you have a break-up between State and Federal funding with respect to each of the projects?

Mr SKINNER: We would have sources of funds coming from the Federal Government, how it is utilised within the organisation.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Would it take a large amount of time to delineate those break-ups?

Mr SKINNER: I would have to go back and check with my staff.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It probably would have taken less time to produce a budget paper that simply referred to State funding, rather than adding up the State funding, the Federal funding and the private sector funding, I suggest to you.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That is not a question; it is a statement, Mr Chair. I thought we were here to answer questions, rather than hear the political polemics of the Hon. Don Harwin and his sidekick there.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Wielinga, do you in your monthly break-ups have a breakdown of what funding in your project is supplied by the State and other agencies?

Mr WIELINGA: Our normal monthly meetings deal with total project expenditures, and we look at schedules of break-ups associated with projects. The financing of projects is dealt with through our finance director.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Is the finance director here?

Mr SKINNER: That is me.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Skinner, I ask you the question I just asked Mr Wielinga. Would you have those details at the Roads and Traffic Authority?

Mr SKINNER: We can source the details of where funding comes through. It is a process that we may look at on an annual basis, of where the money comes from as to the sources of funds. As Mr Wielinga has indicated, our organisation is focused on the use of those funds and delivering projects in an efficient manner, and that is the focus of the way we manage our projects.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, given the response by the Roads and Traffic Authority, I repeat my original question: Will you undertake to get for the Committee of the Parliament a delineation of the actual funding of these projects?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, I have answered this question on a number of occasions, and I do not intend to answer it again.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: With great respect, Minister, my question to you is, yes or no, will you undertake to get for the Committee a copy of the funding of these projects?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, with the greatest respect to the honourable shadow Minister for Roads, as I have previously stated, all the information he seeks is on the public record. The funding agreement between the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government is governed by an AusLink 1 agreement, which he would be well aware of. That is a public document and it is on the public record, and he can certainly access it if he chooses to do so.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is basic data for the running of your department; it is material that would be there on a daily basis. Your refusal to provide this sort of information for the people of New South Wales—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Is there a question in this statement, or is it just another statement? I have got four hours, and that is fine, but let us have some questions.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, will you or will you not provide this information?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will not do the research of the Opposition when it is on the public record.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, in February this year 2UE's John Laws interviewed Premier Morris Iemma about the widening of the Spit Bridge. I was going to play a recording of the interview but the Labor Party and the Independent Chair did not believe I should. So I am now restricted to reading a transcript. My interpretation of that transcript is as follows:

Iemma told Laws that, "This project would assist in improving traffic flow and mobility."

Laws then asked, "So it's going ahead?"

There was 7 seconds of deafening silence before Iemma said, "Hello?"

Laws asked again, "So it's going ahead?" Iemma finally responded with, "John we're committed to this project. We've gone to tender and that is strong evidence of our commitment to this project."

Minister, having heard that transcript, can you confirm that the Spit Bridge widening contract was abandoned by you and Morris Iemma prior to the election?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, I must say at the outset that I am always cautious with people quoting so-called media reports—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We have the audio recording, if you would like it.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: It reminds me of an interview the Hon. Duncan Gay did not that long ago when he was asked for his policy in relation to a particular matter—I believe it was the Spit Bridge. His response was, "Oh come on, it's a Sunday, it's a bit hard." There is a certain subjective interpretation. Having said that, I would also ask, through the Chair, perhaps it would be appropriate to address the Premier by his correct title, which is Premier Morris Iemma, as opposed to "Iemma", which I find offensive.

The issue has been discussed at length in the Parliament. The New South Wales Government is not proceeding with works to widen the Spit Bridge. The costs for the project just do not stack up. As I said before, we have to tick two boxes when delivering new infrastructure: one is value for money and the other is public interest. After comprehensive evaluation, the proposal to widen the Spit Bridge could not be financially justified.

It should also be noted that the Opposition, and particularly Mike Baird, did not support the widening of the Spit Bridge. In fact, unlike the Government, it was something the Opposition was not even prepared to look at. The Spit Bridge and Military Road are identified in the New South Wales Government's urban transport statement for improvements. The Government has set up a working group to investigate initiatives to improve traffic flows on this corridor. The working group includes

the Roads and Traffic Authority, the State Transit Authority, the Ministry of Transport, and the Premier's Infrastructure Implementation Group. The third meeting of the working group is scheduled for early November 2007.

I am advised that the working group is investigating improvements for the corridor, such as the fast-tracking of bus priority works, including new bus lanes and bus jump starts at key intersections; further reducing car parking, creating clearways on Military Road; upgrading intersections at Spit and Parriwi Roads and the entry and exit at Spit car park; westbound tidal flow on Military Road-Spit Bridge to Ourimbah Road; and further reducing the Spit Bridge opening times. The allocation for Spit-Military Road was an early concept estimate forecast. Priorities of projects continually revised to ensure delivery of value as part of a balanced funded program.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Did you and Premier Iemma have a discussion prior to the election that the Government would not go ahead with this project?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, why did the Government state its commitment to the project when the Roads and Traffic Authority's own modelling showed the widening provided no benefits for peak direction traffic? That was sourced from an email dated 1 August 2005 that we obtained through freedom of information.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, this has been widely canvassed in the Parliament.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Well you should be able to answer it then.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: If I was not being rudely interrupted by the Hon Duncan Gay, then perhaps I could answer it. If you do insist on interrupting me from time to time, then I may have to gather my thoughts because you have brokored by train of thought. Mr Chair, this issue has been widely canvassed in the Parliament. The Hon. Duncan Gay is well aware it was a project that we looked closely at. Unfortunately the technical challenges of the project meant it did not represent value for money or was not in the public interest to continue with. The cost did not stack up and we were unable to proceed with that project.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, where have you allocated the funds that were originally intended for this project?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Of course we have a global budget of \$3.6 billion. At the moment we are awaiting the report of the inter-working group that I mentioned earlier, which is looking at issues in relation to that. We may well allocate some of those funds to initiatives indicated by the working group.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: How much of that \$3.6 billion includes funding Federal funding?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will seek some advice on that. My advice is \$829 million.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, when did you decide not to go ahead with the Spit?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I did not make any decision. There was a recommendation from the Roads and Traffic Authority that the project did not stack up and I accepted the recommendation of the Roads and Traffic Authority.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, your predecessor got rid of the general manager of the Bikes and Pedestrian Branch, which I understand was a State Emergency Services position within the Roads and Traffic Authority. I think it changed names a few times. With that general manager we also lost the accompanying cycle budget. Are there any plans at all to reinstate a general manager or a SES position with sole responsibly and a focus on cycling?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: In relation to cycling there is now more than 3,900 kilometres of cycle way in New South Wales for the use of cyclists and pedestrians. You would be aware that in 1999 the Government released the Bike Plan 2010 with the commitment of \$251 million over 10 years to deliver an average of 200 kilometres of cycling facilities per year—

Dr JOHN KAYE: With respect, Minister, I was asking about the management.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: But it is all interconnected. It is about cycling.

Dr JOHN KAYE: We will get to that but can we start by talking about the general manager and the fact that your predecessor, the Hon. Michael Costa, axed the general manager. Do you have plans to reinstate a general manager or an equivalent SES position?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: My advice is we have no plans, no.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So we are going to continue without a general manager. What do you understand to be our per capita expenditure on cycle ways in New South Wales?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Per capita?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Yes, how much we spend per head of population.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I do not think that is a calculation that the Roads and Traffic Authority has ever done.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is a hard one I know and it would take a lot of work. The total expenditure on cycle ways is, I understand, of the order of \$8.66 million, is that right?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Over what time period sorry?

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is a 12-month expenditure. I think it is 2006-07?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Did you say \$8.6 million?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Roughly \$8.7 million.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am advised the Roads and Traffic Authority is directly funding bicycle specific programs valued at \$7.6 million this year and these will deliver cycling specific infrastructure education promotion.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So if I divide \$7.6 million by 6.7 million people I get about \$1.20 per head of population, roughly speaking. You can believe my arithmetic. Why is it that that puts us as the lowest amongst the mainland States for per capita funding of cycle ways? There is no mainland State that is anywhere near as low as that: Queensland is at \$3.16, Western Australia at \$4.93, South Australia at \$2.02 and Victoria at \$3.89. Why are we so low compared to other States?

Mr WIELINGA: Perhaps if I could give you briefly a little bit of additional information. Cycle ways are structured in a 50-50 arrangement with local government. Most of the local councils have their individual bike committees and the Roads and Traffic Authority works with those local councils on a priority basis to fund bicycle plans on a 50-50 basis. In addition we build new cycle ways into our major projects. For example, we are spending \$7.5 million on a cycle way for the Lane Cove Tunnel project. On our major highway system most of the road shoulders are constructed with a bit of additional width to facilitate cycle movement as well. It is difficult to separate out those costs as part of the cycle way program.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I turn now to your shared expenditure with local government, which, as you say, is matched on dollar for dollar. How much State Government money is being spent on that?

Mr WIELINGA: We have just mentioned that in the current financial year we have \$7.6 million. On a 50-50 basis you are looking at about double that amount because council—

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is council money, okay. How many applications have you had from councils for matching funds?

Mr WIELINGA: I am sorry, I have just been advised it is \$3 million with local government. It is \$7.6 million in total.

Dr JOHN KAYE: When you say in total, \$7.6 million is the total State Government expenditure?

Mr WIELINGA: It is \$7.6 million and that involves 93 local government bicycle projects.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So \$7.6 million is the total State Government expenditure, \$3 million of which—

Mr WIELINGA: Is shared with councils.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And they add another \$3 million into that? That \$7.6 million does not include the \$3 million that came from local government?

Mr WIELINGA: No.

Dr JOHN KAYE: How many applications have you had for matching funds from local governments?

Mr WIELINGA: We can get those details for you.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So you will take that on notice. Could you also at the same time tell us how many of those applications have been knocked back? And can you give us an indication here of, roughly speaking, how many get knocked back or do most of them get funded?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: With respect, rather than give rough indications I think it is appropriate that we take that request on notice and come back with exact information.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Alright, let's go to somewhere else in relation to which you might be able to give an answer.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: While you are interested in bicycling I think it is worth pointing out that since we announced Bike Plan 2010 in 1999—

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am glad you raised Bike Plan 2010—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Please let me finish.

Dr JOHN KAYE: The Minister is not answering a question. The Minister has just launched into a speech that does not address any question I have asked.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am about to explain to you about Government expenditure on bicycle tracks since 1999. So it is pretty relevant to the line of questioning you are now pursuing. It is only going to take a minute John and then we can move on.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Go for it Eric.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Since 1999 when we announced Bike Plan 2010 we have provided more than \$219 million towards bicycle programs. I think that is pretty good.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Let's talk about Bike Plan 2010 and let's talk about route 17 in Bike Plan 2010, which is the Harbour Bridge to Woolloomooloo. My understanding is that it is scheduled for completion in 2005. My question is: When will you start work on it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Interestingly enough I do not have details here. I will have to take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You would not have any details because you do not have a senior manager anymore who is interested in that. Likewise, Bike Plan 2010, route 18, University of New South Wales to Sydney University, that is scheduled for completion in 2006. When are you expecting to start work on that?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: How much is budgeted for those two projects and in which years?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: How many of the routes that were anticipated in Bike Plan 2010 have been completed? How many are yet to be commenced?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Bike Plan 2010 envisaged an average of 200 kilometres of cycling facilities to be created each year. The advice I have is that an average of 233 kilometres each year of cycle facilities has been provided by the Government since we launched Bike Plan 2010 in 1999.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That does not answer my question. My question is how many routes in Bike Plan 2010 have been completed?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will have to take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Port Botany has been given the go-ahead for a \$1 billion expansion over 60 hectares. What proposals are in place for budgeting and implementing an appropriate road network infrastructure to service Port Botany?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Could you repeat the question?

Dr JOHN KAYE: The Government has just approved Port Botany—I think you know where that is, Minister—for a \$1 billion expansion over 60 hectares. What plans do you have in place for an appropriate road infrastructure to cater for the expansion of Port Botany?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: There is, indeed, a substantial expansion of the Port Botany plan. It is important when considering Port Botany that we talk about the total freight task. You would be well aware that the Government is committed to a target of 40 per cent of boxes to be moved by rail. That is an important issue. Obviously, the Roads and Traffic Authority is looking at proposals as to how we will manage the growing freight task generated by an extended Port Botany.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Your answer, which did not really answer my question, was that 40 per cent of the containers will be transported by rail. How many fewer trucks will that result in?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think there is a flaw in your questions because one is talking about the percentage of total freight task and the other the number of trucks, which depends on the type of trucks. It is worthwhile being aware that the Government has a plan for an intermodal at Enfield, which is an important part of managing the freight task as well, which you would be aware of. Discussions are also taking place about other challenges that the freight task will deliver.

