

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4

Thursday 23 February 2006

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of

TRANSPORT

The Committee met at 10.00 a. m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. J. A. Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. J. C. Burnswoods
The Hon. G. Donnelly
The Hon. K. F. Griffin
Ms. L. Rhiannon

The Hon. S. P. Hale
The Hon. D. E. Oldfield
The Hon. M. J. Pavey

PRESENT

RailCorp
Mr V. Graham, *Chief Executive Officer*

Ministry of Transport
Mr. J. Glasson, *Director General*

State Transit Authority of New South Wales
Mr. R. Wilson, *Acting Chief Executive Officer*

CHAIR: I declare this meeting open to the public and welcoming officers, including Mr Vince Graham, to this public hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Transport. We were to look at State development as well, but the director, Mr Loftus, is not going to appear. We have no reason for his non-appearance at this point.

The Hon. JAN BURNSWOODS: Madam Chair, as I said before, I am not sure we should be having State Development, given the portfolio changes. I think it would be reasonable to check that.

CHAIR: If you had waited until I got to the end of my sentence, that is what I was going to say. But we will have some further discussion on that matter. Also, in relation to Transport, the new Chief Executive Officer of Sydney Ferries has advised last evening or yesterday afternoon that he would not be appearing here today due to there being a board meeting of that organisation. So, I propose that the Committee further deliberate on that and we might have to have another hearing specifically relating to ferries.

Before questions commence, some procedural matters need to be dealt with. In accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings, which are available from the attendants and clerks, only members of the Committee and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photos. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee, you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation you place on anything that is said before the Committee. Members and their staff are advised any messages should be delivered through the attendant on duty or the Committee clerks.

We have discussed that we will deal with rail matters first and proceed to other transport matters after that. I declare the proposed expenditure area for Transport open for examination. Mr Graham, welcome. Do you have any brief opening statement?

Mr GRAHAM: No, I do not, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: If I could firstly ask in relation to CountryLink, could you advise the Committee how much has been spent by CountryLink since 1 July 2005 on hiring buses due to changes to normal services, including the hiring of buses to commute passengers to other stations as a result of connections being missed?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, I am happy to provide that information on notice by way of overview. With the issue of guaranteed connections, I think you are referring to recent press comment regarding the need to maintain connections between a train scheduled to arrive from Melbourne into Sydney a little after 7.00 o'clock to connect with a train departing Sydney and going through to the North Coast of New South Wales about half an hour later. Because of speed restrictions currently in place on the main southern line—those speed restrictions imposed sensibly by the Australian Rail Track Corporation—the travelling time of the XPT on the Melbourne to Sydney leg—and bear in mind that the physical train that operates the Melbourne to Sydney XPT leg is a return of a service that operates the Sydney to Melbourne leg with a 40 minutes turnaround at Melbourne—the consequence of these speed projections, imposed by the Australian Rail Track Corporation, impact on that service in both directions, and because of those speed restrictions we have not been able to maintain the connection. Importantly, when our customers buy a ticket on the Melbourne to Sydney service to connect with the Sydney to North Coast service we are selling them a ticket on the basis of guaranteeing that connection.

Therefore, because we stand in a public place and with a particular product, in this case a guaranteed connection, our customer service obligation, in our view, is that we will provide that connection. When the train is running late, because of these speed restrictions sensibly imposed by the RATC, we have the option either to delay the departing train from Sydney to the North Coast, in which case we not only inconvenience 250 people on that train, but because of the time of day that train is departing, that is, right in the middle of the morning peak service, by departing that train late we will also disrupt somewhere between four and six peak-hour, metropolitan passenger services. So, in order to meet all of our customers' requirements, to maintain the greatest good for the greatest

number of people, we do, when necessary, provide a connection by road coach through to the North Coast. On each occasion we do that, the cost of hiring that coach is approximately \$1,900.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Just following on from that question, you pointed out the Federal Government is upgrading interstate freight routes at massive cost to the Federal Government. The recent accident at Harden that interrupted the services from Melbourne to Sydney for a week, I believe, was not a result of the RATC upgrade; that was a result of an accident involving a State Rail or CountryLink train? In providing the answer to the Committee could you please identify specifically the situations where it has been the fault of CountryLink or State Rail as opposed to inconvenience caused by the RATC upgrade?

Mr GRAHAM: I will not take that on notice. I am happy to answer that now. Your question contained an assumption that the track is currently being upgraded by the Commonwealth Government, the RATC. That is not quite correct. The money has been provided; the upgrading at this point in time has not commenced. The causes of train delays on that corridor: we had an incident involving the XPT that I think I have dealt with publicly in a very straightforward way, explaining what occurred. The answer to the previous question in terms of speed restrictions obviously does not go to the XPT incident. The XPT incident in itself created a withdrawal of services for safety reasons and, again, I was very public about the fact that we would not reinstate those services until it was safe to do so. I am sure I would have the unanimous support of this Committee in that decision.

The matters affecting the speed restrictions, however, if I could go into some detail about the reasons for that. In early February there was a derailment of a freight train at a location called Eurong Creek close to Junee on the RATC track. The cause of that particular derailment I am not privy to nor does it involve RailCorp. It was a third-party operator's freight train and it was an RATC track. The effect of that freight train derailment was to rip up around seven kilometres of track, and once that seven kilometres of track was reinstated, RATC quite sensibly imposed a speed restriction of 20 kilometres an hour on that track.

In addition to that section of track there are further speed restrictions because of track condition on that main southern corridor, including track in both New South Wales and Victoria, all of which is leased to, maintained and operated by the Australian Rail Track Corporation. Again, the net effect of those speed restrictions—and I emphasise my strong support for the safety decisions that the RATC is taking in these circumstances—in periods of extreme heat, and obviously we are just coming out of that time now, the summer effect on operations, the RATC sensibly impose speed restrictions on its track whenever the ambient temperature reaches the high 20 degrees Celsius. That is to protect the track and to protect operations from heat-related misalignment. It is a very sensible, safe thing to do and it has my 100 per cent support in how it is addressing that.

However, the implications are that obviously the trains for safety reasons must run slower. Given the service pattern for the XPT train—that is the daylight service from Sydney to Melbourne forms the overnight service Melbourne to Sydney, with a 40-minute turnaround in Melbourne—we get hit both ways with any speed restrictions. I certainly apologise to our customers for that inconvenience but both RailCorp, as operator of CountryLink, and RATC have our customers' safety at heart.

CHAIR: In relation to the XPT axle issue, can you advise the Committee how much was spent on the last replacement of those XPT power car axles?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, I can take you through that. Perhaps a little background, first of all, on the incident at Harden so I can paint the broader canvas for you.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Before you start, could you fill me in on when the XPTs came into service and what their original lifespan was, just as a precursor to that answer?

Mr GRAHAM: The XPTs entered service in 1982, so the first of them has been operating effectively for—quick maths—23 years, 24 years. The XPT train is based on a British design, the HST train, which obviously has been in operation in the United Kingdom for a lot longer. I think we generally regarded that type of train as having something like a 35-year expected life. So, we would still see considerable life in those trains. They are of course subject to regular maintenance, and I will

come back to that issue in a moment, in response to the chairman's question. But that maintenance of the XPTs is undertaken, and investigations currently confirm that has been done. Importantly, we are also spending at the moment \$32 million on an upgrading program of our XPT fleet to ensure its ongoing suitability both in a mechanical sense and in the safety for its operation.

