

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4

**INQUIRY INTO THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-
WEST SECTOR**

At Sydney on Wednesday 19 November 2008

The Committee met at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. J. A. Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. A. R. Fazio

The Hon. K. F. Griffin

The Hon. J. C. Robertson

The Hon. M. R. Matthew-Cox

Ms Lee Rhiannon

The Hon. R. A. Smith

CHAIR: Welcome to the third public hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4's inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's north-west sector. This hearing is being held in order to receive evidence from the various government agencies whose activities influence the position of transport services through the north-west sector.

Before we commence I would like to make some comments about procedural matters. In accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for the broadcasting of proceedings, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation is placed on anything that is said before the Committee. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available on the table by the door.

I remind everyone that messages for Committee members or witnesses must be delivered through the Chamber and support staff or the Committee clerks. I ask everyone to turn off their mobile phones as they interfere with Hansard's recording of the proceedings. I would like to welcome the representatives of government agencies who are appearing as witnesses today. Thank you for appearing before the Committee.

MICHAEL ALAN SCHUR, Deputy Secretary, Office of Infrastructure Management, New South Wales Treasury, and

MARCUS RAY, Acting Executive Director Metropolitan Planning, Department of Planning, affirmed and examined:

LESLIE ROBERT WIELINGA, Chief Executive Officer, Roads and Traffic Authority,

JIM GLASSON, Director General, New South Wales Ministry of Transport,

PETER DUNCAN, Acting Deputy Director General, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and

ANGUS BARRINGTON DAWSON, Chief Executive Officer, Growth Centres Commission, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I need to advise all of you that if you should consider at any stage that certain evidence you wish to give or documents you may wish to tender should be heard or seen only by the Committee, please indicate this fact and the Committee will consider your request. If you take any questions on notice today the Committee would appreciate if the responses to those questions could be forwarded to the Committee by Thursday 4 December. Is it the desire of one of you to make an opening statement on behalf of the Government's submissions?

Mr DUNCAN: I would like to make a brief statement. I simply want to refer the Committee to the two previous submissions that have been made, one of 20 October and a subsequent amendment of 6 November. In the responses today I will try to facilitate or direct the questions to relevant areas, if that assists the Committee. I will leave that to you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: In one of the submissions Dr Laird from the University of Wollongong made the point that the Action for Transport 2010, relating to road and rail projects, which was released just over 10 years ago, included the construction of the Epping to Castle Hill railway by 2010. He made the point that "Sydney's north-west is the only growth corridor throughout the metropolitan region without a heavy rail link. Despite significant development in recent decades, the provision of adequate public transport has been neglected. The result is a high dependency on cars. Failure to address this lack of public transport would mean reduced access to employment and educational opportunities for residents and severe traffic congestion." That was a quote from the 10-year old document.

How will agencies provide an explanation as to why those words from the Action for Transport 2010 have been allowed to come true—in particular the failure to address the congestion question while providing infrastructure in the period that has transpired?

Mr GLASSON: I think the matter of the delivery of infrastructure and the Government's priorities in terms of delivering its infrastructure are matters for the Government; they are not matters for us as agency heads. We do not make those policy decisions and we are not accountable for the delivery against them.

CHAIR: So it is the Government's fault that it has not put into action the action plan?

Mr GLASSON: I am not saying it is the Government's fault; I am saying that—

CHAIR: It is nobody else's fault, is it?

Mr GLASSON: It is not for us to give comment on the Government's delivery against plans that are put in the public domain from time to time.

CHAIR: Have the agencies looked at the models that apply in other parts of Australia? Dr Laird, for example, said, "New South Wales is not just lagging behind Queensland, it is also lagging behind Victoria and Western Australia. In Western Australia, it has delivered, whilst we in New South Wales have plans sitting on the books. Each of these other three States have been able to deliver improved rail services attracting strong patronage growth. New South Wales cannot afford to keep going in this way." Did the agencies here in New South Wales have dialogue with, for example, the infrastructure planners in southeast Queensland? Have you

looked at Metrolink in Melbourne or the bus systems in Brisbane? Do you learn anything from the agencies that operate in other jurisdictions?

Mr DUNCAN: Yes, we do, and we keep in regular contact through both formal and informal methods, and our infrastructure plans here are similar to those other States. From what I have seen, our planning is similar to those other States as well.