CHAIR: We will move on to the Government.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Minister, could you advise the Committee on the Roads and Traffic Authority's implementation of aspects of the Urban Transport Statement, which were announced by Premier Iemma in November?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I thank the honourable member for her question—asked so politely, I might add. The priority of the Iemma Government is to improve bus travel times and reliability. The Urban Transport Statement makes it clear that improving public transport is a key strategy we will pursue in order to relieve congestion on our busy roads, benefiting all Sydney road users. The State Government is currently implementing a \$235 million package of bus priority measures to support the rollout of strategic bus corridors across the Sydney road network. Members of the Committee would also be aware of the New South Wales Government's commitment to improving the efficiency and reliability of bus services on Victoria Road, in particular. Today the Roads and Traffic Authority regards itself as an integrated transport agency.

There is a strong focus and commitment on improving public transport. That is why we are playing a key role in the management of 42 strategic bus corridors in Sydney, of which Victoria Road is one of the most significant. This same corridor is busy not only for buses but for general traffic as well, particularly between Drummoyne and Rozelle. Improving this corridor is a key outcome for the Roads and Traffic Authority and a commitment for the Government. As I have already said, the upgrade of Victoria Road will particularly benefit bus users of this strategic bus corridor. The Roads and Traffic Authority is investigating options for the Iron Cove Bridge duplication as part of improving bus priority measures and general traffic conditions on Victoria Road. Extensive investigations are underway and the most feasible options will be taken to the community later this year for consultation.

Studies needed in the development of these options include underwater surveys, electricity and telecommunications cabling, geotechnical surveys of soil and ground types, bridge concept designs, investigation of automatic tidal flow technology, investigation of potential bus bay locations, assessment of environmental issues such as noise impacts and heritage issues and traffic modelling and parking studies. The necessary preliminary work is underway to move the project forward from concept to construction. The Roads and Traffic Authority is currently finalising the establishment of an alliance with a private sector designer, environmental specialist and construction specialist who will work with the Roads and Traffic Authority to deliver the project. Once established the alliance will immediately work on the preparation of environmental assessments, designs and programs for the project.

Early estimates for the project have ranged up to \$100 million for the options, with completion expected in 2009-10. However, the procurement process will determine both the final cost and timetable for delivery. We are not at that stage yet. The duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge will not be without its challenges. It is well known that skilled labour capacity in the construction industry is stretched at the moment and, like all major infrastructure builders, the Roads and Traffic Authority must compete in this market for resources. We will work with local communities throughout this project to get the best outcome for them and the best outcome for bus commuters and motorists. This is one of the busiest road corridors in Sydney with about 78,000 vehicles travelling on Victoria Road and crossing Iron Cove Bridge every day, as well as approximately 800 buses which use Victoria Rd carrying more than 35,000 commuters every day. We take our commitment seriously and we are getting on with the job of delivering this important project.

As well as a major infrastructure upgrade of Victoria Road, bus priority measures have already been introduced on a number of corridors as part of the urban transport statement. This includes Maroubra to the city via Anzac Parade as well as Parramatta to the city via Macquarie and Ryde. The Parramatta to Bankstown and Parramatta to Castle Hill corridors have also benefited from measures to give buses priority, as has the corridor from Brookvale to the city by Roseville. Bus priority measures have also been implemented to benefit commuters along the Miranda to the city, Miranda to Hurstville and Miranda to Bankstown corridors and also the Liverpool to Bankstown, Bankstown to Burwood and Burwood to Macquarie corridors.

The Roads and Traffic Authority is working to benefit our road users by providing buses with priority along these corridors. The measures being introduced include new infrastructure such as intersection improvements, bus priority B lights at traffic signals, road widening and the installation of

red bus lanes, bus-only lanes and transit lanes. Members would also be aware that both Spit Road and Military Road were identified in the New South Wales Government's Urban Transport Statement. The Government has set up a working group, as I said earlier, to investigate initiatives to improve traffic flows along the corridor. The Roads and Traffic Authority is considering options for the whole corridor beyond Spit Road and Military Road and Pittwater Road and North Narrabeen.

I am advised that the working group is also working to provide its initial report to the Government by the end of this year. I look forward to providing the Committee with updates in the future. As well as the infrastructure and policy, new technology is also playing a key role in improving travel times and priority for commuters. Again this is part of the implementation of the Urban Transport Statement. Only this week the Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport, the hardworking Mr John Watkins, announced the selection by the Roads and Traffic Authority of Tyco Traffic and Transportation as our preferred tenderer for the rollout of the public transport information priority system [PTIPS]—on-board bus technology. The introduction of PTIPS provides active priority for late-running buses at traffic signal-controlled intersections.

The PTIPS is intelligent technology. In simple terms it is smart buses speaking to smart traffic lights—buses fitted out with satellite tracking technology to determine whether or not a bus is running on time. In the case of a late running bus, an on-board system will communicate with the Roads and Traffic Authority's Sydney coordinated adaptive traffic system [SCATS] to give the bus traffic light priority. This high-level technology is already in use and has been trialled over a 12-month period along several of our strategic bus corridors—the routes between Hurstville and Miranda, Liverpool and Bankstown and State transit route 400 from Bondi Junction to Burwood.

Since 1995 the New South Wales government agencies, essentially the Roads and Traffic Authority, have introduced 227 kilometres of bus lanes and bus priority roads across Sydney, including 98 kilometres of bus lanes, 48 kilometres of bus-only transit ways and 81 kilometres of transit lanes. The Roads and Traffic Authority and the Ministry of Transport will continue their integrated approach to implementing these measures to continue to benefit Sydney's road users. As I have said, we consider ourselves an integrated public transport agency, not only a builder of roads. Encouraging public transport use through policy and infrastructure development is one of the keys to managing demand for space on the road network.

Also, as part of the Urban Transport Statement, in November last year the Premier announced a \$100 million Pinch Points Program, a good example of policy and infrastructure coming together. The program is aimed at improving traffic flow at key congestion points in Sydney's major road corridors. I take this opportunity to update the Committee on its progress. The Pinch Points Program will target more than 20 corridors in Sydney, which are known as peak hour traffic hotspots. Through the program the Roads and Traffic Authority will develop ways to ease traffic flows for our road users by providing targeted improvements to the existing road network in order to maintain travel speeds and provide reliable travel times.

The Pinch Points Program will improve road capacity largely through relatively small-scale but nonetheless significant road infrastructure improvements: measures such as lengthening turn bays, adding extra lanes on key sections of roads, widening intersections and changing their traffic light configurations, and replacing heavily used roundabouts with traffic lights. These levers that we can pull and buttons we can push, so to speak, should enhance capacity on the key road corridors and improve travel times for motorists.

Other measures to be applied under the program include implementing clearway and local parking restrictions to improve lane use and allow better flow of traffic during peak periods. Earlier this year under the Pinch Points strategy the Government committed to installing traffic lights and additional through turning lanes at the intersection of Richmond Road and St Marys Road in Berkshire Park. The installation of lights at this busy intersection will improve safety and travel times for people entering Richmond Road from Llandilo, Berkshire Park and Shanes Park. These intersection improvements are scheduled to be completed by 2009. The Roads and Traffic Authority is getting on with the job of delivering all of these road network improvements under the Urban Transport Statement to improve the efficiency and reliability of the Sydney road network.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: What has been undertaken to improve safety in road tunnels?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think it is important from the outset to say that Sydney's road tunnels are considered among the safest in the world. Our road tunnels contain sophisticated safety systems and they have their own dedicated control rooms, which are constantly monitoring 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Sydney road tunnels are monitored using closed-circuit television cameras located to provide coverage of the tunnels and their approaches. Incident response teams are also on standby around the clock to manage all types of incidents.

The systems and procedures for each tunnel undergo extensive scrutiny and are reviewed and approved by the emergency services. The Committee should be aware that exercises are conducted regularly to ensure emergency services, the Roads and Traffic Authority, tunnel response teams and operators are all well prepared in the event of an incident. The Committee would be aware of two recent examples from both within Australia and overseas of how an accident in a road tunnel can have catastrophic effects because of the enclosed environment. The Burnley tunnel accident in Melbourne earlier this year saw three people unfortunately incinerated in a truck accident inside the tunnel. Also earlier this year people died in a truck accident in a Los Angeles tunnel in the United States.

The Interstate 5 Tunnel in Los Angeles was just 170 metres long, two lanes wide, and had a speed limit of around 85 kilometres an hour—not dissimilar to some of the infrastructure we have. According to the *Los Angeles Times* the wreckage of 30 trucks and commercial vehicles as well as one car were pulled out of this tunnel more than two days after the initial fire and explosion. I think it is important for the whole Committee to understand that we take our tunnel safety very seriously and what happened in the Burnley tunnel and what happened in the United States are clear reasons why it should not be considered a frivolous issue.

If you have a look at the website edition of the *Los Angeles Times* on 15 October, it talks about a tunnel that was charred and still smouldering; the roadway pocketed; the ceiling blistered; the highway's asphalt shoulders resembled solidified lava flow—and that is because of the really extreme temperatures that can be generated in the enclosed environment of a tunnel; sections of the concrete walls had peeled away exposing the steel reinforcement bars, some of which appeared to have bent because of the heat; and the integrity of the side walls of the tunnel had been compromised by the heat generated by the accident in that tunnel.

That is why we ask all motorists to stick to the speed limit in Sydney's road tunnels. The maximum speed limit in any of the Sydney road tunnels is 80 kilometres an hour and there is clear, variable speed signage showing the appropriate speed in the tunnel: sometimes that is changed in the event of roadworks or maintenance being conducted on those tunnels. That is why I think suggestions by some members of the Opposition to remove speed cameras from road tunnels needs to be carefully examined. Speed cameras are there to slow people down, especially in tunnels. We do not want people speeding anyway on the road network, but one of the most dangerous places to speed is certainly in our road tunnels anywhere throughout Sydney.

Most of the speed cameras on New South Wales toll roads are in road tunnels. Unfortunately, the Hon. Duncan Gay told the *Daily Telegraph* on 8 October that these roads are the least needing of speed cameras, which is quite disappointing. When John Laws asked him on the same day if we need any speed cameras on tollways and in tunnels—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Point of order: These are budget estimates. The Minister is clearly indulging in a character assassination of me on a question that I have not asked in the budget estimates. I request you return him to delivering detail on budget estimates rather than indulging in a misdirected character assassination that he has already done in another place and, frankly, without any basis.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: To the point of order: I asked a question on road safety and I think that cameras are an important element of road safety. The honourable member has raised this issue in the House many times about cameras; he has already raised the issue of the same radio program in this hearing already. It is appropriate that if the Minister wants to refer to it he can.

CHAIR: Can the Minister confine himself to the question he is answering?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I thought I was. I can understand that the honourable member does not want his words—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: I am more than happy to have a public debate with you, but this is beyond—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am glad you said that, because when John Laws asked you on the same day if we need speed cameras on tollways and in tunnels your response was, "I'm pretty doubtful".

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Point of order: Mr Chairman, you just made a ruling and I understand that this Minister is now deliberately flouting your ruling.

CHAIR: Can the Minister confine himself to answering the question without a commentary on various members of the Committee?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I only have nice things to say about you Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile.

I will just go through some of the systems that are in place to keep motorists safe in our road tunnels. We have obviously closed-circuit television monitoring; automatic detention systems; customer reports; emergency management equipment in the tunnels, located at control rooms, which enables the centralised management and coordination of emergency services in the event of an accident; emergency barriers and variable message signs that are used at the tunnel at entry points to stop vehicles and protect drivers from driving into potential hazard situations—if there is an incident in the tunnel the last thing you want is more people going into the tunnel; electronic message boards on roads around the tunnels to alert drivers of an incident in the tunnel; and very sophisticated smoke detection systems to detect smoke in an emergency and allow efficient and safe evacuation from a tunnel.

In an emergency we have water suppression systems such as deluge water sprays and sprinklers, which are installed to manage fires in the tunnel. I can advise the Committee they have been used on a number of occasions when cars have caught fire in our road tunnels to put the fire out quickly and manage it quickly. As well, to assist in the management of fire, there are fire hose reels; fire extinguishers throughout the tunnels; and hydro points located throughout the tunnels for use by the New South Wales Fire Brigades. We have emergency phones that are located at least every 60 metres throughout Sydney's tunnels, and these are connected directly to the tunnel control room, which is monitored 24 hours, seven days a week. We have dedicated communication systems that have been established specifically for the emergency services. We have a number of traffic management measures that can be utilised in the event that it is necessary to control the movement of vehicles within the tunnels.

Also, we have public address systems and emergency broadcasts through vehicle radios, and they can be set up to alert people of an incident. I do not know if you have ever experienced it but you can be driving through the tunnel listening to the radio and we have the ability in our tunnels to broadcast an alert through your car radio system. The exits have emergency exit signposting with flashing lights to guide people out of the tunnel. Exit paths have fire-rating protection established to allow the safe evacuation of people in an emergency. As well, we have traffic reports to alert drivers generally via the radio of incidents so that they can change routes or delay their trip if they so choose.