I will turn to the question regarding the XPT incident at Harden. At around 4.00 a.m. a fortnight ago today, one wheel of an axle on the power car of the XPT derailed on approach to Harden station. There were no passenger cars or, obviously, passengers involved in that incident. The cause of the derailing was a fracture in the axle. This particular type of fracture has not occurred previously in the 23 years of operation of the XPT, nor on the basis of our inquiries has the equivalent British Rail HST train experienced such an event. Once our investigators went on site and identified the cause, we immediately inspected a couple of power cars at the maintenance centre, and in the particular area of the axle concerned and identified a surface crack in one axle. It was not a fracture as such, but there was a surface defect. On the basis of that, I took a decision at around 6.00 p.m. to withdraw the fleet from service immediately and we transferred our passengers onto road coaches. Obviously that was an inconvenience to our passengers, and I have publicly apologised to them for that, but was a necessary safety step for us to take.

By way of background, this incident has been investigated by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which is a Commonwealth investigatory agency. So there is independence in terms of jurisdiction and organisation in the conduct of this inquiry. However, having withdrawn the fleet, obviously our concern was to ensure that it was not brought back into service until we were confident it was safe to do so. We subsequently inspected 100 per cent of the axles on the remainder of the power cars and 100 per cent of the axles on the trailer cars. In addition to the fracture, our investigations identified no evidence of any fracture in any axle similar to the Harden fracture. We did identify eight power car axles with surface defects. All of those axles with surface defects had been withdrawn from service.

Given that the investigation established that there were no other fractures, that we had done a 100 per cent check, and that there were no surface defects in passenger trailer cars, we progressively started to reintroduce XPT services keeping in mind the safety system aspect. Obviously we knew what had happened at Harden and how it had happened. However, we did not understand why it had happened at Harden; that is, why these surface defects had developed. In order to protect the safe operation of the system, 100 per cent of axles are ultrasonically inspected and we have introduced an interim 20-day ultrasonic inspection program of all axles on power cars in service.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How many days?

Mr GRAHAM: Every 20 days. That is to ensure we have very early interception of any formation of surface defects on axles. We will continue with that interim arrangement until we are satisfied that we and the ATSB understand precisely the reason for these surface cracks appearing in axles. To go to the heart of the question, we have established by looking back over the records that each of the nine axles — the one at Harden and the eight with surface defects — had been through the maintenance regime between April and November 2005, well within the time requirements of the technical maintenance plan. Bogies are overhauled by a contractor, and we continue to work with the ATSB and the contractor in better understanding the mode that generates these surface defects.

In the meantime, we have restored five of our six XPT services to operation. We operate six XPT services to and from Sydney each day: two to Melbourne, one to Dubbo, and three to the North Coast, with terminating destinations at Grafton, Casino and Brisbane on the North Coast. We have restored five of the six; the only service we have yet to bring back into operation is the Melbourne overnight service. While we had the fleet shut down we were operating 25 coaches a day in each direction to support continuation of service. We are down to two coaches at the moment, and they are servicing the Melbourne overnight service. We are looking at the rate at which we can bring the remaining power cars back to service as well as undertaking investigations prior to completing the full return of service.

CHAIR: Thank you. It is good to have all that on the record. However, I actually asked you how much was spent on the last replacement of XPT power car axles. You might have to take that question on notice.

Mr GRAHAM: I am not precisely clear on what you are asking for. Perhaps I can explain and it might help clarify the question. Axles are effectively an eight-foot, machined lump of steel. Their maintenance regime is on an 18-month and three-year basis. At each of those maintenance cycles wheels are pressed off axles and bearing surfaces are re-machined. Therefore, I cannot identify the precise amount of money spent within an overall contract to maintain bogies and to machine the individual axles. I could identify, for example, the annual contract cost of maintaining XPT bogies.

CHAIR: That might be helpful. Are these axles the originals?

Mr GRAHAM: It varies considerably. Of the ones showing surface defects, some of the manufacturing dates are as recent as 2003. We would normally expect, an internationally one would expect, an axle to have a life of between 60 and 100 years.

CHAIR: From where were they purchased?

Mr GRAHAM: I think the axles are manufactured by Comm Steel in Australia. Given the manufacture dates I have seen, they would not have been purchased as part of the original contract. As I said, I am aware of at least one axle that has a manufacturing date of 2003.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: But there could be more that are new axles from Comm Steel. You are not ruling out that the nine axles that have the defects could have been bought recently, in early 2003, for example.

Mr GRAHAM: Of the nine axles involved, the most recent purchase that I am aware of is 2003.

CHAIR: In relation to the passenger carriages, why were the XPT axles not tested?

Mr GRAHAM: 100 per cent have been.

CHAIR: They have been?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes.

CHAIR: If all of the XPT power car axles had been test by 14 February, why did you have to have a staged return to service?

Mr GRAHAM: The fleet operates with 19 power cars and approximately 60 trailer cars. Of the eight axles identified with surface defects, seven were on individual power cars. We took the decision that we would not return those axles to service. That meant that as we progressively undertook testing we were able to clear 12 of the 19 power cars. As we progressively cleared those we were able to undertake a staged entry back to service. We implemented that staged return over a number of days, consistent with the 100 per cent testing of the good fleet and with not having seven of the 19 power cars to bring back to service immediately.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: A national report was recently released entitled "WORKability 2", which deals with an inquiry into employment and disability. The report states that access for disabled people to public transport is crucial to their obtaining employment. How much money has been allocated to upgrading stations for disabled access in the past five years?

Mr GRAHAM: I understand that we have spent about \$400 million to date on meeting the disability obligations for stations in the CityRail network, bearing in mind that we have 302 stations. We have completed approximately 25 per cent of the stations on the network. The stations in that 25 per cent constitute approximately 65 per cent of patronage on the network. This financial year we are expending approximately \$22.9 million on meeting our obligations for disabled access to our stations.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That is in addition to the \$400 million?

Mr GRAHAM: That is correct.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Over what period was the \$400 million spent?

Mr GRAHAM: I will take that period of time on notice. It is certainly five-plus years.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I would appreciate it if you could give me the breakdown for the last six years. You said that approximately \$23 million has been allocated for next year.

Mr GRAHAM: For the 2005-06 budget year it amounts to approximately \$23 million, yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many stations received an upgrade last year?

Mr GRAHAM: I will take that question on notice. Could I just be precise, when you say "last year" are you talking about the 2004-05 year or a calendar year?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The 2004-05 financial year.

Mr GRAHAM: I will take that question on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many stations are scheduled to be upgraded in the financial year 2006-07?

Mr GRAHAM: I think that in Budget Paper No. 4, which has already been published, you will be able to identify the number of stations where the design work has been undertaken. But, again, to be accurate in my answer I am happy to take that issue on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You said that there are 302 stations in the City Rail network and that about 25 per cent of those have been upgraded to permit disabled access. That is about 70 so, presumably, approximately 230 remain to be upgraded, is that so?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How long do you expect it will take until you have completed the entire program and all of those stations have disabled access?

Mr GRAHAM: With 75 per cent of those stations remaining, and 25 per cent having cost \$400 million, the unit cost of those can be calculated. Obviously the rate at which one can proceed with those will be dependent on the funding that is available on a year-by-year basis.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That is a recipe for "never, never ever". Are you able to give a more tangible answer than that?

Mr GRAHAM: No. I cannot give a more tangible answer than that. I know that there is a commitment for funding for those easy access stations that have already been announced. The allocation for 2006-07 for the easy access program will be a matter of government policy determination, and published in the forthcoming budget.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: As you would be aware, in metropolitan strategy there is an emphasis upon 60 per cent of population growth being provided for along major transport corridors. An area with which I am familiar is the Marrickville local government area. Do you know how many stations in the Marrickville area, which is densely populated, are scheduled for an upgrade, have been upgraded, or have disabled access?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes. I would certainly have that information available for you. Importantly, I would just like to get a clear definition about what one means by the "Marrickville area"?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I suppose if you take the State electorate of Marrickville—

Mr GRAHAM: I will take the State electorate of Marrickville as the geographic definition and advise you on that.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Thank you. Will you also advise at that time whether any stations in that area are scheduled to be upgraded, because my understanding is that there is disability access to none of them at the moment.