CHAIR: It is just that they deliver and New South Wales does not, is that it?

Mr DUNCAN: I believe we do deliver. We are delivering to the State Infrastructure Strategy, and that is what we continue to deliver against.

CHAIR: Why do you think it is that so many witnesses to this inquiry in relation to the north-west sector are frustrated and angry that major infrastructure projects have not been delivered?

Mr DUNCAN: I cannot speak for those witnesses; they give their own evidence. I am simply saying that we coordinate with other States and we deliver against the State Infrastructure Strategy, which is updated on a two-yearly basis.

CHAIR: There is a reference in the mini-budget to deferring the North West Metro. From an agency point of view can you explain what you understand to be the meaning of the word "defer"?

Mr SCHUR: I think the word "defer" means exactly that—to defer. In other words, at this stage there is no specific timetable for that project.

CHAIR: Basically, it has gone into limbo?

Mr SCHUR: I believe it has simply been deferred, given other pressing priorities that the Government considers need to be invested in prior to that project. There is no specific timetable for that project. That is all it means.

CHAIR: There is no internal indication of the time at which it might come back on the agenda?

Mr SCHUR: No, not at this stage.

CHAIR: One of the concerns expressed by many witnesses to the hearings we have had in this inquiry relate to the centrality of their plans. For example, in local government areas, the centrality of the rail link—whether it is the north-west heavy rail or the North West Metro—to their planning. The Mayor of Baulkham Hills said:

The rail has been core to our planning. It has to be. But what we also have to remember is two things. In the absence of that people need to have the bus situation, which needs roads, and public transport for buses. But, more importantly, the whole of our planning would be deemed to be predicated on that. But not everyone is going to live within walking distance of that rail line in its current format because both of them are basically on the same corridor. We are dependent on a modal transport system that allows feeder by public transport, and it has to be by road, to those railway stations. All of that is now in sheer chaos.

Do government agencies have any idea about how they should proceed to get local councils out of what they see as sheer key chaos in north-west sector?

Mr RAY: I might answer that question, Madam Chair. Obviously, in the broader planning regime the States planning regime for metropolitan Sydney is set out in the Metro Strategy—a document put out in 2005 and one which has a long forward view to 2031—so we are talking about a 25-year strategy that will have to adapt and be developed over time as new information comes to us and as new circumstances arise. At the next level down, and in order to assist councils, the department has embarked on 10 subregional strategies to try to provide the framework down to the next level to assist those councils in their detailed planning.

All 10 of those subregional strategies are out in draft form. Included in that area is the subregional strategy for the north-west area, which includes Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Penrith and Hawkesbury. That strategy was put out for public comment towards the end of last year—2007—and public comment has been received in relation to it. The department acknowledges that in completing the subregional strategies program

we will be looking at circumstances as they develop between the exhibition of the subregional strategy and its completion.

Given the recent Government decisions in the mini-budget, together with the changed economic outlook with the global financial crisis that has come upon us in the last few months, the more recent population and household projections that the department has published, and also the slowing in the take-up of development land release opportunities in Sydney over the last couple of years, the Minister for Planning has asked the department to look at all those factors—not just the decisions that came out of the mini-budget but also those other important factors—and to prepare a report for her early in the new year. So we are heading towards about March 2009.

That would then be able to feed into a number of planning areas. Obviously, it would feed into completing the subregional strategies that would directly assist councils, and it would also feed into the department's individual work with councils in completing their standard local environmental plans. At a broader level that would then feed into the five-yearly review of the Metro Strategy that is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

CHAIR: Mr Ray, are you aware of the evidence given to this Committee by Mr Dominic Johnson on behalf of the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils?

Mr RAY: No, I am not.

CHAIR: He said—and no doubt you would understand that he is a former employee of NSW Planning—that he had been very involved in the development of the Metro Strategy. He said that with the abandonment of North West Metro, or the rail link, the Metro Strategy had "no real merit". What is your reaction to that?