Safety systems and processes are reviewed and maintained on a regular basis to ensure the integrity and reliability of the system and to retain high levels of tunnel safety. As well as having the best systems to monitor and respond to incidents, there is a strong preventative focus taken before any Sydney road tunnels are opened to the public. That is why we have a maximum speed limit of 80 kilometres an hour in any of Sydney's major tunnels. Further, to ensure that these well-designed systems are operationally effective, we have a regular program of simulation exercises held in and around the tunnels with the operators and the emergency services. There is also a coordinated management process within the Roads and Traffic Authority's traffic management centre to minimise the impact of incidents on the broader network, further demonstrating the Government's commitment

to road safety. I thank the member for her question on this matter. I know that it is of interest to the many hundreds of thousands of motorists who travel in our road tunnels every day.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Government members have no further questions at this time, but reserve the right to ask questions at a later time.

CHAIR: I have some general questions given that we have been discussing tunnels and tunnel safety. Can you outline your plans to resolve the massive congestion on Parramatta Road with plans to link the M4 to the city? What is the final timetable and approximate cost of that project?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That is an excellent question. The Committee would be well aware that the Government is developing plans to deliver an extension to the M4 East motorway. The New South Wales coordinator general, Professor David Richmond, is coordinating work on this project to deliver the best road option for the people of Sydney. As outlined in the urban transport statement released in November 2006, a discussion paper will be released later this year for community consultation. We anticipate before the end of the year the release of a discussion paper on the M4 extension.

The link will be considered in light of the Port Botany expansion and the role of Sydney airport in the State's economy. It also needs to be considered in light of the growth in Western Sydney. A whole-of-government process will ensure that the expansion of Sydney's motorway network is fully integrated with the Government's metropolitan strategy. No decisions will be made about the project without widespread and extensive community input.

CHAIR: Will the discussion paper now include the proposed length of the tunnel? Is that finalised or will it show options?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I understand that the discussion paper will canvass the preferred route. We will have to wait for the discussion paper to come out for full public consultation.

CHAIR: But are you hoping it will be a discussion about a proposed route rather than alternatives?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Because of the potential size of the project—which could be larger than the Sydney Harbour Bridge—and the potential impact on the metropolitan area, it would be better to have a preferred route that people can look at and debate. It is very important that all councils and the community participate in discussion about this project.

CHAIR: I assume that it will be able to link in with the Cross City Tunnel for people who want to travel straight through.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That is potentially possible.

CHAIR: Are you not sure?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: It would be unwise to pre-empt the discussion paper being released for public consultation. A fair bit has been canvassed in the media about potential routes.

CHAIR: The committee I chaired that inquired into the Cross City Tunnel discovered that there would be serious problems with the tunnel. They have eventuated and have led to the appointment of an administrator and now the sale. Are you aware of any problems concerning the future of the Cross City Tunnel and its future operation? Are any changes to the toll envisaged? I know the toll is in the hands of the private sector, but usually you have some consultation with the operator.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Cross City Tunnel change of ownership is a matter for the company and its investors. It is important to remind the Committee that all risks associated with the tunnel continue to be borne by the company, not by the taxpayers of New South Wales. I am advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority and Treasury conducted a due diligence process as part

of the sale. This process was there to ensure that the parties are appropriate owners, that the financial structure proposed by the parties is robust, that the risk-sharing commercial arrangements between the relevant parties are similar to the original deal and any Government liabilities are less than or equal to the original agreement.

I understand that all necessary probity and auditing requirements were met prior to the Government's approval of the transaction. I honestly think that this transaction represents a new start for this \$700-million piece of infrastructure, which I understand is getting about 40,000 off Sydney roads on some days. It shows a strong desire in the business community to continue to invest in infrastructure in New South Wales. It also shows there is confidence in the strength of the growing New South Wales economy.

CHAIR: You mentioned earlier the safety of the tunnels and the precautions you have taken to deal with potential accidents and fires. What progress have you made on the M5 East tunnel in view of the ongoing criticism about the ventilation systems?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Members would be well aware of the issues with haze in the M5 East tunnel. The Government is continuing to work to deliver on its commitment to improve air quality in and around the tunnel. As I previously advised the Parliament, the Government's air quality improvement plan for the tunnel has a number of components. First, we have video detection systems installed to identify illegal smoky trucks. This became operational in June 2006. I am advised that since the installation of technology, 368 smoky trucks were detected during the moratorium period, which ended in December last year. Since the end of the moratorium, operators face enforcement action if they fail to fix their trucks. I am advised that more than 200 incidents of polluting heavy vehicles were referred to the Department of Environment and Climate Change in the first half of the year for appropriate action.

The second component of the plan was to improve ventilation flows with the installation of 12 additional jet fans. These were commissioned in December last year and are now operational. The third component is the installation of Australia's first road tunnel air filtration plant. I understand that an extensive community consultation period is occurring about the proposal. The Minister for Planning granted approval for the construction operation of the filtration in July this year. The modifications report and the Minister's approval are available on the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Department of Planning websites. I am advised that these works are scheduled to begin in coming months. The final element of the plan is the revised ventilation strategy. The Government has made it clear that this will not be implemented until the filtration plant is operational later this year.

I am advised that ambient air quality is monitored by the Roads and Traffic Authority at four monitoring stations around the tunnel and that this data is published on the Roads and Traffic Authority website. I am advised that in-tunnel monitoring is conducted by the tunnel operator and data is provided to the Department of Environment and Climate Change and New South Wales Health each month. The Government will continue to work to deliver on its commitment to improve air quality for motorists and local residents.

CHAIR: I refer back to the Cross City Tunnel. As you are aware, the previous owners took legal action for compensation because of the road changes. Has that action now lapsed or has it transferred to the new owners? Is the Government still facing a potential liability?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The inquiry into the Cross City Tunnel, which you chaired, Mr Chair, made some excellent recommendations, including a number of road changes that the Government has implemented. Since then the operators of the tunnel have not activated the dispute clauses within the contract. The contract contains extensive clauses dealing with disputes between the Government and the operators. At this point, those dispute mechanisms have not been activated by the old owners or the new owners.

CHAIR: We are hoping it will not progress in the future. I was also involved in the Lane Cove Tunnel committee. That committee was very concerned about the potential congestion on Epping Road with the reduction in lanes. The Government agreed to a 12-month postponement. Is the Government considering extending that postponement or is it continuing with the original plan? Has it taken potential congestion on Epping Road into account?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: There have been significant improvements in travel times along the corridor since the Lane Cove Tunnel and expanded Gore Hill Freeway were opened. A lot of negativity was generated, particularly by the Opposition, in relation to that project prior to its opening. I know a recent independent report commissioned by the NRMA found that the Lane Cove Tunnel and expanded Gore Hill Freeway generated substantial time, fuel and money savings for motorists who use it.

One of the lessons learnt from the Cross City Tunnel and emphasised by your inquiry into the Cross City Tunnel was the issue of integration of a project into the broader road network. You would be aware that arising out of that an integration group was created that looked into integrating the Lane Cove Tunnel back into the road network in a way that maximised benefits to motorists but minimised inconvenience to the community. A part of that involves looking at the issues around reconfiguration of Epping Road. Since we have had a successful integration of the Lane Cove Tunnel into the road network, I am advised that works are continuing to enhance public transport and urban amenity along the Epping Road corridor.

We have reformed the Lane Cove integration group to oversee the next stage of works. Some changes have been made and we are allowing motorists in that corridor to adjust gradually to those changes. We are following the recommendations of the Auditor-General, the Richmond review of motorways and the bipartisan parliamentary inquiry. I am advised that the second stage of works is continuing, and two lanes of general traffic will be maintained each way while the work takes place. Two road openings have occurred as part of these works—two right-hand turns from Epping Road, into Centennial Avenue and Parklands Avenue. There are no road closures in this project, and that is important.

Work commenced in September 2007 on the following elements of the project: Construction of the new right-hand turns in Epping Road westbound at Parklands Avenue and Centennial Avenue, and the construction of a further 3.5 kilometres of shared bike and pedestrian access on the southern side of Epping Road. In February 2008 bus lanes are due to commence operations on Epping Road, and then in February 2008 the following will take place: Introduction of T-2 transit lanes on the Gore Hill Freeway between the Pacific Highway and Merrenburn Avenue; the introduction of an a.m. T-3 transit lane on Epping Road eastbound between Pittwater Road and Mowbray Road West; the opening of a new tunnel off ramp linking the Gore Hill Freeway to the T-2 lane. As always, I need to thank motorists and the local community for their patience and cooperation on these improvements as they are being made.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, you mentioned earlier that you acted on a recommendation of the Roads and Traffic Authority in scrapping The Spit Bridge project. Could you give us details of the date and the title of the document that you acted on to make that decision?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will refer to my previous answers, both here and in the House in relation to this matter.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: But, Minister, you indicated that you acted on a recommendation from the Roads and Traffic Authority. This would have been a formal recommendation that—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, with respect, the honourable member can restate his question any way he likes. I will refer to my previous answers, both in this place and in the House in relation to this matter.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Chairman, to be fair, budget estimates is about eliciting information on these projects and the estimates in the budget of New South Wales. If I am to ask a question of the Minister and he refuses to answer, we are not progressing the people of New South Wales at all. It is a fair question. The Minister used as a reason for stopping The Spit Bridge project that the Roads and Authority gave him a recommendation. I quite properly asked the Minister the date and the title of the document. I had not yet asked, but I will ask now for the Minister to undertake to obtain a copy of that document for the Committee.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I refer to my previous answers in relation to this matter. This decision was a decision—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, are you refusing to detail this information?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am advised this was a process that was taken to Cabinet. So, I can only refer to my previous answers in relation to this matter both here and in the public arena and in the House.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: But you would understand, Minister, there would be a document that would come from the Roads and Traffic Authority to you outside Cabinet.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Point of order: If the Minister is referring to a Cabinet document, I am sure the honourable member is aware he is not at liberty to discuss Cabinet documents or Cabinet decisions.

CHAIR: Or whether there was a document in the first place.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: To the best of my recollection, and I am sure the transcript will indicate this, the Minister in answer to an earlier question of mine indicated that he did not have consultation with the Premier over this matter. So, it is my understanding this is one of the few decisions he has made himself as Minister, and he said to the Committee he acted on a recommendation from the Roads and Traffic Authority—and that is quite proper—to the Minister for Roads. It is not a tricky question, Minister. I have asked, given what you said—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, with respect, he can ask this any way he wants, but this has gone by the Cabinet. If he is ever lucky enough to stumble into government he might understand the processes of government and Cabinet, but I cannot add to my answers any further.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, you will no doubt recall the tragic circumstances of the freeway bridge collapse in Minneapolis in early August this year that killed 13 people, and then the collapse of a bridge that was under construction in China that killed 36 people. With regard to the Gladesville Bridge in Sydney, the Roads and Traffic Authority website states, "At the time of inspection in August 2004 the Gladesville Bridge was in sound structural condition." Given that the Gladesville Bridge is of State significance and in light of the tragedies I just mentioned, has the Roads and Traffic Authority carried out any inspections of this bridge since August 2004?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will ask the chief executive of the Roads and Traffic Authority to respond to that.

Mr WIELINGA: Perhaps I should take just a couple of brief minutes to describe our approach to bridge maintenance and bridge inspections. The Roads and Traffic Authority has a fairly rigorous regime for regular inspection of bridges.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I understand, but these are specific questions on a specific bridge.

Mr WIELINGA: I understand that. It is normal practice for us to do detailed inspections of our concrete structures, the new concrete structures, at two-year intervals, but regular inspections, visual inspections by our bridge maintenance staff. In respect of the Gladesville Bridge we will need to give you the details of those inspections, but we have those records.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Is it your understanding that it would have had an inspection since 2004?

Mr WIELINGA: I would expect it is had more than one since 2004.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, would you therefore agree with the Roads and Traffic Authority's website, which states that the Gladesville Bridge's physical condition is good?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take the advice of the Roads and Traffic Authority in relation to the engineering and maintenance of the Gladesville Bridge. I will obtain information as to the maintenance regime of the Gladesville Bridge over the past three years, if that is the question being asked, but I have every confidence in the Roads and Traffic Authority's maintenance program. I think we spend on maintenance a year \$933 million. In relation to the maintenance of the Gladesville Bridge—

CHAIR: You will take that on notice, specifically in relation to the Gladesville Bridge?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Did I get it correct, Minister, that you need to take on notice my question that you would agree with the Roads and Traffic Authority website that the Gladesville Bridge's physical condition is good?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I have every confidence in the Roads and Traffic Authority's maintenance schedules. We will ensure that the Gladesville Bridge is structurally sound.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Wielinga, did you indicate detailed inspections or visual inspections?

Mr WIELINGA: Both things occurred. There is a regime for detailed inspections. Also, visual inspections occur at our structures. I am not aware of any particular problems with this structure. If that is what you are leading to, tell us about it and we will have a look at it.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We will get there. Minister, does it concern you that the RTA website says the bridge is in good physical condition because "the railings on either side of the bridge appear to have been repainted but the commemorative plaques however are in poor condition and could do with some cleaning works."