Mr GRAHAM: I will come back to you with that information.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many people are employed to manage the scheduling of upgrade works?

Mr GRAHAM: Again, there is a sizeable project team constantly working on these. I will come back to the Committee with the precise number, but, given that we are managing a project this year of some \$23 million, it is a reasonably sizeable project team. In addition, there are substantial contractors, because these are not built by RailCorp's own staff; all of the construction is tendered into the private sector.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What consultation with the community takes place in determining when or how stations are to be upgraded?

Mr GRAHAM: There is quite an extensive process, and part about process is generally to submit the development application to the local council concerned, because there are obviously collateral issues associated with them. Each of these upgrades generally involves reasonably significant consultation with the local government agencies in those areas.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Apart from local councils, do you ever consult with other community groups or special interest groups?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes. We do.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many of those which you have undertaken last year?

Mr GRAHAM: I will take that question on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I would be pleased if you could inform me of the consultation that took place last year and the consultations that are proposed to take place in the coming year. What criteria do you use in determining whether a station is to be upgraded?

Mr GRAHAM: There are a number of criteria of associated with that. Obviously, the patronage flow is certainly an issue. We would also have an eye to trying to, within a defined area, provide disability access on a subregional basis. In some circumstances, the ease of construction enables something to proceed a lot more quickly than in others. There is a range of criteria that goes to determining the easy access priorities.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Who makes the final decision as to whether the upgrade will proceed or not proceed?

Mr GRAHAM: I have been in the organisation a little over two years. All of the easy access stations that are currently being upgraded were decisions taken prior to the last State election, so I do not have first-hand knowledge to answer that question for you. I understand the processes that I am currently going through in terms of the next tranche of easy access upgrades, but I would not seek to comment on something about which I do not have first-hand information.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You said you are going through a process that the moment. When you expect that process—which, presumably, will select the stations to be next in line to be upgraded—to be finished?

Mr GRAHAM: The current population of stations that have been announced for easy access upgrades, depending on rate of funding, will certainly consume the program over the next two to three years. I would not expect to be finalising our next priority of station upgrading—it would be sometime

in the next 12 months, but, given that we already have the program rolled out as far ahead as it is, the next tranche of easy access program is not yet determined.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Making the generous assumption that you will be there in the next two to three years, you would expect to be ultimately responsible for determining those stations?

Mr GRAHAM: Well, I would certainly expect to be involved in providing information. The easy access implementation program is obviously, in terms of capital allocation, a government policy issue. The fact that it is a government policy issue in determining the rate of funding available in the broad context of State government finances, obviously I do not have ultimate to termination of that.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Is the upgrade reviewed after it has been completed to see whether it meets the needs of the community and that is working well?

Mr GRAHAM: I think that is probably done in practice by the people who are using it. Certainly in my experience the customer and community feedback from the upgrades that certainly I have attended and receive comment on would demonstrate that the design criteria are certainly meeting community expectations.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Just following up on your answer in relation to the XPTs, you said that there is a \$32 million investment in the maintenance and upgrading of the XPT infrastructure. Have you reassessed that in light of the recent axle incident?

Mr GRAHAM: No. We have not. The \$32 million program is a targeted program. Not included in that \$32 million is the overhaul of the locomotives, the mechanicals, the engine side of things that has occurred over the last few years. The target of the \$32 million days to a number of mechanical features—buffers between carriages. It goes to upgrading the buffet cars and creature comforts—carpets, seats and curtains, for example—on the train as well.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: The latest issue in relation to the axles and the eight surface defects that you found, is a possibility that the eight axle surface defects you identified could have been coming on line in 2002?

Mr GRAHAM: No. There is quite a range in the manufacture date—quite a range.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What sort of range?

Mr GRAHAM: From 1988 through to 2003. As I say, it is quite a range.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to the XPT, the 20-day ultrasound check of the axles that has been put in place in regard to maintenance, how much you expect the maintenance budget to increase—in respect of the XPTs?

Mr GRAHAM: Do you mean in this interim period?

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Yes?

Mr GRAHAM: The cost of the ultrasonics is effectively an individual with the ultrasonic testing machine, so I am not expecting that that will have a substantial impact. It is there to ensure that we are confident of a safe operation of XPTs in service while we Australian Transport Safety Bureau [ATSB] conducts its investigation.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What is the annual cost of administering the pensioner voucher scheme?

Mr GRAHAM: I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What is the estimated revenue from the introduction on 1 March of the pensioner voucher tax?

Mr GRAHAM: Again, I can get a more precise figure for you, but I do know that approximately 30 per cent of the patronage on XPTs is by way of pensioner vouchers.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What is the estimated saving for the 2005-06 financial year from the closure of CountryLink centres and the downgrading of staff numbers in existing centres?

Mr GRAHAM: The modifications that we have made CountryLink sales offices involves approximately 82 staff. In terms of the precise number, I am happy to provide that estimate for you.

CHAIR: Mr Graham, would you mind providing a breakdown station by station?

Mr GRAHAM: Certainly. That is not a problem.

CHAIR: I would like to have a look at Tamworth, for example, but all of them would be of use.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: I would like to look at Queanbeyan. How are you advising pensioners and those who do not have access to the Internet to make their bookings on CountryLink services?

Mr GRAHAM: We have quite a diverse range of options available for booking on CountryLink services. We have recently introduced Internet capability. Clearly that works well for the backpacker market, but does not necessarily work as well for the seniors market. What we have instituted, however—

The Hon. JAN BURNSWOODS: Madam Chair, should we perhaps have a short break? It is very hard to concentrate on what Mr Graham is saying with all these consultations going on with Ms Rhiannon.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: I am following up on how pensioners now book?

Mr GRAHAM: In terms of the options available for pensioners, in addition to the travel centres that remained open in the country, obviously there are travel agents in town who they are able to book through. That process has been made easier as well by the Internet front end. Obviously, travel agents are quite competent in utilising that. We have also, in order to broaden the availability, entered into an arrangement with Australia Post, which has 970 agencies throughout New South Wales. It is now possible for those who want to exercise another choice to ring up our CountryLink call centre, book their tickets, go forward to anyone of the 970-odd Australia Post outlets to pay for their tickets and it is then subsequently sent to them.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Of the staff who have nominated for redundancy, how many are currently filling positions?

Mr GRAHAM: Again, I will come back to you with the precise details, but I will give you an indication that of the total of 82 staff positions I think we had somewhere in the high 60s of people who volunteered for the redundancy package. For those who did not, we have been able to do sensible swaps because in some locations we have individuals whose jobs were not perhaps the ones that were affected by this, but because of their stage of life they found the voluntary redundancy attractive. We have now been able to finalise all of these arrangements with our staff, and I think we have done so on a commonsense and compassionate basis.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: All the redundancies have been finalised?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, we have a joint union process.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: All this will happen before the 4 per cent wage increase, which is due in April?

Mr GRAHAM: Sorry?

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: There is a 4 per cent wage increase due in April 2006. I am asking whether all this will be put to bed before that wage increase?

Mr GRAHAM: As I understand it, all of our CountryLink regional rural staff review processes with the unions have been completed sensibly.

CHAIR: In relation to CityRail, can you explain why CityRail has not reported safety performance statistics on its web site since August of last year?

Mr GRAHAM: Yes, I can. Because of our safety management system that was accredited last December through the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator [ITSRR] and embedded within that safety management system the incident approach that we are taking, the hazards approach that we are taking, we are reconstituting the reporting of the safety statistics to make it far more meaningful to the public and to ITSRR against our safety management system guidelines. We are doing that work now and when we bring it back on line we will continue to publish the statistics and they will be a lot more meaningful to us, the community and the regulator.