Mr RAY: As I said before, the Metro Strategy is a document that covers all of Sydney and it has a 25-year horizon. A range of different decisions will be made over that 25-year period about the delivery or the timing of infrastructure. Because of Government decisions in the mini-budget, the new timetable for the delivery of infrastructure in certain cases, the population projections, the economic outlook and the take-up of new housing in the area, the most appropriate thing we can do is look at the implications systematically and with a degree of thoroughness before we make any further comment in relation to that. It is important for us to do that review and then obviously certain decisions will be taken as a result of it. At the moment we need to do that review.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Mr Ray, the supplementary submission from the Ministry of Transport refers to the deferral of transport infrastructure in the north-west sector. We just heard from Mr Schur that that is to be deferred indefinitely. The Ministry of Transport states:

The Department of Planning has assumed enhanced public transport capacity due to a North West Metro ... in their population and employment forecasts for the North West. This includes the assumption that the key centres of Castle Hill, Norwest and Rouse Hill would be serviced by rail access by 2015 (or 2017 for Rouse Hill).

Are you talking across government about the implications of government decisions? Do you take that reference in the mini-budget to mean indefinitely deferring north-west rail projects, in whatever form, when they are part of the key assumptions you are making in relation to servicing expanding population centres in the north-west?

Mr RAY: Yes, as part of the review that I have just spoken about.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You will consider these changes to government policy by conducting a review?

Mr RAY: Yes, in relation to the strategic planning framework for Sydney and for completing the subregional strategies. That is what we intend to do.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In what is stated here it seems to be implied that your expectation from a planning perspective is that the only way to adequately service the population centres that are planned for the north-west is by way of a rail link?

Mr RAY: I do not actually think you could infer that from the subregional strategies or from that submission. Obviously, the subregional strategy itself was talking about a North West Rail Link because it was put out before the announcement of the North West Metro. But even the subregional strategy itself indicated that the final timing for the delivery of that piece of infrastructure, the North West Rail Link as it then was, was something that was subject to more detailed planning, and subject to economic and financial considerations. So, I would not say that the assumption was that the north-west rail had to be there at that particular point in time.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In your professional view, is a rail link to the north-west necessary at some point in the future to service the planned population expansion in that area?

Mr RAY: I think at this point in time the approach that I would like to take with that before coming to a view on that would be to conduct the review and see how that fed into the subregional strategy.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: What would be your instincts in that regard? We know there is a review in 2009, but what are your instincts? You come across these issues; you are familiar with it?

Mr RAY: I think it is too early to speculate and I would not like to hazard a view on that.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The people of the north-west have been speculating for 10 years. Surely you could give us your professional views in that regard?

Mr RAY: Look, it would simply be premature for me to do that given that the Minister has asked the department to conduct a review with other government agencies in order to get an updated position that can feed into the completion of the subregional strategy and also that can assist councils in doing their planning.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: This next question is probably directed to Mr Glasson. In relation to the heavy rail link as opposed to the North West Metro link, can you give me specific reasons why the heavy rail link was dumped in favour of the metro, which we know has also been dumped

Mr GLASSON: No. I think those were matters that were considered and decisions made by the Cabinet. I was not in the Cabinet room; I do not know ultimately how that decision played out.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Was that a position recommended by your department?

Mr GLASSON: We provide advice on a range of options to the Government, I think in relation to all their major decisions and we do not tend to provide a definitive view. We simply provide advice around their options.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: There has been a bit of confusion about the cost of the heavy rail link. You probably remember our estimates discussion about that?

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Could you clarify the cost of the north-west heavy rail from your most recent costings?

Mr GLASSON: I do not have those with me and I did not do the costings.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Okay. I think the costing was \$4 billion. Does that sound to be about the right figure for excluding a second harbour crossing?

Mr GLASSON: That is of the ballpark that was mentioned, but I think the north-west heavy rail format as I understand it essentially could not be functionally delivered without the second heavy rail crossing of the harbour in a capacity sense.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Did the North West Metro require a second harbour crossing?

Mr GLASSON: That requires a crossing under the Parramatta River further up the harbour than the centre of the city.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: And that was included in its \$12 billion costing?

Mr GLASSON: Correct.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Regarding the investment the Government has already made in relation to the North West Metro and the heavy rail, so far as the purchase of land, can you estimate or give us the figures on how much you have spent in purchasing land for those rail corridors?

Mr GLASSON: No, but I will happily take that on notice and come back to you with a correct figure.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you be able to also provide us with details of the total cost of the 47 full-time staff who have been working for years in relation to the north-west rail options?

Mr GLASSON: What time period are you interested?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: For the whole period in which the north-west heavy rail project and the North West Metro has been a policy of this Government?