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Sorry, what is the question? Am I worried about the plaques?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Does that concern you?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Frankly, I find this sort of questioning quite ridiculous. You have an undertaking from the RTA to provide you with the clear inspection and maintenance program for the Gladesville Bridge. We take our maintenance responsibilities extremely seriously. Whether the commemorative plaques on the bridge need some polishing, I do not know about, but I have every confidence that the RTA takes its maintenance very seriously.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The RTA assessment that I just spoke about and the physical condition then goes on to say, "DMR file notes indicate that divers inspected parts of the bridge exposed to water every six months from December 1965 to check for spalling in the reinforced concrete and for marine growth. It is unclear whether these inspections continue to be carried out."

Mr WIELINGA: I expect they are but we will come back and confirm that. For all of our bridges in marine areas, we do inspect those areas particularly in direct contact in water for spalling and what we call concrete cancer.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, given those comments on the web, how can the community have confidence that the bridge is undergoing regular inspections when your own department's website states that, "It is unclear whether these inspections continue to be carried out"?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That is your interpretation.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No, that is a direct quote.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You have deliberately, as is your way on everything from the Lane Cove Tunnel onwards—and I just want to remind you that you have a history here—you forecast that the Lane Cove Tunnel would be a disaster when it opened; you forecast that when

we took the Harbour Tunnel cashless it would be a disaster and here you are now going through the RTA website, which pretty much underlines the extent of your research, which is to just log on somewhere and have a quick look—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It was your website, Minister. It was not just somewhere.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Maybe, it is.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Do you know where your website is? Do you check it at all? Does anyone check it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: It pretty much demonstrates where your thinking is. The RTA is focused on maintaining an extensive road network and taking its maintenance seriously.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is where you provide information, Minister.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You are more worried about picking through an extensive RTA website, which is one of the largest run by the Government and which carries a lot of information on it in relation to MyRTA.com and you are more interested in picking through, because you are too dead lazy to do any serious work, the website to try to find anomalies. We have given you an undertaking to give you a clear update of inspections and maintenance of the Gladesville Bridge.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Have you finished so that we can get on with the job? The smear is over. Let us just ask some questions.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We know the history of you as the king of smear in the House. Your attacks on the spouses of other members are well known to people in this room and are recorded in *Hansard*.

CHAIR: Could you just restrict yourself to answering the questions, Minister?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: He raised the issue of smear and I think the king of smear should not be allowed to get away with that. But in relation to this matter I will not allow you to scaremonger, the way you did with the Lane Cove Tunnel, the way you did with the Harbour Tunnel going cashless.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is your website and I am asking you specific questions about your website.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Well that is great. You go to the website. You have an undertaking from the RTA to give you the information to demonstrate the maintenance and inspections.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: If you are not going to answer the question can you be quiet so we can ask some more?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am still answering.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: You have not answered anything; you are just smearing

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The maintenance and inspection of this important piece of road infrastructure is continuing and we have given clear information on that, and to expect either myself or other members here from the RTA to know the exact details, which is really what you want, of the maintenance of every individual piece of infrastructure in the State is a little bit far-fetched, which is why it is appropriate that we take it on notice to give you this information.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I would not have thought it was too far-fetched to have asked relevant questions on the maintenance of a major structure like Gladesville Bridge.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: And we have indicated that we will take it on notice, so move on.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I am trying to. I noted an article in the *New York Times*, not long after the Minneapolis bridge collapse, found that bridge had passed its annual inspections but the 1950s-1960s design of the bridge is what ultimately led to its collapse. I note that Gladesville Bridge is of the same era, having been completed in 1964. In fact, I was rowing under it in the early 60s while it was being built. What does your department look at when assessing the safety of the structure of the Gladesville Bridge?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will ask the chief executive to respond to that.

Mr WIELINGA: Michael, do you want deal with that?

Mr BUSHBY: I think it is worth noting that Les has mentioned that there is a regime of assessments that are done on bridges over time. There is the visual inspection, which is regular, that is looking at minor defects and things that need to be picked up at short notice, such as looking at whether drainage systems work properly, whether surfacing is correct, whether footpaths are suitable for their use. That happens regularly as part of the normal maintenance regime for the road network. It is a quick action and responsive approach to being able to maintain the structures.

There are other regimes as well and the time frames look at the particular exposures of the bridges. For instance, under water I think is done roughly on a four-year cycle, so we go around and look at underwater inspections. In the same way there is a structural check that is done on the structures which is done on a periodic basis, and I am not exactly sure of the timing, but it would be included in the response that we have undertaken to give you, which looks at the changes in traffic loading, the types of vehicles that are going to be using the road network to see whether there is a change that is going to affect the ability of that structure to be able to respond to the loading that is being given. At that time it looks at the condition of the individual components and elements of the structure to be able to match its use.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I have some specific questions, Mr Wielinga.

Mr WIELINGA: Just going back to the particular bridge that you were concerned about in America—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: That is a different bridge, I understand.

Mr WIELINGA: It is a different type of bridge. It has got slender steel members. We have only got one bridge in New South Wales that is closely related, but not the same. We are dealing with a reinforced concrete structure here. It is an entirely different structure.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I understand that. I understand one inspection of the bridge a number of years ago found concrete cancer in a section of the bridge and it was immediately repaired. Are these sorts of inspections continuing and are you finding cancer or not?

Mr WIELINGA: The short answer is the inspections do continue. The concrete cancer problems tend to be worse on the far North Coast because of acid sulphate soil. We use special concretes these days to deal with that particular problem and we have higher concrete covers over steel. We had some issues with the bridges in the Ballina area and they have been repaired. This was some time ago but we do inspections and we deal with it.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Gladesville Bridge, you will get me these details?

Mr WIELINGA: Yes.

CHAIR: Details of what?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Concrete cancer.

CHAIR: Of what bridge? All bridges?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No, just the Gladesville Bridge. These are specific questions on Gladesville Bridge. I am sure you are aware that Gladesville Bridge is unique in its size and its major concrete arches. Can you provide details of when the last test was carried out on the arch?

Mr WIELINGA: What sort of testing are you talking about?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: For example, what was the movement of the arch between the most recent test and the one before?

Mr WIELINGA: I still do not understand the test you are talking about. We have not done a specific loading test on that bridge.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The bridge, as you know, between summer and winter, rises and falls because it has four sets of causeways that go over in an arch and as the concrete heats and cools between summer and winter it rises and falls.

Mr WIELINGA: We understand.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Part of your historic testing has been to track that arch, the rise and the fall. My question was: What was the movement of the arch between the most recent test and the one before?

Mr WIELINGA: We will have to get back to you on that.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, who carried out the test, the Roads and Traffic Authority or a contractor?

Mr WIELINGA: Again, we will have to come back to you with the detail.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I understand that for a number of years the Roads and Traffic Authority has had specialised equipment, a one-second theodolite, that it has used to carry out this sort of work on the Gladesville Bridge. Does the Roads and Traffic Authority still own a one-second theodolite?

Mr WIELINGA: I will have to come back to you on that. This technology is advancing all the time; it is GPS-connected. Our surveyors are generally provided with the most modern surveying technology we can get.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: If the Roads and Traffic Authority does not own a theodolite, could you indicate how the bridge will be monitored without it and how you are able to fit the recent observations with the historic observations?

Mr WIELINGA: One of the things you should perhaps appreciate is that structures tend to be monitored with a lot more detail than they were in their initial couple of decades, for obvious reasons: concrete shrinks. You get to know the history, and you can monitor what is happening with bridge bearings and those sorts of things, to have any pointers for potential problems. We can provide all this detail, but if you have a specific issue you are concerned about, tell us about it and we can look at it.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I am seeking general detail on inspections, given that the Roads and Traffic Authority's website was reasonably less than specific about what was happening in the inspections. Minister, I understand that the Gladesville Bridge rises with heat in summer, obviously because of the expansion, and that it lowers in the cold of winter, and that there are thermometers within the bridge that monitor these changes. Are these thermometers still being monitored, if so, how often are they monitored, and when was the last inspection done?

Mr WIELINGA: We will find out and come back to you.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, with regard to the Roads and Traffic Authority's planning for the substantial expansion of Port Botany, what is your planning figure for the increase in the number of containers that will leave Port Botany each year?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Over what period are you talking about?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Each year, that is, 12 months, or 365 days, or 8,760 hours?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: What was the question?

Dr JOHN KAYE: What is your planning figure for the increase in the number of containers that will leave Port Botany over a one-year period as a result of the expansion.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think a question in relation to planning should be addressed to the appropriate Minister.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I thought you were the Minister responsible for roads. I understand that another 2.8 million containers will leave Port Botany as a result of the expansion.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I do not know where you got that figure from, so I cannot respond.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I understand that some 60 per cent will leave by road and 40 per cent will leave by rail. Roughly, that means 1.7 million additional containers will leave by road from Port Botany. Are you telling me that you do not have a planning figure, that there has been no planning as far as the road network for Port Botany is concerned?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: As you would be well aware, the completion date for the expansion of Port Botany is some years away. The planning is in place, obviously. The Roads and Traffic Authority is liaising with the other relevant agencies. Clearly, the expansion of the M4 East will address a substantial part of that freight task issue, and that is why it is appropriate to wait for that discussion paper to be released.

But I can assure you and other members of the Committee that the Roads and Traffic Authority is conscious of the challenges in that precinct. It is worth pointing out that that is not the only challenge in that precinct, that Sydney Airport is experiencing a substantial increase in passenger movements and by 2020 it is anticipated that there will be around 68 million passenger movements in the air. That will also generate a challenge for traffic. The Roads and Traffic Authority is clearly looking at those issues, because it is the same precinct as well.

Dr JOHN KAYE: My question to you is this: Are you commencing the planning of the additional road capacity that will be required to move the additional containers out of Port Botany?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Roads and Traffic Authority is talking to other government agencies to deal with the challenge of an increasing freight task.

Dr JOHN KAYE: At this stage you do not have a numerical figure on the number of additional freight movements, is that what you are saying?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: This is a movable feast in terms of the generation of increased freight. The growth in the freight task from Port Botany has varied each year, as you would be well aware. If you need that information, it is available from the Sydney Ports Corporation annual report.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do you mean historical data?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am asking you about what happens once—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: And I have explained to you, and you can ask it in 50 ways if you want. Obviously, a lot of discussions and planning occurs with other agencies about dealing with the challenge of the freight task generated by the growing freight task at Port Botany.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You are not going to give us any more information about the thinking of the Roads and Traffic Authority, I take it? You are going to stonewall me on any questions I ask you about planning that the Roads and Traffic Authority is currently undertaking on the road network to cope with the expansion of Port Botany. Do we take it that the usual Road and Traffic Authority brick wall is coming up: we are not going to hear anything more?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: As opposed to the usual dogma by the Greens to be anti everything to go on roads, no—

Dr JOHN KAYE: So you are going to tell us something, then?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think you need to take into account that the discussion paper that will be released in relation to the M4 East expansion may address a number of the concerns you have, but we will wait for that discussion paper to be made public. Let me assure you and other members of the Committee that the Roads and Traffic Authority and the New South Wales Government are well aware of the freight task challenge we face from the very important Port Botany.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, you would accept that an additional 3.1 million containers coming out of Port Botany—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You said it was 2.7 million a little while ago—

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am sorry—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You have to be specific about these things, because the Greens have a bit of a history of scaremongering. I appreciate that you are anti-roads and anti-motorways. I am not aware of one road infrastructure project the Greens have ever supported.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, I am not asking you about our history. I am asking you specifically whether—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think it is very important to contextualise your questions, because all you want to do is scare.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Point of order: Mr Chair, can I ask my question without the Minister abusing me?

CHAIR: Please ask your question.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do you appreciate that local residents are concerned that a number of road options could be used to move the additional freight out of Port Botany by road, that which will go by road, and that they are concerned about which options the Roads and Traffic Authority might pursue? It would not be an unreasonable proposition that you could tell this Committee and the residents of Port Botany—an area which I understand you once sought to represent—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Sought to represent?