CHAIR: When do you anticipate that occurring?

Mr GRAHAM: I think we are probably a couple of months away from being able to finalise that, but I am acutely aware of the intensity of the work that is currently being undertaken for that. I think you would agree that the transparency of information on the CityRail web site across a whole range of reliability, safety, drug and alcohol issues is well ahead of other organisations. We are very transparent, and we intend to continue to be.

CHAIR: What happens to the statistics in the meantime, the ones since August of last year?

Mr GRAHAM: Obviously, those incidents continue to be tracked. The difficulty is how meaningful they are in the way they are currently presented, and that is a significant issue. Let me give you a couple of examples to explain the point. You could go onto the web site and identify the number of incidents that have occurred. I am sure your interpretation of the number of collisions that RailCorp is reporting potentially would have something to do with train collisions on the network. The majority of the collisions that we report on the network are motor vehicles hitting boom barriers at level crossings; effectively they have nothing to do with railway collisions. We think it is important to be a lot clearer for public consumption in precisely what we are reporting.

CHAIR: In relation to security on trains, can you tell the Committee what measures RailCorp has taken to ensure security? I understand that over the past couple of years passengers have forced their way into the crew compartments of moving trains 73 times and broken into crew compartments in sidings a further 55 times. Could you give us a briefing on that and, in particular, do you consider the fact that one key gives access to all city trains a serious security risk?

Mr GRAHAM: The answer to your last question is no, I do not believe it is, but in terms of overall security issues we have, over the past couple of years within the timeframe of your question, increased security officer force from 300 personnel to 600 personnel. If you look to the BOCSR crime statistics independently published from our organisation you will see the very significant success of that initiative with a 30 per cent reduction in the assault rate of passengers on trains. Clearly, the presence of and the increased expenditure on transit officers is having a significant impact on improving not only the perception of security but also the impact as observed by the passengers, specifically as relating to cab security.

We have 2,500 train crew, approximately 1,350 drivers and 1,150 guards who need to be issued with access keys to do their jobs on a daily basis. The current access arrangements—and it is not just a single key, there are a number of different types of keys depending on the type of rolling stock—are important in terms of access for those 2,500 people to the fleet. We certainly have experienced a number of vandalism issues associated with vandals gaining access into these cabs. Currently we are looking at alternative electronic systems that might provide greater security, but with at least 2,500 employees needing access the issue obviously is complex for railways around the world.

CHAIR: On another security issue, can you tell us what RailCorp's policy is if there is a gang of youths passing through turnstiles without tickets? Will such relatively large numbers of people be apprehended?

Mr GRAHAM: Obviously, there are two levels to that. We have very specific instructions to our barrier staff that, under OH and S guidelines, they are not allowed to put themselves at risk in that circumstance. Where there is a potentially hostile environment we would not, and we specifically direct our staff not to, become involved in challenging or any provocation, which, clearly, might lead to injury to them. I think that is absolutely consistent with the OH and S Act. Our primary means of ensuring that we do not have fare evasion is part of the task of our 600 transit officers, and we constantly monitor and test fare evasion levels through a testing procedure of going into a specific carriage, counting the number of passengers in that specific carriage and reviewing each of the individual passenger's tickets.

We do that across a range of carriages so that we are able to identify reasonably precisely what the fare evasion levels might be. I am very pleased to say, again, that we have seen an improvement on the basis of transit officers and those assessed fare evasion levels. Obviously, transit officers are trained to a different level. Transit officers have powers in terms of fare evasion, but our normal barrier staff has neither those additional powers nor are they trained to be interventionist in any way.

CHAIR: In such an incident, what is the protocol? Is it that transit officers are required to attempt to apprehend such persons, or do the police become involved? What is the normal course? Can it be both?

Mr GRAHAM: It can be both. But, obviously, our transit officers patrol the network at large. Part of their duties is to rotate through barrier duties on stations and when transit officers are present and someone does not have the correct ticket or does not have a ticket then obviously they are trained to deal with that specific circumstance.

CHAIR: What is the latest estimate of the numbers of people who are travelling without a ticket, and what is the estimated loss of revenue from such people travelling without a ticket?

Mr GRAHAM: I will get you the more precise detail of that, but going back a couple of years the estimate was that that probably was of the order of \$18 to \$20 million and recent surveys have indicated a reduction in that fare evasion level, but I am happy to take the precise answer to that question on notice.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What level of RailCorp staff would be on stress leave currently as at today?

Mr GRAHAM: Again, I will take that on notice for you.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What compensation is given to RailCorp staff if they are unable to work due to an injury inflicted by a commuter?

Mr GRAHAM: The normal workers compensation arrangements would apply in that circumstance. Obviously, in addition to that we would provide any necessary counselling support under our employee assistance scheme in those circumstances.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Are you happy with your levels of workers compensation payments within your organisation?

Mr GRAHAM: Sorry, I do not understand the question.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Are you happy with the level of workers compensation payments within your responsibility? Are they high? Are they low? Are you aiming for better?

Mr GRAHAM: I do not think any chief executive in either a public or private sector organisation would be happy paying any workers compensation payments. I suppose the precise

answer to your question am I happy, the answer is no. Initiatives are under way to improve constantly our level of workers compensation incidence—obviously, the incidence is measured through a key performance indicator of lost time and injury frequency rate. Again, the very significant effort that has gone into our safety management systems has shown a very significant improvement in the lost time to injury rate. If and when an injury occurs, obviously, the duration rate of that injury and the management processes ensure a safe and speedy return to work for the employees involved, even if that means coming back on restricted duties for a period of time.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How do we compare to Victoria and Queensland in workers compensation payments?

Mr GRAHAM: I do not know the answer to that question, and I do not know that that comparative data is available.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Currently, how many vacancies are there in relation to RailCorp station staff?

Mr GRAHAM: We operate an establishment level of station staff of around 2,800. We would have somewhere around 170 vacancies, and in the past six months we have recruited 150 staff.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Does that mean you have 50 short or would it be 170?

Mr GRAHAM: We have 2,800 staff and the station assistant is a key entry point to the organisation and we encourage that. People come onto the job and then they progressively proceed through to higher levels, whether that be train guard, train driver or signal person. It is an entry point in the organisation. I would expect that there would be always a percentage of vacancies as we continue to recruit at an establishment level of 2,800.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What is the minimum number of staff required to evacuate a station safely in the event of an emergency or terrorist incident?

Mr GRAHAM: We have very well documented procedures. We exercise that issue on a very consistent basis. Recent incidents that have occurred, such as at Town Hall, where, a couple of months ago we had a fire in the a.m. peak, demonstrated the effectiveness. We always ensure that safety critical positions on our stations are priority for manning on a shift basis.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What additional resources will RailCorp allocate to the introduction of the new timetable for the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line and the South Coast line on 28 May 2006?

Mr GRAHAM: We will pursue the same successful formula of public communications that we had for the introduction of the 4 September timetable last year. That included volunteers providing public information—volunteers out of head office—and it included additional station staff and transit officers to ensure that the public at those locations were aware and had information available to them. As I said, it worked very successfully for us for the introduction of the 4 September timetable and I would expect to replicate that.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How much did that cost?

Mr GRAHAM: Because we used volunteers out of head office it was very cost effective.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How cost effective was it?

Mr GRAHAM: It is cost effective because you pay nothing additional.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: So it did not cost any more to get that going.