Mr GLASSON: Okay. I am not sure that I could go back in the north-west heavy rail because a lot of that was done within the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, as it was then. It certainly was not done within my agency. So, to the extent that we could find figures, yes, I am happy to try to pursue that, but I cannot say that I could go back that far. I would not have access myself to that information.

CHAIR: Who would have access to it?

Mr GLASSON: I do not know who currently holds the records of time spent within the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources [DIPNR]. I simply do not know that.

CHAIR: You said rightly that the agencies give advice to the Government on options?

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

CHAIR: In comparing the North West Metro and the north-west heavy rail link, what was the advice to the Government as to which was the preferred option?

Mr GLASSON: I do not think we gave advice specifically as to a preferred option. I think we gave advice in relation to what they would get with each option.

CHAIR: Did the agency have a preferred option? Did you recommend for and against, on the pros and cons for each project that one came out better than the other?

Mr GLASSON: No. I do not think we did. I am happy to be corrected on that when I go back and look at the documentation, but I do not believe that we did give a recommendation either way. You need to understand that the carriage of reporting to the Cabinet about the north-west came through the Office of the Coordinator General. Whilst we may have provided information to our various Ministers along the table, the advice to the Cabinet came through the Office of the Coordinator General.

CHAIR: Mr Duncan, can you help us with the answer to that question?

Mr DUNCAN: Clearly, there were a range of options provided. I cannot tell you exactly what a recommendation was of Cabinet, but I can say that there were benefits, advantages and disadvantages with various options and they were provided for a Cabinet decision.

CHAIR: Did one stack up better than the other?

Mr DUNCAN: I think clearly it did if there was an answer with the North West Metro, but at that stage my understanding of it was that it provided a broader range of benefits to the transport of Sydney.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: In its submission the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils comments that there has been a 32.9 per cent increase on the 2006 population. In giving advice on the transport

needs for western Sydney and, obviously, north-western Sydney, could you explain how you have factored the population increase into the advice you have given?

Mr DUNCAN: I think that would be better answered by planning, really. Population growth is not my area.

CHAIR: Mr Ray?

Mr RAY: Could you just repeat the question?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils in its submission notes that there has been a 32.9 per cent increase on the 2006 population. Could you explain to the inquiry how this population increase and its transport needs are factored into advice that you give the Government on future transport plans for western and north-western Sydney?

Mr RAY: I am not quite sure I understand that figures that you are quoting from, the 2006 figures and 32.9 per cent. I am not quite sure what it actually is.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I have just taken that from their submission, but if you look at it in general terms, clearly the population is increasing.

Mr RAY: Clearly we take that into account in giving advice to government. Using the Metropolitan Strategy and the subregional planning as the framework, we look at the population increases and we give advice to government about transport in conjunction with other agencies.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: WESROC also notices the high level of car ownership in western Sydney. In recent years has there been a shift in your emphasis in transport planning to more public transport planning, or how have you been striking the balance between motorways and public transport?

Mr RAY: A number of the matters that we are pursuing, or that we have pursued from the time of the Metropolitan Strategy and that has since been reflected in the State Plan, or one of the main objects of the Metropolitan Strategy and the subregional strategy, is to increase the number of jobs that are closer to home. That is one aspect—to reduce the need to travel long distances or into the city. That is one of the major directions of the Government's strategic planning for Sydney over the last three or four years. As to the split between public transport and other forms of transport, obviously the department provides advice from time to time. But one of the things that obviously we will be looking at in this review, the Minister has requested, is these matters in more detail so that we can move forward in planning the north west from here.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Could you explain how often you meet with the people with whom you are sitting now to work through this advice and consider the population trends and the needs of the people of this region?

Mr DUNCAN: I think I can answer that question. There is a transport chief executive officers cluster group that meets regularly, on a monthly to two monthly basis.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So all of you people who are sitting here meet monthly.

Mr DUNCAN: Representatives of their organisations, that is correct.

Mr GLASSON: Generally, these people.

Mr DUNCAN: That is on a range of transport and planning issues.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: On those issues, in terms of the advice that goes to Cabinet on transport matters, is it signed off by that group, or are you putting in your advice separately?

Mr DUNCAN: In all cases we do both in the sense that the cluster group, chaired by Mr Glasson, considers the issues that are of importance to transport as a group. We provide advice to a representative of Ministers and organisations, as requested.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I appreciate that apply. I am trying to get a sense of to what degree there is competition between you about your favourite projects, between transport and major road projects, or if there is a sense of collaboration in terms of what is being channelled to Cabinet?