Dr JOHN KAYE: We will talk about that later—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Point of order: The member should ask his question.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Will you or will you not give us some indication of what roads and projects the Roads and Traffic Authority is considering to move this freight?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I have indicated that the Roads and Traffic Authority is in appropriate discussions with other government agencies and the Sydney Ports Corporation with

regard to meeting the challenge of the freight task that Port Botany presents to Sydney, and I can assure residents and the communities in the area that appropriate public consultation and discussion will occur.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Let us talk about the M4 East—the on-again-off-again M4 East. The Richmond review tells us that inner urban motorways are very unlikely to pay for themselves, as I understand it. That means that if we go ahead with one or other option on the M4 East, we are likely to see some form of subsidy from the public purse, that is, State Government subsidy, to the operation of the M4 East. Does your department have any estimates on how much it would cost the public purse?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, as I have indicated previously to the Committee there is a discussion paper being prepared by the Coordinator General in relation to the M4 East and once that discussion paper is completed and in the public arena I think issues such as costing will be dealt with as part of that. It would be appropriate to wait for that discussion paper to be in the public arena.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, will you commit to a full and publicly disclosed cost benefit analysis on the M4 East? A cost benefit analysis that includes all the costs, including the induced traffic costs, the congestion costs, the air quality costs, air pollution costs? Will that cost benefit analysis also consider all the public transport alternatives that could provide a similar transport capacity?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think the honourable member is getting a little bit ahead of himself here. Let us allow the discussion paper to go into the public arena. I imagine all of the issues you have raised, and others, will be well and truly canvassed during the public debate. That is why it is important that we have a discussion paper go out to the public arena so that you and other interested people can participate in a debate about that. But I can assure the Committee that the recommendation of the Richmond Inquiry into motorways will be adhered to as part of the process to deal with this project once the discussion paper is in the public arena.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, is an unreasonable proposition that any investment, which I think you described as being larger than the—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Potentially larger than the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Potentially larger than the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Is it an unreasonable proposition to say that should be subjected to the most rigorous form of cost benefit analysis available to the Government?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I absolutely agree that it should have a rigorous cost benefit analysis to it, however, the voodoo cost benefit analysis suggested by the Greens is not the appropriate way.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am sorry, Minister, could you expand on what cost benefit analysis we have suggested?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Look—

Dr JOHN KAYE: Sorry, a basic assumption—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, it does not work like that. You do not get to jump in again and interrupt me. The basic assumption of the Greens is that the roads are bad.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The pre-requisite is to tell the truth.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: They have been talking and will not let the Minister answer.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Gee you would have trouble recognising that Duncan. The basic assumption of the Greens is that all roads are bad. I am not aware of the Greens supporting

any road infrastructure projects in my two years as Roads Minister. Let me assure you that the discussion paper, and it is a discussion paper, will allow members of the public, including the Greens, the opportunity to publicly canvass issues around any potential project. I think that is an appropriate way to go. The Richmond Inquiry into motorways outlines a number of pre-requisites for any future projects to go ahead, including no closures of public roads, to ensure there is a real benefit to the community, that the toll is reasonable and those other sorts of things will be incorporated and canvassed through the discussion paper.

CHAIR: Minister, I have some general questions. One relating to the M4-M5 cash back rebates. I notice you have given a forecast of cashback claims to be paid. You expect that to be a fairly large increase. I am wondering how you have estimated the \$830,000 compared to \$725,000 in 2006-07? Was that based on the estimated increase in traffic using those roads?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: To the end of August 2007 in excess of 365,000 motorists have claimed cashback rebates. Since the commencement of the scheme on 1 January 1997 over \$533 million has been paid out to motorists—that is at 30 June 2007. During the current financial year to 31 August rebates worth \$15.5 million have been paid. Rebates commenced on 1 January 1997 and the number of participants in this scheme has increased steadily since then. All eligible claims are paid. In light of the refunds made to date, \$97 million is allocated in the 2007-08 budget for cashback. Does that satisfy you? Are you happy with that?

CHAIR: Yes. Is there any change to eligible people claiming the cashback?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, there is no change the cashback.

CHAIR: How long do you plan to keep that operating? Is it indefinite, is it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We are committed to the ongoing of cashback.

CHAIR: So there is not a five-year term or something?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Obviously when the toll comes off the M4 there will no longer be a cashback on the M4 and that is due to come off on 15 February 2010.

CHAIR: Earlier there was some discussion and questions about the bicycle lanes, how many were built and so on. It seems to me there is a problem with some of the bicycle lanes where people are riding a bicycle are encouraged to actually do it on some of our expressways?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes.

CHAIR: Has there been any consideration as to the potential danger for the bicycle riders to be on a fairly narrow strip with vehicles travelling at a hundred or 110 kilometres per hour?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will ask Mr Wielinga to answer that.

Mr WIELINGA: There is always a consideration for the safety of cyclists on motorways; because of high-speed traffic there are a set of Australian cycle standards. The shoulders on those motorways tend to be a bit wider so the cyclists can drive on the left-hand edge of the shoulder to give a bit of separation between vehicles. One of the issues that concern us is the wind, particularly from trucks, with cyclists. In an ideal world you would have a separate cycleway to being on the motorway but a lot of these cyclists want to use those motorways and at the moment we let them. But where there is a separate cycleway that would be the ideal option.

CHAIR: Have you ever considered they should use the original road? There is always a road that could be used, like the Pacific Highway?

Mr WIELINGA: We try to put cycleways there. In fact very often you will see from our new projects that that is where we want the cycleways, but people still reserve the right to belong to and be able to use the motorway shoulder.

CHAIR: It is up to the Roads and Traffic Authority though to make a policy decision whether they should be allowed to use the expressways or not. They want to use them; I accept that.

Mr WIELINGA: I understand that. There are some sections of motorways where there are particular accident problems that we could do something about that at the end of the day there are different sorts of cyclists. There are some that do it seriously and like to move quickly and they believe they have the right to use motorway shoulders and even motorway lanes. There are others that do it at a more leisurely pace. In an ideal world, as I said, you would separate the cycles completely from the traffic flow but that option is not always available.

CHAIR: That option is what has occurred on the M7?

Mr WIELINGA: It has occurred on the M7, yes.

CHAIR: Which probably adds greatly to the cost of the project?

Mr WIELINGA: It added approximately \$60 million to the cost of project for that 40 kilometre long cycleway.

CHAIR: \$60 million to allow people to ride their bicycles?

Mr WIELINGA: Correct, and pedestrians to walk along as well.

CHAIR: Pedestrians I know can use it too.

Mr WIELINGA: That is correct.

CHAIR: Another issue that puzzles me is the large sound barriers that are put on these expressways and so on, obviously to protect residents from noise. Even when you have a high rise, like almost a cliff, they still build the sound barrier on top of the cliff almost as if they cannot stop building them. They just continue along, up and down and up and down, when there is already a natural barrier there. Is that necessary or is there some technical reason for it?

Mr WIELINGA: It is all defined by noise contours that come off from the motorway noise. We look at where the buildings are located; there are varying heights where the buildings are. The intention is to try to put a barrier between the sources of the noise and where the residents are. Sometimes we do that with earth mounds, sometimes we do it with constructed walls and sometimes it is a combination of both. The intention is to deflect the noise over the top of the building. We do not want to make them any higher than they need to be. They are expensive to build but they need to do a job. The height is selected by their ability to do the job to deflect the noise away from the residents.

CHAIR: So there is a scientific purpose behind it? It is not that somebody just does it?

Mr WIELINGA: Mr Chair, we can show you the modelling that is done and how the decisions are made about noise wall heights and so forth. We can show you the process. The Roads and Traffic Authority has a set of noise guidelines that might assist your consideration.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Do you have a particular corridor in mind?

CHAIR: Almost all of them that I drive on at I see a very high natural barrier with a high fence on top. It does not make sense to me, bearing in mind the costs involved. You referred to a cost of \$60 million for bicycle lanes. Has anyone calculated the cost of the sound barriers that are built in this way?

Mr WIELINGA: On individual projects we would have a line item that shows the cost of the noise walls. In our interaction with communities around projects, Mr Chair, the opposite view is taken. They ask for more, not less. We do carefully look at the economics. We have a combination of walls and treatments for individual residences to overcome the problems. Noise is an important issue to the community around motorway projects. We need effective strategies to deal with it and we need to work with those residents close to the motorways to try to come up with the best outcome we can.

CHAIR: I have also noticed on the latest expressways the use of plastic material that motorists can see through to the countryside. I am sure most people would appreciate that. How do you assess where that type of installation will be undertaken? I know you have done so in various places, such as a large section on the Kiama bypass. Is your assessment based on the beauty of the countryside?

Mr WIELINGA: That is a consideration. Urban design is a consideration too. It is about making the motorway feel open. The issue that works against it is that some residents do not want the clear barriers; they do not want to be able to look at the motorway. You will find very often that we locate them over bridge structures and other roads. Urban design considerations, the look and feel of the motorway, the look and feel of the surrounding countryside and input from local residents are all factors that are taken into account.

CHAIR: I refer to the reduction of fatalities on roads. In Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 3, page 20-10 you refer to the number of fatalities per 100,000 population. The number has been reducing, not dramatically but gradually. Your projected figure for 2007-08 is 6.9. Have the new regulations that relate to L plate and P plate drivers and alcohol played a role in reducing road accidents and fatalities? In other words, have the initiatives been successful? Have you made an assessment about that?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: A number of initiatives I hope are contributing to an improvement in fatality numbers. In all honesty, it is a little bit early to be able to make a proper assessment. Certainly the changes to P plate regulations, which have been substantial, we are hoping will reverse the trend. Last year was the lowest road toll recorded since World War II. We had an increase by 30 per cent of P plate drivers at the same time against the trend. We are hoping the changes—which include peer restrictions after 11.00 p.m., a ban on mobile phones for P1s, and one speeding offence for P1s and they are out—will have an impact on the number of young drivers that are involved in fatalities. In addition, the other major initiative that has occurred is the random drug testing. It is very much in its initial stages at the moment but we hope that also will take drugged drivers off our roads. They are two initiatives. A number of other initiatives have contributed to the reduction. Obviously, we keep improving the roads and better roads make the roads safer. Also, improved car design is helping as well.

[Short adjournment]

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, I show you a Roads and Traffic Authority document entitled "Victoria Road upgrade delivery program". The Opposition obtained this document pursuant to Standing Order 52 in relation to the Iron Cove Bridge. The document states, "It was found that even given the best case scenario the Premier's announced completion date of 2009 will be difficult to achieve" and that the project "could continue beyond early 2012." This delivery program document then goes on to recommend, "that the Roads Minister be informed about the RTA's project delivery program and the associated risks." That document was written on 4 April 2007. Yet the details of this predicted three-year delay in the project only became public on 21 June and only after I called for papers on the project. Minister, at the time you told the media that you were not aware of the predicted delays, was that in fact the case? Did your department fail to tell you about these delays?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That question was asked of me in the House. I refer to my answer in *Hansard* in relation to that matter.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The question, or a similar question, has been asked in the House but you did not answer it. Minister, this is a budget estimates hearing and I have asked you a particular question about a document in your hand. At the time you told the media that you were not aware of the predicted delays, was that in fact the case? Did your department fail to tell you about these delays?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, I appreciate that the honourable member has now resorted to recycling questions asked of me in the House. I addressed this question in the House, relating to the same document raising the same issues. I am disappointed that the member does not take the time to ask me something new. I have provided Parliament with extensive information

regarding the upgrade of Victoria Road and the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge. For the benefit of the member, I will repeat some of what I said.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No, Minister, it is a specific question. Did you or did you not?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You are so lazy you have to recycle questions asked in the House. You should improve your work ethics and ask me something new. I dealt with this in the House. The duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge and the upgrade of Victoria Road are key commitments of the Government. It is one of the busiest road corridors in Sydney with about 78,000 vehicles crossing Iron Cove Bridge every day. It is a high-priority project and we want improvements delivered on Victoria Road in this term. Particularly, the upgrade of Victoria Road will focus on improving bus travel times and reliability for commuters.

I am advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority is investigating options for the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge, including extensive geotechnical surveys. When feasible options are developed they will be taken to the community later this year for consultation. So you can just rehash your old questions because you are dead-set lazy, but we will at the end of this year release a concept for public consultation, because unlike you, who has a distinguished career in opposition, we are getting on with the job of delivering on our commitments to the people of this State and delivering on the upgrade of Victoria Road and the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Now you have finished your sledging could you answer the question?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am just warming up actually.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Your colleagues indicate that the best way to tell when Eric Roozendaal is lying is to look to see if his lips are moving, and your lips were moving then.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Is that the best you have got, Duncan? I think I heard that when I was about 10-years-old.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is not bad.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Now he is rating himself on his sledging. Mr Chair. What can I say? He is captain coach and sole selector of the sledge team. After 19 years in this place, Duncan, I really thought you would have something better than that. It disappoints me.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Within that document I can see no mention of a shortage of skills. Part of your reason for the delay was a shortage of skilled tradesmen for this project.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We are now going from the sublime to the ridiculous, because—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Let us leave it. We do not need another sledge.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You have asked the question about skills shortage and you are going to get the answer.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Wake up, you idiot. You are a Minister of the Crown. How about answering questions without sledging?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Now listen to the answer, because, yet again, you are too damned lazy to ask a decent question. In relation to skills shortage, if you speak to anybody involved in construction, road construction or infrastructure construction anywhere in this country they will tell you that the resources boom in Western Australia and Queensland has put huge demands on infrastructure skills in this country. If you talk to any of the construction companies they will tell you they are now recruiting project managers and engineers from around the world to try and meet the skills shortage in this country. You might want to ask: Why is there a skills shortage in this country? It is because the Federal Government has completely abrogated its responsibility—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Chairman, the Minister is answering a question that has not been asked.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You asked about skills shortage, Duncan. You took your foot out of your mouth and you put the other one in.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: He is answering the question.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: He is not answering the question.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: You asked about a skills shortage.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Point of order: Mr Chairman, I request that you draw the Minister back in line. He is answering a question I did not ask. He is spending his whole time sledging members and not answering questions. If you are truly an independent chairman do your job.