Mr GRAHAM: No. Again, great credit to the staff involved. People were prepared to say, "Hey, I'd like to get out there for these few days and get involved in customer service". Many of them worked additional hours to do it and did not put up their hands for overtime in the circumstances. I

think this is an ideal opportunity—I am sure that you would join me in this comment—to say this. The new timetable, since its introduction, in the first four months has lifted service reliability for customers from 61 per cent to 91 per cent. I would like to take this opportunity very publicly to acknowledge the considerable energy and effort, commitment and dedication of so many staff right across the organisation. I must say that it is an absolute joy to be out there now on the network with our train drivers and our train guards, whose spirit and morale has lifted so significantly. They are proud people; they are proud of the public service they perform. The energy and effectiveness of what they have done is to be commended. Thank you for the opportunity to say that.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How many internal RailCorp investigations are going on in relation to faults, derailments and SPADs.

Mr GRAHAM: Again, I do not carry that level of statistical information in my head. I am more than happy to take that question on notice.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What is RailCorp's current policy on mandatory drug and alcohol testing for staff involved in accidents or SPADs?

Mr GRAHAM: I will take you back to the Waterfall commission of inquiry, if I could. The Waterfall commission basically made a number of recommendations in regard to drug and alcohol testing. The commission recommended that random alcohol testing be implemented. We have gone further than the commission's recommendation and implemented random alcohol and drug testing. For random alcohol we undertake as a target 15,000 tests per annum and for random drug we undertake a target of around 3,000. We are currently performing in excess of those targets. The Waterfall commission also had a recommendation across the industry that there would be post-incident drug and alcohol testing.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: And that is mandatory.

Mr GRAHAM: That is what the commission was proposing. If you actually go to the ITSRR quarterly reports on the implementation—

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Pages 6 and 13.

Mr GRAHAM:—you will see where ITSRR are currently working up for the industry at large a definition of what constitutes an "incident".

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: So there is currently no mandatory testing after an incident. We are just waiting on the ITSRR recommendations.

Mr GRAHAM: No, that is not correct. We do extensive mandatory alcohol testing after an incident. Again, I am being very cautious here because I am not sure what you understand by the term "incident" compared with what I understand by that term. That is precisely the work that ITSRR is currently undertaking on behalf of the industry. ITSRR have produced some guidelines which are discussion drafts with industry.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What does RailCorp regard as an incident worthy of mandatory drug and alcohol testing?

Mr GRAHAM: Let me take you back to comment you made earlier. You referred to the number of investigations and SPADs. For the benefit of the Committee, the acronym SPAD refers to signals passed at danger. A signal passed at danger is a signal that a driver goes past if the signal is red. A driver can go past a signal at red because of either driver error or because of the fact that the signal goes back to red in the driver's face. For example, a circumstance where that occurs is during significant electrical storms when you get a lightning hit on the network. It will generate a pulse signalling systems failsafe. If they experience those power surges the signal goes to red. If a SPAD occurs because it is a technical SPAD versus a driver SPAD you would take a totally different approach in terms of the incident management of that, as we do. I only quote that example to demonstrate to you that the definition of an "incident" is a little more complex. That is why ITSRR, as the industry regulator, are doing the work that they are doing.

CHAIR: In relation to the Waterfall aftermath, are you aware of any WorkCover prosecutions that have been initiated or are on foot against State Rail?

Mr GRAHAM: I am aware that WorkCover are considering that particular position. What they ultimately and finally choose to do is a matter for WorkCover, not State Rail.

CHAIR: Sure. Are you aware that there may be a number of such actions?

Mr GRAHAM: Again, I do not intend to comment publicly on what is a process that WorkCover has a legislative obligation to undertake. It would be inappropriate for me to do so.

CHAIR: I think Ms Lee Rhiannon has a couple of questions and then we will examine the other part of the Transport portfolio.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the latest information regarding the safety and condition of Menangle rail bridge?

Mr GRAHAM: The Menangle rail bridge is part of the 60-year lease entered into in September 2004 with the Australian Rail Track Corporation and is no longer infrastructure that RailCorp has responsibility for.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you get reports from them about when it was last inspected and the condition of it?

Mr GRAHAM: No. As I said, the track has been leased to them. The obligation for the safe maintenance of that is with ARTC and the obligation for effective safety regulation of that infrastructure is with the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Thank you. There is often talk about integrated ticketing. From the rail side, what is the latest involvement that you have had in discussions with the other transport arms, such as ferries and buses, and the Government—however this system is working—about progress on bringing in integrated ticketing?

Mr GRAHAM: That is not a matter—that project—that is the direct responsibility of RailCorp. I suggest that is a question more appropriately directed to Mr Glasson later in your deliberations.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you are just waiting to be told what will happen rather than having any involvement in it.

Mr GRAHAM: No, we certainly have an involvement.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Can you explain what that involvement is?

Mr GRAHAM: We are obviously one of the potential users of integrated ticketing, along with the buses, ferries and private bus operators. But we are part of the process. The governance and management accountability for that process rests currently with Mr Glasson and he is the appropriate person to answer your question.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As to CountryLink—I apologise if this question has been asked—when you replace trains with buses how much money are you saving?

Mr GRAHAM: I did address that question earlier.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Can you give us an update regarding rail branch lines? Last year I remember that about \$100 million was granted to provide for the upgrading of rural rail branch lines in Western New South Wales. Has that money being used yet? What is planned for the future of those lines, considering that there is obviously an ongoing maintenance issue?

Mr GRAHAM: RailCorp's infrastructure area of responsibility is the area bounded by Bomaderry on the Illawarra line, generally around Macarthur on the main Southern line, Lithgow on the main Western line and Broadmeadow at Newcastle on the Northern line. The infrastructure outside of those areas is divided into two parts. The interstate and other mainline infrastructure was leased to the Australian Rail Track Corporation in September 2004 for a 60-year period. The remainder of the country network is the organisational responsibility of the Rail Infrastructure Corporation. The Acting Chief Executive there is Mr Bruce Farrar. He would be the gentleman who has responsibility in that area, and therefore the appropriate person to answer your question.

CHAIR: On behalf of the Committee, Mr Graham, many thanks for your attendance today. We appreciate your assistance again. I should announce that Ms Lee Rhiannon is substituting for Ms Sylvia Hale for the rest of the hearing.

I now welcome Mr Glasson and Mr Wilson. Thank you for your attendance today. I will begin with a question about the State Transit Authority. Can you advise the Committee of the status of the implementation of a reliability monitoring system in relation to the Liverpool to Parramatta transitway?

Mr WILSON: When that system was introduced some three years or so ago the technology provided there consisted of some loops in the ground and computerised systems. That system itself has not been able to produce reliable results in terms of on-time running. However, our own checks of services reveal that we have very, very few cancellations on that service and on-time running is reasonably good, particularly on the dedicated parts of the transitway. We have had going into Liverpool—particularly while there was some construction happening there—some difficulties with reliability on Hoxley Park Road. Also going into Parramatta until very recently when the new interchange opened there there had been some difficulties getting into and out of Parramatta. But in an overall sense the reliability of that service is excellent.

CHAIR: Excellent? The T-way has been in place for three years—since February 2003. Do you agree that patronage is still well under the STA target of 2.8 million trips per annum, which I understand was the target at the bidding stage for the T-way operations contract? Am I correct in saying that the target has not yet been met?

Mr WILSON: That is correct, but the patronage is still growing quite strongly. Indeed, last week we had our highest week ever and I anticipate over the next three or four weeks to continue to get record patronage. We have currently, on an annualised basis, a little over 2 million boardings per annum, and that is increasing at a little over 300,000 boardings per annum. So we are certainly heading towards that target of 2.8 million, which was the basis of our bid.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: You are about a third under.

Mr WILSON: Yes, approximately that.

CHAIR: When will you get to the target on current estimates?

Mr WILSON: At the current rate of growth we will get there in about year five or six, I would anticipate. We are hoping that the conclusion of work at Parramatta in particular, and the improvement of both the running conditions and the terminus facilities at Parramatta will be a stimulus to growth. There is some redevelopment there by Westfield that is occurring at Parramatta and we would look to that also to assist in reaching those targets.

CHAIR: In terms of reaching targets and the like can you explain why the STA has not reported performance statistics on its web site since August 2004? Those statistics have not appeared in relation to Sydney buses, Western Sydney buses, Newcastle buses and ferries?

Mr WILSON: We have been reporting those statistics in our annual report and that was certainly reported for the year 2004-05. We are currently looking at improving the reporting of those statistics. In particular, we are looking towards the implementation of technology on our buses that will provide vehicle tracking on the buses and enable us in the future to be able to report much more representative and reliable information about what our performance is.

CHAIR: Why have the statistics not appeared on the web site? Why was the decision made not to post them there?

Mr WILSON: We are not currently happy with the data available on that fine basis.

CHAIR: Will you provide the Committee with updated statistics when you have got them fixed and they reappear?

Mr WILSON: Certainly.

CHAIR: Will you provide an explanation of how you go about gathering the STA's on-time running statistics for bus routes? How are those figures collated?

Mr WILSON: The current information for the on-time running is based on on-time departure from major terminals which is basically what might be regarded as bus inspectors, if you like, particularly at some of our city terminals who fill in check sheets and that is manually analysed. In future when we have got vehicle tracking technology we will have GPS on each bus.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: When is that coming on line?

Mr WILSON: It will come on line progressively over the next three years. It is quite a major project. Part of it relates to the installation of GPS tracking on the buses and the other parts relates to the software that is required to both track where the bus is, know what work that bus is on, and be able to do a comparison as to how that is occurring.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Yesterday I was at the depot of a trucking company which has more than 100 trucks in its fleet and it is had the systems tracking for a number of years. It knows at any one time where its trucks are, what speed they are doing and the maintenance record of them. Are you telling the Committee that State Transit is still three years away from putting this sort of sensible technology into its busy so Sydney people have an idea what is happening?

Mr WILSON: I think Sydney people do have an idea what is happening at the moment. The issue with technology is it is being introduced as part of the new metropolitan bus systems contracts and we, like the private buses, will be part of the same system for monitoring. So that system will cover both State Transit and the private bus network.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Why is it taking so long? Are you scared of what the data will reveal?

Mr WILSON: No, I am not scared of what the data will reveal. In terms of the implementation of that system that is perhaps something that the director general might care to comment on.

Mr GLASSON: Prior to the metropolitan bus contracts being introduced some of the private companies had some GPS tracking and others did not. It has been made mandatory now. The time really relates to both the roll-out of Tcard because the GPS is embedded in the Tcard machines and that will not be out across the whole of the metropolitan area until sometime early to mid next year. The other issue is the time it is going to take for the RTA—and the Government announced a three year program—to effectively install all the devices along the strategic bus corridors that will actually pick up the GPS information as the buses pass those points and relate it to the timetable.

CHAIR: When will the Tcard trial finish?

Mr GLASSON: There has been a Tcard roll-out to the private buses for school children over the past year. The trial in the Punchbowl area will commence in late May and run for approximately two months.

CHAIR: What happens after that?

Mr GLASSON: After that the full roll-out will commence later this year, and the metropolitan area is expected to be completed by early next year.

CHAIR: Is that January or March?

Mr GLASSON: It will depend—it will be sometime early next year.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: There will be no major progress on reporting data of on-time running until after next year's State election, is that right, other than what we have now which is an official recording of the departure time of a bus?

Mr GLASSON: In fact, the recording by all the bus fleets on the strategic corridors around Sydney is still probably three years off. It will be a gradual process depending on the RTA roll-out.

CHAIR: Has any member of the Tcard consortium or ERG been paid any moneys by the Government in advance of the delivery of the Tcard project?

Mr GLASSON: I am happy to provide to you on notice details of payments under the contract but I do not believe that they are being paid in advance of delivering on certain milestones within that contract.

CHAIR: Would you provide that?

Mr GLASSON: I would need to check on the confidentiality but I am happy to go back and do that.

CHAIR: In June 2005 former Premier Carr talked about speeding up travel in Sydney's central business district. How many new bus lane enforcement cameras have been installed in the central business district since 22 June 2005?

Mr GLASSON: I would have to take that question on notice. The RTA would have been doing the installation on those. I would have to get that detail for you.

CHAIR: Have the operating hours of bus lanes been extended since June 2005? If so, what are the new operating hours?

Mr WILSON: I do not recall any changes to the operating hours themselves but there have been additional bus lanes installed. We can provide details on that if you wish but I know, for example, in both Chalmers and Elizabeth streets there have been additional red lanes installed.

CHAIR: The Committee would appreciate that information. Will you provide the Committee with an update on off-bus only ticket sales being made at some central business district locations? What have been the results to date? Have they resulted in any on-time running improvement?

Mr WILSON: Our first pilot was at Watson Street which is the last pick up from the northern services before they turn onto the Warringah freeway. The analysis of that trial showed that we reduced the average boarding time which is about 10 to 12 seconds for a cash transaction and about two to three seconds for a magnetic ticket validation. That demonstrated that the buses at Watson Street were incurring less delay there. I do not have the exact time average for the buses but it certainly proved the effectiveness of pre-purchase tickets. We are currently looking at some locations to introduce ticket vending machines in the city that will vend single journey magnetic tickets that people can use on the bus. We are going through that process now. We are certainly anxious to increase the amount of off bus ticket sales. The work we do needs to be considered in the context of rolling out Tcard along the program that Mr Glasson identified. I do not want to invest in a lot of equipment that does not have a payback that is reasonably quick because it is going to be overtaken by Tcard.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In light of the attack on a State Transit bus driver in Ashfield on the night of Wednesday 28 December 2005 on the 480 bus route, what checks were made on the closed circuit television [CCTV] equipment on the bus prior to the night of the incident?

Mr WILSON: Our CCTV equipment on buses undergo regular weekly checks by maintenance contractors. In addition, if the staff become aware that the CCTV equipment is not working they are asked to report that and we would take immediate action to have that defect rectified.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Were any reports completed on this particular CCTV unit?

Mr WILSON: I am sorry, I do not have that information.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Would you provide that to the Committee?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: If a report was done on that CCTV would you also provide that to the Committee?

Mr WILSON: Yes, I will take that on notice.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: State Transit conducts weekly checks of CCTV units on all its buses?

Mr WILSON: That is a regular check independent of the driver. You will see a flashing red light on the equipment and if that light is not flashing the driver is supposed to report the equipment.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Is that as far as the checking goes or is there a weekly check as well?

Mr WILSON: It is as well as the weekly check. The weekly check is done by contractors independently of the driver.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How many buses are currently fitted with security screens?

Mr WILSON: I would need to get back to you with the exact number. We have a number of screens fitted on our latest model buses.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Will all new buses be fitted with security screens?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Is it a policy to retrofit all other buses in time?

Mr WILSON: We will examine the issue of retrofitting and I would imagine that any program we undertake of retrofitting would start with the new buses and progressively work back.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Do you have a stated goal to achieve that?

Mr WILSON: We are currently examining that in detail at the moment. I am not able to give any specific commitment as to exactly what will be done in terms of retrofitting but we are certainly looking at this issue and I would expect that we will be doing some retrofitting but whether it is the whole fleet is not certain. There are issues of the difficulty of actually fitting the screens in some of the older buses so that will need to be examined in a fair bit of detail.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What buses were put onto STA bus routes this morning compared with yesterday or even last Thursday?

Mr WILSON: I do not have figures from this morning. We have a very high level of bus availability in the morning and that has improved considerably over the past 12 months so I would expect that bus availability would have been almost 100 per cent this morning. When I say "100 per cent" I am not saying 100 per cent of our total fleet would have been available but 100 per cent of what we require to run the peak would have been available. In addition, we have also had provided at

this time of year what we call AD, or as directed, buses to cope with some of those pressure points that you get around this time of year. So we would have, in fact, quite possibly provided more than our peak requirement this morning.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Would you provide the figures for today, yesterday and last Thursday?