CHAIR: You did make a reference to no comment on skills.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: In that paper. He was talking about the Federal Government. I have got a fresh question; I have got a fresh paper.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Have another go, Duncan. The score is 2-0 at the moment.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: You have taken to rating yourself, have you?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am rating your score.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I have here a Roads and Traffic Authority briefing note regarding the Victoria Road-Iron Cove Bridge upgrade, again obtained under Standing Order 52.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: And all these documents are in the public arena.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It was compiled prior to 11 April 2007, and it states, "Work needs to commence immediately with a goal to complete construction in late 2009". That briefing note also includes a time frame, which states that for the project to remain on schedule a short list of contractors must be approved by 6 July 2007; selected contractors must be approved by 24 August 2007; and by 21 September this year there must be an agreement of scope and TOC prior to implementation. Have you selected the contractors for the project?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: As you would be well aware, the concept will be released for public discussion and comment later this year. I understand we are preparing an alliance arrangement for that particular project.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Have you selected the contractors for the project?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The process has not gone to public consultation yet.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: So the answer is no?

Mr WIELINGA: With projects with very tight time frames we endeavour to bring several activities through in parallel. What we are doing with this particular project now is that the environmental studies and the detailed design and the concept development are all being done in parallel. We have a contractor working with us on that design work at the moment so that we can facilitate it and get a running start on the project when we get final approval.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Does that mean the project is on time or behind time, given the time frames detailed in this document?

Mr WIELINGA: Our target remains the end 2010. Of course, the next few months are always critical. When project managers put their timetables together—and I speak with authority on this—they tend to be like farmers, that is, pessimistic about deadlines. However, we encourage the interaction between project managers with paperwork to set realistic deadlines. We talk to management about how we get projects back on schedule. That is what we are doing with the project.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: So at the moment it is behind schedule, but you are trying to get it back on schedule?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That is your interpretation. I do not think you are a skilled engineer, so you cannot make any judgements about these projects.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I was asking a question.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, you were making a statement.

Mr WIELINGA: Our target for the end of 2010 remains the same. We will endeavour to do everything we can to bring it in on schedule. However, major infrastructure projects are always a challenge. But I still believe it is possible. We will continue to work to try to achieve that target.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I have a further document from the same source. This relates to the Victoria Road upgrade and to the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge. Minister, you told the Legislative Council on 21 June 2007, "We have to go through a careful community consultation process." I have here a series of emails obtained under Standing Order 52 sent between various Roads and Traffic Authority staff involved in the Victoria Road Iron Cove Bridge project on 26 February 2007. One email discusses a planned diving operation in Iron Cove to collect samples of sediment under the water as part of the assessment of the bridge duplication. A project manager who wrote the email stated:

We need to be very careful about undertaking operations before we have advised the community.

In response a colleague suggested:

We can moor the diving boat on the other side of the bridge so as not to draw too much attention. Divers could swim to the location and drive a sample tube as far as possible into the mud. I don't think that using this method will draw too much attention. No-one can ask the divers as they are in the middle of the cove. If asked, they can say they are carrying out an inspection of the existing bridge piles.

Minister, given your comments in the Legislative Council, would you agree that the staff involved in this project were in fact trying avoid any kind of community consultation by ensuring divers were in the middle of the cove and away from any curious members of the community?

Mr WIELINGA: I know this project manager. He has been involved in a lot of difficult projects for the Roads and Traffic Authority in the past. As background, if you are working on a major project and you happen to be in a motorcar with a Roads and Traffic Authority numberplate and you drive down a particular street, people think you are going to build the road at that location. Like good project managers, they were exploring all options and investigating the creek on both sides. They did not want to alarm the community. I was not involved in this, but I believe that was the project manager's motivation. It had nothing to do with not consulting people; that is always a given. It was about this early in the lifecycle not creating unnecessary alarm.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Thank you. That is why I was very careful not to name the people involved. I have one further document. Minister, on 21 June 2007 you told the Legislative Council that the Roads and Traffic Authority was examining "at least nine different options" for the duplication of Iron Cove Bridge. A Roads and Traffic Authority spokesperson has since told the Bridge Community Working Party and the media that a shortlist of two possible options for the promised duplication would be revealed to the public by the end of October. Given that today is 26 October, can you inform the Committee whether those two options will be made available within the next four days?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I have made it very clear that an important part of this process is the public consultation period. Clearly, the duplication of the bridge will have a substantial impact on the urban environment in that area. The Government is committed to releasing the concepts for public consultation before the end of this year.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is now not the end of October, but it will be by the end of this year?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Your hearing is excellent.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Thank you. That document, again obtained under Standing Order 52, has at least 10 options. The first of those 10 options reads, "Do nothing". Can you promise the Inner West community and the motorists of Sydney that this project will go ahead and that, unlike the Spit Bridge project, you will not do nothing?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Government has made it clear that the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge and the upgrade of Victoria Road are priorities. As I have said, we will be releasing the concepts before the end of this year for public consultation and we are committed to the projects.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: On a scale of one to 10, how would you rate your efficiency with correspondence?

The Hon. IAN WEST: That is not a question.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Mr Chair, what do I do with these inane questions "on a scale of one to 10"?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Are you good at answering letters or not?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: My office receives thousands of pieces of correspondence and we endeavour to deal with them as quickly as possible.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I note that your office responds—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I could rate your performance on a scale of one to 10 if we are going to be ridiculous. Talking of scales, we could use the worm.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Minister, you will have plenty of time to rate me in three years. Your office responds to letters from electorate offices and constituents by stating, "The Minister has asked me to acknowledge receipt of your representations," and "The Minister has arranged for the matters raised to be examined and a response will be provided as soon as possible." How long do you think these constituents should have to wait for a response to the issues they have raised; what do you think is a fair time?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: If the member is referring to a specific piece of correspondence, I suggest that he tell me. As I have said, thousands of pieces of correspondence are sent to my office and the Roads and Traffic Authority and I cannot possibly respond without knowing which piece of correspondence he is referring to.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: That is a fair response. In fact, I have 162 pieces of correspondence. The first is a letter from me. Do you recall that I sent you a letter on 15 May this year requesting a formal briefing from the Roads and Traffic Authority on all issues relating to the Roads portfolio? Are you also aware that your colleague Joe Tripodi responded within a fortnight and organised a Ports and Waterways briefing for me? More than five months have passed and I have not yet received a response from you. We even refreshed your memory on 6 June with a question without notice in the Legislative Council and you still have not responded. I would still like a briefing but, more importantly, why have you not responded to my polite request in that correspondence?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Because I think you are dunderhead, basically. That is why. You are a dunderhead. I will treat you with the respect you deserve. A bloke who accuses me in the House only a few days ago of being involved in sponsoring organised crime wonders why I take my time in responding to his correspondence. You are a dunderhead, that is why.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Your belief on a question I asked in the House a few days ago, that you think I am a dunderhead is the explanation that you give to the people of New South Wales for why you have not responded to the shadow Minister for Roads who asked you on 15 May for a briefing from your department?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You are definitely a dunderhead, that is beyond discussion. The issue is this—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Do you think people will accept that as proper behaviour?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will treat you with the respect you deserve. When you conduct yourself in a decent and human way, I will treat you in the same way.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Do you believe that is proper behaviour?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You have a history of smear in the House. That is why you are known as the king of smear. You have personally attacked me in the House for being involved in organised crime and you wonder why I take my time in responding to you. Let me say, your colleagues, and I can name a number of them, are respectful, decent human beings who conduct themselves in an appropriate way. But you, sir, are a dunderhead and you, sir, will be treated like a dunderhead.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Is that why you do not respond to the other hundreds of people in New South Wales? Are they dunderheads as well?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, quite the contrary. You are specific in that species. You are specific. I am happy to discuss your conduct any time.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We will be more than happy to circulate your response to the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Fine.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, can I ask you whether the Roads and Traffic Authority monitors factors that affect long-term oil prices?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No.

Mr WIELINGA: What we do is monitor the expected prices of bitumen, which affects the roads, and that is affected by oil prices. It is not our role to monitor oil prices per se.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, are you personally aware the IEA, that is the International Energy Agency, in its July 2007 medium-term oil market report said:

Despite four years of high oil prices, this report sees increasing market tightness beyond 2010 with OPEC spare capacity declining to minimum levels by 2012.

I do not know whether you are familiar with the IEA. Are you aware of the IEA?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You are not aware of the IEA?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No.

CHAIR: Could you give the full name?

Dr JOHN KAYE: The International Energy Agency.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Oh, yes, I am aware of the International Energy Agency.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Good. So you are aware that it does predictions of long-term energy prices and long-term availability of energy stocks, primary energy stocks?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Is there a point to this question?

Dr JOHN KAYE: No, it is a question. Are you aware that that is one of the functions of the IEA?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will accept your advice on that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: But you were not aware that what it is now saying is that we are about to head into a period of extremely high oil prices?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: And?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Well, are you aware or not aware of that? It is a yes or no answer, Minister, it would not be that hard.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, I was not aware of that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So, what we take from that is that there is no planning within the Roads and Traffic Authority associated with the now commonly accepted scenario that oil prices are going to significantly rise and there will be a significant shortage of oil over the next 10 years. There is no sense of planning for that at all?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am the Minister for Roads. One of my agencies is the Roads and Traffic Authority, and we have a responsibility to maintain the road network and deal with the challenges of maintaining the road network. If there is a change in petrol prices, that increase in the cost of petrol will be reflected in traffic flows, I imagine. But I do not see it as a core responsibility of either my ministry or the Roads and Traffic Authority to monitor the—what was it, the IAE?

Dr JOHN KAYE: The IEA, Minister.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I do not see that as a core responsibility of my agency.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So, am I correct in saying your agency is making planning decisions about motorways?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, planning decisions are made by the Ministry of Planning. My agency delivers road infrastructure, the maintenance of road infrastructure, road safety and public transport corridors.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In respect of the M4 East corridor, if the M4 East is developed your department will be a proponent—that is, you will be putting forward to the people of New South Wales and the planning Minister the idea that we should build a road project that is larger and more expensive than the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Potentially.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So, you will do that without having looked at the likely demands for the use of the road?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No, quite the contrary.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So, you are saying to me that when you develop such a project you do make forward traffic demand projections?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Absolutely.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Across what period do you make that forward traffic demand projection, roughly?

Mr WIELINGA: We usually do 10- and 20-year projections on our traffic modelling.

Dr JOHN KAYE: So you are telling me that you are doing 10- and 20-year projections of traffic modelling with no forecasting of oil prices? Is that correct?

Mr WIELINGA: What we are doing is traffic projections. The transport data centre does projections of land use changes and residential growth, and so forth. It predicts movements, it predicts the share of people of using different particular modes. A number of good research articles show what happens when fuel prices increase. Alternative vehicles come along. A lot of research shows people's strong preference for their commuting modes and there is an expectation in these different scenarios that there will still be a high demand for all transport modes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I must say, I am quite shocked. You are telling me that your presumption is that traffic demand, demand for use of Road Traffic Authority facilities, will not be substantially affected by a significant increase in oil prices?

Mr WIELINGA: I am not saying there will not be a significant impact on traffic movement. What I am saying is it will affect a number of things. It may affect the type of vehicles on the road—they may become smaller with small engines. There may be more hybrid vehicles, they might move to electric vehicles. A lot of different alternatives become viable at that time, depending on the price of oil.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, help me here, maybe I have missed something. On the one hand you said to me earlier that you do not look at oil price predictions, yet we are doing 10- and 20-year traffic projections and the best we can say is, assuming the price of oil rises, that there is a significant rise in the price of oil, it does not matter because there will be other technologies or other vehicles that will compensate, and the demands somehow or other will not be affected significantly by a major rise in the price of oil? Is that the thinking of the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Minister?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think you need to take a step back, because you are getting a bit carried away here. The reality is it is the responsibility of my agency and of all governments to anticipate demands and needs of a growing population. It is the responsibility of the Roads and Traffic Authority to manage the road network and plan for the growth of that network and to deal with the challenge of increasing vehicles. A number of issues in relation to the number of vehicles travelling on our roads impact on that. There has been a huge growth in the availability of motor vehicles to families. Whereas 10 or 15 years ago most families had one to two vehicles, it is now quite common for families to have three to four vehicles.