Mr WILSON: Yes, I will take that on notice.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: On 2 February it was stated in the cross city tunnel inquiry that information regarding complaints about reliability—

The Hon. Jan BURNSWOODS: Point of order: Is it in order to ask questions in a Committee about the unreported discussions of a committee inquiry? I would have thought that that contravenes standing orders.

Ms Lee RHIANNON: To the point of order: That information was provided at a public hearing.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: I read the newspaper.

The Hon. Jan BURNSWOODS: We have rules in the Legislative Council about debating unreported proceedings of committees.

CHAIR: I do not think my colleague was asking about the unreported work of a committee. If the question is simply that it has been stated that information regarding complaints about reliability on various routes associated with the cross-city tunnel [CCT] had not been analysed in the past, can you provide that information now?

The Hon. JAN BURNSWOODS: I repeat, I am seeking a ruling. We have rules that any evidence that is given before a parliamentary committee can obviously then be discussed in that committee's report. The fact that something was stated and even the fact that it is available on a transcript on a web site, or whatever, is beside the point. The fact remains that we are not here to discuss the proceedings that are before another committee, in this case a select committee of the Parliament.

CHAIR: As I said, I suggest that the question can be rephrased so that we are not transgressing on any other inquiry. But this Committee is entitled to ask a question along those lines.

The Hon. JAN BURNSWOODS: But we are not entitled to refer to material being debated by another committee. And in this case it is very clear it is being debated because evidence given to the Committee is being quoted.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Madam Chair, I feel that the Hon. Jan Burnswoods is questioning your ruling and we are wasting valuable time.

The Hon. JAN BURNSWOODS: The Chair has not given a ruling.

CHAIR: I have ruled that the question should be rephrased so that it simply does not refer to the CCT inquiry, it simply refers to Mr Wilson being asked has there been an analysis of complaints about reliability on various routes associated with the cross-city tunnel at this point and, if so, can we have that information.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Mr Wilson, could you give us some information regarding complaints about reliability on various routes associated with the cross-city tunnel? Have they been gathered and analysed?

Mr WILSON: In terms of providing a detailed answer, I will take that on notice. But what I can say is that we do have a good record of every complaint made through our 131 500 service. Every complaint lodged is examined individually. If people request a call back on that complaint they will

receive it and I will undertake to have some analysis done of those along the lines you have requested and we will provide some information.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: So you will give us a breakdown of the number of phone calls and complaints that you have received to that line?

Mr WILSON: That is, to a certain extent, a how long is a piece of string question. What I will do is endeavour to relate the issue you are asking about to the cross-city tunnel and the routes affected by that, which from our point of view we have had impacts probably, especially to the immediate east of the city. There have been more general impacts on other corridors as well, but when the complaints are made they are classified into various classifications—late running is one of them—and we will have a look and see what we can provide for you there.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Have you analysed the travel times since the opening of the cross-city tunnel for your commuters?

Mr WILSON: Yes, we did surveys of running times in the city.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What are the results of those surveys?

Mr WILSON: Again, I do not recall the details, and that can be provided, but we had mixed results. We had improvements on some corridors following the opening of the tunnel and deterioration on others.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Can you provide details to us of the deterioration and the positive outcomes?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to the Ministry of Transport, have all the Sydney region bus contracts been finalised?

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What are the guidelines for assessing applications by Sydney private bus operators for additional bus services?

Mr GLASSON: In simple terms, the bus operator has to demonstrate clearly the capacity issue on the route that they want to introduce new services on and under the contracts there is a test, which is a public interest test, to ensure that there are not some underutilised services or significantly underutilised services somewhere in the contract area that could be better utilised on a route with more demand, prior to approving additional buses.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Would it be possible for the Committee to have a copy of the guidelines?

Mr GLASSON: Certainly. The generic contract is on our web site, and I would happily provide that. That provides the details.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Just in relation to Forest Coach Lines, why has it taken approximately nine months for the Ministry of Transport to make a decision on their request for additional services?

Mr GLASSON: I am not sure that that is strictly the case. Forest, as I understand it, made an application in July last year to the Ministry for two additional buses on their 270 city service. The Ministry determined to provide one additional bus, and that was approved in August last year. That bus, I understand, will be delivered next month to Forest. So it depends what the nine months includes, whether that includes the total negotiation of their finance, ordering of the bus and delivery of the bus to them.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to other requests for additional services, is that the sort of time frame that is normal, or is it a bit longer or a bit shorter?

Mr GLASSON: I think between a month and two months to assess an application in the normal run of events is probably not unreasonable. I would like to think it could be done within a month or shorter, but the circumstances last year were that the Ministry was still in the midst of negotiating contracts and resources were not readily available to do everything at once.

CHAIR: Mr Glasson, in relation to freight rail, can you give the Committee some information relating to this current financial year on what action the Ministry has taken to facilitate the moving of freight on to rail and off our roads?

Mr GLASSON: The Ministry is not responsible for transport planning. That was a function that was transferred to the Department of Infrastructure and Planning and so resides in the Department of Planning. We do not have a specific accountability to influence freight by mode.

CHAIR: I do not think there is transport planning in the Department of Planning either, based on yesterday's estimates.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: It is just another thing clogged up in Planning.

Mr GLASSON: When the Department of Transport was changed to a Ministry of Transport in mid-2003, all the transport planning functions which resided within the previous department were transferred to the Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

CHAIR: In relation to the grain lines, which were alluded to earlier, can you advise the Committee what is the department's intention, the Ministry's intention, in relation to the 15 branch lines?

Mr GLASSON: I think the Government has stated a commitment to funding of 11 of those branch lines up till the end of the 2007-08 financial year, and there is a detailed explanation from the Minister as to what that entails.

CHAIR: So beyond 2007-08 it is up in the air, is it?

Mr GLASSON: Well, I think the Minister has been having discussions with New South Wales Farmers and others about a process beyond that time.

CHAIR: And what about the other four?

Mr GLASSON: They are suspended as government policy, so it is a matter that the Minister would need to be asked.

CHAIR: So government policy is that they are suspended indefinitely?

Mr GLASSON: That is as I understand it.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Where are those four grain lines?

Mr GLASSON: I can provide you with the detail of which ones are suspended.

CHAIR: In relation to taxi fares on the M7, can you advise what steps the Ministry is taking to simplify those taxi fares? For example, do you propose to have a fares summary sheet to be issued every quarter in conjunction with changes in the consumer price index, if there are any changes in the consumer price index?

Mr GLASSON: My understanding is that the operator did distribute a fares summary sheet to all the taxis prior to the commencement of charging of fares, and that will be updated and provided to taxi drivers prior to any increase in fares.

CHAIR: What is the cost of those fares summary sheets and who has to pay it?

Mr GLASSON: That is provided by the operator to the taxi drivers.

CHAIR: In relation to the CCTV monitors in taxis and for extra security staff at taxi ranks, can you provide the Committee with information as to the amount that the Government is committing to funding the installation of those CCTV monitors in cabs and for any extra security that is provided or will be provided at taxi ranks?

Mr GLASSON: I am happy to come back with the detail on that but, essentially, the Government is still in discussions with the industry about the funding of all the additional cameras and the Minister has made a statement in relation to the extension of the secure ranks initiative within New South Wales in consultation with local councils and police.

CHAIR: I would just run through some questions and you can answer them on notice if you like. Firstly, who would ensure that the installation of the monitors and the extra security staff would be put in place? What is the expected time frame for all taxis to have these CCTVs installed? How many taxi ranks are currently monitored by CCTV? What checks are done to ensure CCTV monitors are functioning properly? Who will be paying for the images to be downloaded, if they need to be downloaded? If we could get the answers to those questions on notice it would be very much appreciated.