People are travelling further and more diversely around Sydney, so there is a growing demand. What impacts on traffic is obviously geographical location—people are commuting further to work using private vehicles—cost of petrol, cost of vehicles, the elasticity of incomes—if people have more to spend and it costs relatively less to use their vehicles, they use their vehicles. There are a number of issues. Of course, we are planning for the traffic challenges of New South Wales. For you to suggest that the only—

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is a bit like planning with your eyes closed?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: No. What are you suggesting?

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am suggesting this is quite scandalous; that the Roads and Traffic Authority is planning roads worth hundreds of millions of dollars and is proposing that the people of New South Wales invest hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in roads, with no estimate or

even scenarios of where it thinks the price of oil is going, without being aware of the IEA—with the Minister thinking it was the IAE—and you are asking us to commit to massive amounts of public money. No comment? We will change topic was obviously we are not getting anywhere further with that. Is it true that Gary Humphry, who was the general manager, Motorway Services, RTA, has retired?

Mr WIELINGA: That is correct.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Is it not true that you called Mr Gary Humphry a filtration sceptic, that is to say that he was one of the people who was vehemently opposed to filtration in tunnels?

Mr WIELINGA: I do not know if that is correct or not. That is an unfair characterisation.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: It is not appropriate to ask a departmental person their opinion of another person within their department.

The Hon. IAN WEST: It is grossly out of order.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Will the RTA amend its stance on filtration and move towards installing proper filtration?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think that is an interesting question because you are obviously unaware of the plan to install an around \$50 million filtration plant into the M5 East, which will be the first, of course.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am aware of the M5 East. What about the Lane Cove Tunnel?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: This will actually be the first filtration plan of any road tunnel in the whole country. The RTA and the New South Wales Government are actually leading the way in terms of in-tunnel filtration. I point out that other tunnels such as the Lane Cove Tunnel have state-of-the-art ventilation systems, so to characterise the RTA as being anti-filtration is ridiculous.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I take you briefly to subsidies for B-doubles. What is the current registration fee for B-doubles?

Mr WIELINGA: I will come back to you on that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Could you come back with the current registration for B-doubles?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: State or federally registered?

Dr JOHN KAYE: State registration, the annual New South Wales registration and permit fee for B-doubles as of 1 July 1996, so the current and the 1996 figures?

Mr WIELINGA: I will take that on notice.

Mr BUSHBY: Can I just comment on that? In between those dates you are talking about there has been a national agreement on registration charges and a lot of work has been done between then and now. The registration charges now are consistent across the country. [*Time expired.*]

CHAIR: Minister, you mentioned earlier in one of your answers about reducing road deaths and the value of random alcohol testing. You made a reference to random drug testing. Is it a fact that there is only one bus conducting these tests or has there been an increase, and what are the future plans to make it a more extensive, viable drug-testing program?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Laws allowing New South Wales police to conduct random roadside drug tests came into force in December last year. Police have been conducting random road drug testing to detect speed, ice, cannabis and ecstasy since this time. Highway patrol officers are able to tell within minutes whether a driver has taken any of the detectable substances.

When and where this testing takes place is an operational decision and is a matter for NSW Police Force.

I am advised that so far there have been 40 roadside drug-testing operations, with around 4,500 drivers tested and 116 tested as positive at that roadside to at least one of these drugs. That is equivalent to around one in 39 drivers testing positive. Clearly we envisage an expansion of random drug testing, in a similar way that we started with quite small random breath testing and expanded that.

CHAIR: Who bears the cost for these special drug-testing vehicles? Is it the RTA or the Police Department?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: That is a good question? I will come back to you with the exact details, but we did place a small charge on every drivers licence issued to fund a roll-out of random drug testing. I will come back to you, so that I do not give you the wrong numbers, on exactly what that charge is and how much the RTA has contributed to random drug testing.

CHAIR: And that would include the actual vehicles. I understand you need a special vehicle to do it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes. I will come back with that information.

CHAIR: Is it a fact that there is only one drug-testing bus?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I understand that is the situation at the moment.

CHAIR: You agree there should be more? You are hoping there will be more in the future?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I would certainly support all initiatives to make our roads safer and I think it is important to take drivers under the influence of drugs off our roads.

CHAIR: Another area where there have been some serious accidents is railway road crossings where, for a variety of reasons, drivers try to beat a train and hit it. Are there any plans to try to replace those road crossings with bridges, particularly where there are heavy vehicle movements?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: In relation to level train crossings it is important to look at their upgrade, particularly in rural communities. I am advised that there are more than 3,000 level crossings in New South Wales, including more than 1,600 that are public crossings. The job of upgrading these railway crossings is undertaken by a range of agencies and is coordinated by the New South Wales Level Crossing Strategy Council, chaired by the Director General of the Ministry of Transport. Member agencies of the Level Crossing Strategy Council include the Australian Rail Track Corporation, the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator, the Local Government Association and Shires Association of New South Wales, the Ministry of Transport, New South Wales Police, the Rail Infrastructure Corporation, RailCorp and the RTA.

In 2006-07 the Government spent up to \$9 million on safety improvements at railway level crossings throughout New South Wales. That was \$7 million through the RTA and \$2 million through RailCorp. The New South Wales Government has allocated at least \$36 million over the next four years for improvements to level crossings in New South Wales. In 2007-08 at least \$9 million will be spent on level crossing safety improvement programs for projects in New South Wales.

CHAIR: Obviously if there are 3,000 you cannot do them all at once. Do they work out a priority of the ones that seem to be more dangerous?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes, the agencies look at all of the issues and prioritise the ones that they believe need to be done.

CHAIR: Is there any formula that you do one a year or 10 a year?

Mr WIELINGA: There is a program called the Australian level crossing assessment model [ALCAM], which looks at the priority of these into sections and recommends treatments for level crossings. They are done in priority order in accordance with the budget that we have got. In addition, when we do major new road construction projects, we tend to incorporate grade separated interchanges at railways when we do that. For example, we are exploring one at Riverstone at the moment.

CHAIR: Could you calculate that you might do 10 a year?

Mr WIELINGA: Can we come back to you on that? If you are talking about a number of treatments at level crossings, we can come back to you with the number, or are you talking about the number of grade separated treatments?

CHAIR: Where you actually put a bridge over crossings?

Mr WIELINGA: That is a grade separation. We will have to come back to you on that. That is only done as part of major projects. Those sorts of treatments cost tens of millions of dollars and we tend to look at things like boom gates, perhaps rumble strips, lighting, those sorts of treatments, to improve safety at these intersections. Of those 3,000 crossings some of them are on State roads, some of them are on local council roads and some of them are actually private crossings on private property.

CHAIR: I was thinking particularly of ones where there are very heavy vehicle movements.

Mr WIELINGA: I understand what you are talking about but they are sort of done as part of our major construction activities and based on priority, but given the significant level of investment that is required, they are usually incorporated as part of new roadwork.

CHAIR: That concludes my questions.

(The witnesses withdrew)

CHAIR: We will now deal with the Commerce portfolio.

PAUL HOPKINS, Deputy Director General, New South Wales Procurement, Department of Commerce,

JOHN LEE, Director General, Department of Commerce, and

ALAN MARSH, Deputy Director General, Office of Public Works and Services, Department of Commerce, affirmed and examined:

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Minister, what common infrastructure has been consolidated since the Government launched its People First Information Communication and Technology Plan in July 2006?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: All governments in Australia face the same pressure to improve service delivery to the community, and control information communication and technology [ICT] costs. The Iemma Government's ICT strategic plan People First takes a coordinated approach to ICT investment. People First means more funding for key front-line services such as health, education, disability services, home and community care, and transport and housing, and less funding for back-office systems and infrastructures. Agencies must align their ICT strategic plans with People First, and their participation in People First is mandatory. People First will satisfy front-line service delivery priorities and keep the costs of doing so within current levels of ICT expenditure.

I am pleased to advise that People First will also deliver estimated savings of about \$560 million over four years. Working groups led by the chief information officers from across government are currently working on detailed technical implementation plans for People First strategies. Major reforms that are underway include standardising government service and product requirements, and

implementing ICT aggregated procurement. This will support ICT infrastructure amalgamation and consolidation.

I am advised that new contracts standardising government requirements for personal computers, laptops and file servers are expected to save \$30 million a year. The contracts for personal computers were announced on 4 May 2007, and contracts for notebook computers were signed in August. The contracts for file servers will follow later this year. The new government telecommunications agreement contracts for voice and mobile were executed in March 2007. Once all contracts are in place, they are expected to save \$50 million a year for all agencies. Of this, schools are expected to save around \$4.5 million a year, and state-owned corporations are expected to save around \$9 million a year.

The Government has also announced a number of ICT initiatives before the election. The single toll-free New South Wales government telephone number will direct citizens to the correct area of their inquiry. The consolidation of existing government websites into a single New South Wales Government web portal will provide an entry point to government electronic services and information. These initiatives will enable the community access the information they need easily and quickly. I look forward to further updating members on People First strategies in the future.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: With regard to the \$560 million saved, may I have specificity on those four years? That is four years from 1 July 2006, is that correct

Mr LEE: That is correct.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Has the Government achieved its objective of delivering a \$70 million cost saving by June 2007, as outlined in the People First Information Communication and Technology Plan?

Mr LEE: I am happy to advise the Committee that as at the last month approximately \$219 million had already been achieved, and we are working towards that goal of \$565 million over a four-year period.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What are the current salaries of government chief information officers, and what is the expected structure post recruitment? Will you be rationalising?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am advised that issues in relation to employment should be referred to the Premier's Department.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What version of Microsoft Word and Excel is currently provided across the public sector?

Mr HOPKINS: At the moment we are still looking at whether we will upgrade to Vista, so we are using the 2 or 3 versions at the moment, which are in the sector, and the job is to rationalise those systems so we have one negotiating point of view.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Which of the 2 or 3 versions are you using?

Mr HOPKINS: I am not the government chief information officer; the government chief information officer works for me. I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Will you release full details of the contract for all the new hardware for the New South Wales Government under this plan?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am advised that there may be some commercial in confidence issues in relation to those contracts. I will take the question on notice and come back with a better response. I will seek some advice on the matter.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Obviously there has been a general press release on the details. There is certainly a strong public interest case in the specifications being released. Therefore I am

wondering whether you would look at releasing that information, because issues such as software inclusions and the type of personal computers need to be looked at—

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take the question on notice to make sure we are not compromising commercial in confidence issues.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Would you also release the total cost, broken down?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am advised that collectively New South Wales government agencies spend approximately \$175 million annually through State contract for desktop personal computers, notebook computers and servers. The New South Wales Government has now been to the market with a new strategic approach to procuring our common computer hardware and associated services. The success of this tender will save the Government more than \$135 million over four years. Suppliers have responded to eight different categories, covering personal computers, notebook computers, servers, Thinline computers, ruggedised notebooks, tablet computers, personal digital assistants, and associated services.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: With regard to my question about government chief information officers, which you said needs to be referred to the Premier's Department, who pays those officers and who do they work for?

Mr LEE: In answer to the first part of your question, there is only one government chief information officer; there are not multiple officers. We should make that point. Some of the larger agencies have chief information officers, similar to other agencies having chief financial officers, as is the case in the private sector. The structure of those agencies then determines whether there is a need specifically for a chief information officer or whether there would be an information technology manager. As recently as this week there was a meeting of chief information officers to talk about the implementation of the People First strategy. I hope that answers your question.

In essence, a chief information officer working for an agency reports to their chief executive officer, but there is one government chief information officer, as was reported this week where the Government has made an appointment. Historically, the salary of the previous government chief information officer, Paul Edgecombe, was published in the Department of Commerce annual report.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Minister, do you have a list outlining the progress of capital works at New South Wales schools, including the status, cost and timeliness, and can the list be made available? Does the list exist and, if it exists, can it be made available to the Committee?

Mr MARSH: The actual project and responsibility for capital works in schools is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training and we provide services to certain of those schools, I think in the last year we did about 500 projects, which range from putting in a small air-conditioning system to quite large works.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: So you would have a list of all of the schools?

Mr MARSH: Well the Department of Education and Training certainly would. A lot of their work is actually done on a regional basis, done through their asset management units throughout the country. It depends on the type of works.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Because there are different programs, some are federally funded and some are State funded.

Mr MARSH: There are a lot of public and private projects we are not involved in. There are a lot of capital works that we do not necessarily do for the Department of Education and Training.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: But you would have a list of what you did?

Mr MARSH: No, not readily available. Because some of it was done through our regional offices that deal straight with the asset management units.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: So you would not compile that centrally?

Mr LEE: The whole capital program relates to the Department of Education and Training. We are a client on some occasions doing specific works in certain regions of the State but we are not the owners of the capital program.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What is the average turnaround time for completing capital works at New South Wales schools?

Mr LEE: I refer to my previous answer. The whole program and the work structure and timeframe would sit with the Department of Education and Training.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What percentage of the cost does the Government take for managing each project?

Mr LEE: That varies. In the last 12 months it was between 4 per cent and 7 per cent, which has already been benchmarked against other private-sector project managers and it seemed to be very affordable.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Is it benchmarked against a statewide industry-standard or is there a local benchmark, for example, in regional areas?