Mr GLASSON: I am happy to do that.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to TIDC, what is the current cost estimate breakdown for each of the clearways projects, considering the total cost has blown out by \$500 million?

Mr GLASSON: I am happy to come back with the detail. They report directly to the Minister, but I am happy to come back with some information.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What is the estimated cost of the Bondi Junction turnback?

Mr GLASSON: That is really Mr Graham's area. These are Mr Graham's questions in that he is paying for those matters.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: You have a co-ordinating role as director general in the Ministry of Transport?

Mr GLASSON: We do have a co-ordinating role but TIDC is run as a separate board reporting to the Minister.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to ITSRR, why have the target dates slipped for 20 of the Waterfall inquiry recommendations?

Mr GLASSON: They report independently to the Minister. I can take that on notice and forward it to ITSRR.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: And in forwarding that could you also find out information as to why recommendation 55 of the Waterfall inquiry has taken so long to implement, which is in relation to the testing of drivers for alcohol or drugs in relation to accidents?

Mr GLASSON: I will pass that through to ITSRR.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Mr Glasson, can you explain why there have been so many delays in introducing integrated ticketing?

Mr GLASSON: I am not certain as to which delays you are referring to.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: If you could run us through that because periodically we hear it is going to happen and then we do not hear anything for a long time. If you could give us a background, say over the last couple of years? I think it is about two years since the Minister announced we were about to have integrated ticketing.

Mr GLASSON: In general terms I will give you an overview, and if you want some more I am happy to come back with some more. A decision was made some 12 months or more ago by the Government to bring forward school student Tcards onto the private bus operators in advance of the program as it was then. My understanding is that the original delivery of the project was for November this year and it is likely that that has some slippage in it, probably to around March next year. There are all sorts of reasons for that. A lot of them will be related to technology, ironing out bugs in what is a new and quite complex system.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So that is one just for school students?

Mr GLASSON: No, that is the total program. My understanding is that the total program was originally to be delivered by November this year, and that is likely to be around March next year.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You mentioned about the school students. Where is that one up to?

Mr GLASSON: That is in all the private buses.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So that is the one you are referring to?

Mr GLASSON: Yes, that is right. There is also a field trial scheduled for late May this year and I think there was some slippage of about a month in that. Overall, that is related mainly to technology.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Where will the field trial occur, please?

Mr GLASSON: It is around the Punchbowl area.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is that just involving trains or private buses and buses?

Mr GLASSON: It is both private and State Transit buses.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So, just buses?

Mr GLASSON: That is my understanding. Does it include the rail stations?

Mr WILSON: My understanding is there is some limited rail on that as well.

Mr GLASSON: I will clarify that for you.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Now a bus question. It is a long-running one. I hope you have some background on it. I have been told it has been going for 14 years. A government bus goes from Swansea to Morisset and is causing a great deal of difficulty for many locals because it is not able to pick up in certain areas. The private contractor, Busways, has the bus franchise for around Vales Point Road and Mannering Park. It is causing difficulties because people are not able to get to some of the shopping centres and then Wyee station, that they are delivered to, has 94 steps. So there are issues in getting to local shopping centres and accessibility. Why can the government bus not stop in that area that is covered by Busways?

Mr GLASSON: That is truly a matter from the old and the current bus contracts, which are exclusive rights.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes. Why is it still a problem, considering we have got into the new contracts?

Mr GLASSON: Because the new contracts in the outer metropolitan areas, including Swansea, will not be finalised until later this year. The metropolitan was done first. Now Central Coast, Newcastle, Blue Mountains and the Illawarra following that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you understand that this issue is being addressed in the new contracts?

Mr GLASSON: It is my understanding that it will be addressed in the new contracts, but I am happy to come back and clarify that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: What I mean by addressed, will public buses be able to pick up in those areas? So, if you could check on that?

Mr GLASSON: Under the new contracts and the consolidation, we are trying to abandon the differentiation between public and private or private and private exclusive areas. We are designating large areas where you get an integrated network and whoever is the provider can pick up. I think it will resolve the situation you are talking about but I am happy to come back on the details of that specific route.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I want to ask you about Newcastle and buses. Do you judge that the fare-free zone in Newcastle has been a success?

Mr WILSON: There is no significant impact on patronage, if that is what your criterion for success is.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I was interested in how you were examining it. What are the estimated losses in the fare box revenue associated with the fare-free zone in the Newcastle central business district, say, for last year?

Mr WILSON: I would need to take that on notice and come back to you.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: If you could give it to us on a monthly basis for 2005, that would be good. I would also be interested if you are seeing there has been an increase in ferry revenue, for instance, and if you are finding that more people are doing park and ride, like to Stockton and leaving their cars there and catching the ferry, and whether there has been an increase in bus patronage outside the CBD in that same period? So, I am asking that as a question which I understand you will need to take on notice. Are you making an assessment of the revenue patterns of the public transport use in Newcastle since the introduction of this fare-free zone?

Mr WILSON: As I said, we will need to come back to you specifically with any data, but my general impression for Newcastle is that it has not provided any increase in patronage.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So, those studies have been done? You have data there where you are making those comparisons, have you?

Mr WILSON: We have information about every boarding we have on the buses, the date, the time of day, the route, the direction of travel, the section point. We have systems where we can monitor the patterns in that on a regular basis, and none of the views I have taken of Newcastle has suggested that there has been any beneficial impact on Newcastle patronage as a result of the fare-free zone.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As far as the plan itself, that is safely in place now or is it under review, the fare-free zone?

Mr WILSON: In relation to that, we will do what we are requested in relation to fares. Under the new contracts it is the prerogative of the director general to say where we do and where we do not offer free fares.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You have not been asked to review it?

Mr WILSON: No, it remains in place for the time being.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I would like to ask about light rail. Is the Government involved in any talks about extending light rail in the city?

Mr GLASSON: My understanding is an application was made to the Government, and that was referred to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When was that, please?

Mr GLASSON: I could not tell you the exact date. It was prior to my appointment. I think it is something like 12 months. I am not sure. You would need to direct that to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning or the Minister for Planning.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Was that application for extension of light rail in the city or a new project?

Mr GLASSON: I am not familiar with the detail. I was not involved in any of those matters.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are you aware of any other light rail proposals being considered in your department by the Minister?

Mr GLASSON: No, I am not.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Mr Glasson, are you enjoying your job?

Mr GLASSON: Yes, I am enjoying my job.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: There seems to be a little bit of confusion and lack of co-ordination and communication just reading between the lines in relation to the Department of Infrastructure and Planning having transport planning decisions, policy decisions, with their organisation. Is it seamless? Is it working?

Mr GLASSON: Generally I think it does work. There are always issues within government but generally I think it does work.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: And the morale within the Ministry of Transport is strong?

Mr GLASSON: I think the morale is good, yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Just asking about the use of coaches and buses on the Casino to Murwillumbah line, do you have an involvement with that or is that purely under rail?

Mr GLASSON: That is rail organising that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you have no involvement in that at all?

Mr GLASSON: Look, I am happy to clarify that, but I understand CountryLink would be ordering those coaches and paying for them.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I would appreciate it if you would clarify that. I have a number of questions about the increased use of coaches there and how much money has been spent on them, and also about the contracts those bus operators are operating under. So, if you could take that on notice, I would appreciate it.

Mr GLASSON: I will. If that is under RailCorp, you would be happy for me to refer it to Mr Graham to include in his answers?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes.

CHAIR: That would be appreciated. Mr Glasson and Mr Wilson, thank you for your assistance here today. We do appreciate it. That concludes the public hearing.

(The Committee proceeded to deliberate)