Mr LEE: I am happy to take that on notice but I can confirm that an independent management firm undertook that benchmark in the last 12 months and we are happy to provide you with those details.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Could you give me the name of the firm?

Mr LEE: I do not have it here tonight so that is why I am taking it on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: And you would be able to provide the name of the firm and the date of their report?

Mr LEE: I am hoping to be able to provide that to the Committee.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: And the report as well?

Mr LEE: Sorry, what was your previous question you were seeking?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I asked you a question about benchmarking. You said that a firm had conducted a study on benchmarking for you. You then gave a statistic of 4 per cent to 7 per cent I believe it was—I will have to check the transcript.

Mr LEE: Yes, so will I.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You took it on notice and then I asked could I have the name of the—

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Point of order: You specifically asked between regional and State and he said he would provide on notice the difference of whether it was a regional benchmark or a statewide benchmark. I think when you are clearing it up for him you should clear it up on the point you actually asked.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Do you want to comment on that? My understanding was you said you had done a study on benchmarking—

Mr LEE: No, I did not.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Clear it up for us then.

Mr LEE: What I understand is that a major independent firm undertook a benchmarking study with both the private sector project managers and the Department of Commerce figures on a commercial in-confidence basis to compare ourselves to the private sector and we compared favourably. I am happy to provide you with the name of the firm who conducted the study but we were not the authors of that study.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: And a copy of that report?

Mr LEE: As I said, we are not the authors.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Do you have a copy of that report?

Mr LEE: I have mentioned to you that the data was provided on the basis that it was commercial in confidence so I will have to check the terms of that contract.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: If then it is possible to provide the report can you provide a copy of the report to the Committee please?

Mr LEE: I refer to my previous answer.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: How often does the Government review its contractors?

Mr LEE: Periodically.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Can you be more specific than periodically?

Mr LEE: It depends. When you have a department like ours that undertakes various works in the public works and services area I would hope you would be able to nominate an industry, if not a specific project, so I might be would able to give you a more definitive answer.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: We will come back to that one. I will continue though with a question on school capital works. What percentage of a grant does the Government take on managing capital works projects at New South Wales schools that are funded by Federal Government grants?

Mr MARSH: I will answer that. There is no set fee that we apply for in those ones we are invited to participate in. It depends on every project. We do not have a set fee of 2 per cent, 2 per cent or 4 per cent but it can work out to be that. It depends on what is required to complete the job in terms of the risk, what approval has to be done, the type of work and that sort of stuff. For smaller jobs obviously the percentage can be higher than, say, a larger job. In some of the larger jobs it can be under 2 per cent or 3 per cent. The Commonwealth Government's guidelines specify that professional project managers have to use these when there is construction involved and there has been some misreporting in the media, where it talks about the contingency amount has been added on as if it is our fees. There has been a bit of misinformation out there in the public arena in respect of fees.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Chair, if I can add to that?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, that is fine you do not have to.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I think it is important. The Commonwealth Government is actually investing in our schools. Program guidelines stipulate the use of a qualified and experienced project manager when construction work is proposed and fees are included in that costing.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: It is not actually adding anything or answering my question. Minister, I do have some further questions I would like to ask about the redeployment program. How many public servants are currently registered as part of the Department of Commerce's redeployment program?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Chair, I am advised staff are displaced from permanent positions in the New South Wales public sector through restructuring, relocation and closure of

business units. Displaced staff may seek redeployment or, in some cases, be offered voluntary redundancy. I am advised that as at 5 October 2007 there were 237 registered displaced employees. Displaced staff is frequently redeployed, either permanently or temporarily, across the public service. That is why the number of displaced staff registered may change from month to month. For example, I am advised that in the 12 months to 30 September 2007 there were 301 displaced employees redeployed to either permanent or temporary situations in the public sector. These are positions that would have otherwise been filled through external recruitment.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Are you able to help me by telling me what the average time spent on the program is?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: In the past year how many people who have been part of the redeployment program were then paid a redundancy?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: What was the amount paid to displaced employees in the last financial year?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Thank you for taking those on notice. I just have some questions about the corporate services initiative. What progress has been made on the shared services report entitled "The Future of Shared Corporate Services Supporting the Machinery of Government"?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Over the past two years the Government has achieved major reform of shared services across government. This has led to significant savings in the sector—savings, which have been redirected into front-line services directly benefiting the people of New South Wales. These include reducing corporate service costs by around 10 per cent, \$152 million from 2004 to 2006; reducing the number of corporate applications across the sector from over 40 to 14 by implementing new whole-of-government contract; continuing to consolidate the number of corporate service clusters in the public sector; and undertaking major reform programs in major agencies such as health, education, rail and police. These reforms are encouraging. There is more to do. I am advised that the shared services senior officers working group, which is driving the implementation of the Government's corporate service strategy, is investigating further options and strategies for savings in this area.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You talked about some of the savings. Could you give the total amount of savings that have been achieved so far? Who is in charge of tracking savings?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I will take that on notice and come back with the appropriate detail.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Over the life of the initiative, what savings are expected to be achieved?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The advice I have is that from 2004 to 2006 we have generated about \$152 million worth of savings. I am happy to take your question on notice.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Minister, the particular report that I have referred to disappeared from the website. When will it be returned to the website?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: It may shock the Chair, but I am not known as a webmaster. I will make the appropriate inquiries in relation to that.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Why does the Government have nine payroll systems?

Mr LEE: Do you mean electronic payroll systems through the EPR system?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You give me the answer and I will listen to what you say and consider it.

Mr LEE: There are various proprietary systems that are used for payroll across the whole of the public sector. It usually is driven by the needs of the specific agency.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Mr Lee, could you give the rest of that answer on notice? I have one further question I would like to ask.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Not if he does not want to. He might want to answer the question.

Mr LEE: I was going to give an exciting response about the specificity of human resource systems in the bus industry and world's best practice. There are all sorts of different payroll systems that are used both in the private and public sector. They are most commonly through MIMS, SAP and Oracle. They have modules attached to them that allow different human resource functions to deal with the specificity of the rostering of overtime, recreation leave and flexible working arrangements.

What you might require in the bus industry is very different to what you might require in the health system, which is very different again for agencies like the Parliament where you work irregular hours and you need an electronic system to have very good flexibility but also be integrated with the whole financial system and billing for that agency. It is an interesting area of public policy and something we are committed to. But just as you should not have one type of computer, like IBM, it is good to have variability. That is why there might be a number, albeit not double digits, but nine different payroll systems in the sector.

CHAIR: Does the Government have any questions?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: No questions at this time.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, I am aware of and strongly support the work the New South Wales Government has done to insulate areas of State-owned enterprises from the WorkChoices legislation through what is called, I think you said, the WorkChoices insulation legislation. I understand the Department of Commerce uses a lot of contractors. Do you make any attempt to monitor the industrial relations practices of your contractors?

Mr LEE: When you work in an industry like we do with public works where there is construction, so you have peaks and flows of work, or some specialty might be required, be it in water resources or water solutions, we do bring in contractors. I suppose it is most prevalent in the information technology area.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am not saying you should not do so. I am asking whether you monitor the industrial relations practices of your contractors?

Mr LEE: Yes. I think there has been some commentary over the last 12 months about a pilot scheme that was introduced for the courier contract that goes some way to making sure that the awards and conditions are based in New South Wales and are also supported for subcontractors for that type of contract.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do I take it from what you are saying, Mr Lee, that you have a pilot project to ensure that employees of contracts are covered by New South Wales awards?

Mr LEE: That they replicate.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That is a good point. Can you tell us about that pilot project? How many contracts have been covered by the pilot project?

Mr LEE: I will take that on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am happy for you to take that on notice. It is a detailed question. Can you tell me what stage the pilot project it is up to? When did it commence, when is it likely to complete and when will you get some answers from it?

Mr LEE: I will just go to my notes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: While you are doing that my next question will be to the Minister. If the pilot project proves successful, is it your intention, Minister, to extend it to cover a large class of contractors? I foreshadow that question with the Minister and return to Mr Lee. Do you wish to take the question on notice?

Mr LEE: The actual trial we are talking about commenced with an expression of interest in February of this year and a number of tenderers were shortlisted. The shortlisted tenderers had an audit undertaken by the Office of Industrial Relations. We have narrowed that down to three contractors, two of which have already signed and are in operation. It did also require the contractor to ensure its subcontractors met those obligations. I think that answers the first point.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You have two contractors whose conditions replicate the New South Wales awards for their direct employees and subcontractors?

Mr LEE: Correct. Based on that trial we will do an assessment. This contract is in place for two years. It will need some monitoring and then we will make an assessment as to whether it has been successful and consider its expansion.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Your trial might outlive WorkChoices.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We can hope that WorkChoices will be finished very soon.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, are you satisfied it is progressing rapid enough or should the department be looking at extending it more rapidly to cover more contractors to insulate their employees from the worst aspects of WorkChoices?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The industrial relations provisions that are a part of this pilot require suppliers to demonstrate that in relation to work carried out on government contracts their employees receive remuneration and associated conditions, including occupational health and safety provisions, broadly equivalent to the relevant State awards regardless of the industrial instrument in which the employees are engaged. Clearly that is very important. We would like to see an expansion of that once the pilot is finalised.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Does that include leave provisions? You referred to remuneration and occupational health and safety.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: My advice is that it does.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Does it include all matters covered by New South Wales awards?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes, that is my advice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: This is a good news story for you. If possible, can you provide more information on it?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Could the department provide a list of all the public schools in New South Wales for which the department provides contract management services from Commonwealth government funding for capital works in schools? Is it possible to produce such a list?

Mr LEE: We will take it on notice but we do not usually consolidate that sort of information. The funding is sporadic.

The Hon. Don Harwin: That is garbage.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I really want this information. This is not political point scoring; we actually want a list of those schools that you manage and for each of those schools the fee that you charge? It should not be that hard.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We will take it on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: If you cannot provide that could you include in your answer the reasons why you cannot provide it and what is the barrier to getting that information? Because that is a separate issue, it is an issue about departmental information and communications technology, which brings me to my next question. The department is a provider of information and communications technology services to government—it is a lead adviser?

Mr LEE: It is an adviser and procurer.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And it procures software, does it not?

Mr LEE: Yes.

Dr JOHN KAYE: We heard in answer to a previous question we were talking about Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word and I presume the entire office suite. What steps is the New South Wales Government taking to move towards open source standards? Are we going to continue down the path of Microsoft software in a Microsoft monopoly or is New South Wales going to take the brave step of moving us towards open source standards?

Mr HOPKINS: It is a fair question. We actually have a contract at the moment, a power contract, for open source software that is accessible by all agencies and there is a range of suppliers on there including some of the major open source suppliers. So, all agencies have that right now that they can utilise and are encouraged to utilise what is appropriate. As far as moving to a full open source suite for the applications, as you would understand, it is more than just what we use; we have to integrate with the market place and all the suppliers, and if we have different systems we cannot talk to each other.

So, yes, there is a movement away from a monopoly situation and we are actually talking with the other States at the moment about how we might deal with monopolies in Australia in regard to software. But we cannot make a wholesale move away if we are to continue to work with the supply base and minimise the red tape with working with our Government.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is late, it is Friday night, and this is an arcane issue for many people but it is a terribly important issue for a lot of us. Can you give us more details of the answer you just gave us? Can you elaborate on that in an on-notice question? Can you come back to us with details of what the cooperation between the States is, where we are going with this and in what particular areas are we moving towards open source solutions?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We will take that on notice and come back to you.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What impact has the United States-Australia free trade agreement had in two areas—one is in the area of software procurement and the other is in the general area of procurement—in terms of the New South Wales Government being able to pursue specific industry development objectives through its purchasing?

Mr HOPKINS: I can answer it in two ways. It has an impact on the way we do our tendering. There have been some existing preference schemes that favoured regional developers, or Australian-based developers or suppliers. With the US free trade agreement that has been removed and there is now open access to New South Wales Government business by all suppliers globally, if you like—or not globally but, I suppose, America and Australia. It has not impacted on the suppliers we actually select because the overseas markets have not entered into this business area different to what was already here.

Dr JOHN KAYE: What you are saying is it has removed certain preferences but that has not had an impact?

Mr HOPKINS: Not at this point in time. It is still very early; it has only been operating a short period of time.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Do you anticipate it will have an impact?

Mr HOPKINS: I think it will have a more positive impact on Australia and New South Wales exporting technology than importing it. There may be suppliers from the USA that are already here and have been for some time in the software industry.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I hope you are right.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: One brief supplementary question in relation to the \$219 million savings on the shared services initiative that you mentioned earlier. Would you be able to provide a detailed breakdown on how the \$219 million is comprised and what particular elements there are, what the assumptions are and how that figure was arrived at?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: We will take that on notice.

CHAIR: Thank you very much Minister. That brings us to the end of the budget estimates inquiry into your department and the Department of Commerce. We thank you and the members of your staff.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