Mr DUNCAN: I think there is a strong sense of collaboration. Those meetings themselves deal with the State Plan, the Urban Transport Statement, the Metropolitan Strategy and all of those policy documents that these people have had input into.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Considering that for the people of the north west there has been a major shift from a promise of a heavy rail line to buses whereby we have gone from something worth \$4 billion to something that is worth about \$300 million in rough figures, could you run through, in terms of collaboration, what you are offering? I notice from some of the submissions that they are putting forward ideas about motorway changes to help the traffic move quickly in terms of giving more dedicated bus lanes. Considering where we are at with the emphasis in the foreseeable future on bus services, could you give us some specifics of recent changes or proposals that your committee has come up with to maximise what is happening with buses?

Mr GLASSON: Can I talk a little bit about buses and public transport?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes.

Mr GLASSON: Perhaps Mr Wielinga might like to speak a little bit about motorways and motorway capacities. In the north west we have both the M7 and the M2 as an east-west link and the link focus towards the city. We have the north-west transitway which runs from Rouse Hill down to Parramatta. We have the main north rail line to the east, and the Richmond line and the main western line to the west, all within the area—in fact and along the southern boundary.

In relation to buses, there are a number of things that we have done over recent times. The bus timetables were recast in the area of the north-west transitway for its introduction in early 2007. There are a large number of additional services and altered services there to take advantage of the transitway to Parramatta. The link to Blacktown was opened in late 2007. Once again, new timetables were put in place to support that.

The timetables for the M2 were altered with the opening of the Lane Cove Tunnel to include a mixture of express buses and buses that ran along Epping Road to allow interchange, particularly for school children around the Lane Cove area. We are now in the process of major integrated network reviews for buses in both region four, which is predominantly the Baulkham Hills-Cherrybrook areas, and also in region one, which is the balance of the west and out to Parramatta and to Penrith. Those will be implemented following public consultation early and mid-2009. They will include in some measure the additional buses announced in the mini-budget. We are still working through that process right now.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Something that came up in a number of submissions, and that I and a number of other members of Parliament have received complaints about, is bus queues.

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: To what degree are the measures you have outlined going to relieve the enormous pressure that exists on the bus system?

Mr GLASSON: There are two things: one is simply the increase in the number of buses available to service those routes and increasing capacity, which has been committed to quite clearly in the mini-budget; secondly, from initiatives such as the 20 per cent discount on weekly tickets and the off-bus sales of tickets which the operators are undertaking in the morning peak out at the Baulkham Hills junction, Berkeley Road, and Oaks Road and in the evening at the Queen Victoria Building [QVB], my understanding—I will clarify and correct this if it is not accurate because I last spoke to the operator some two or three months ago—is that at that time approximately 60 per cent of the daily trips were weekly tickets.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The increase in services that you have outlined is limited in the CBD and possibly other centres by the lack of space for the buses when they arrive at their destination in peak periods.

Mr GLASSON: That is something that we are reviewing at the moment for those north-west and Sydney Harbour Bridge buses, particularly in relation to York Street and Clarence Street. That is a matter,

following some work we are doing with some consultants at the moment, State Transit and the operators, we will be having a discussion on with the city council relating to some of that kerb space allocation.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Does that mean you are saying that there is a limitation at present and the aim for increasing bus services may not be able to be met with the current capacity?

Mr GLASSON: No. I think there is plenty of available kerb space to meet the capacity but it may need some rejigging of how the buses set down and pick up, in what order and at what ranks.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So we are still just talking about York Street?

Mr GLASSON: York Street, Clarence Street, the Queen Victoria building, that whole area.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you have similar capacity problems in any other centres where there are limitations on your planned increase because of managing the number of buses coming in during peak periods?

Mr GLASSON: Certainly, with the integrated networks across the metropolitan area we are attempting to refocus some of those services around travel patterns and travel needs around metropolitan centres. Yes, where those issues arise, we go and have discussions with the local council and with the RTA on changes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: What are those other centres where you are having capacity problems?

Mr GLASSON: I am not saying we have problems but, for example, when we opened the new bus interchange at Parramatta we significantly recast the bus operations in the vicinity of Parramatta. We worked with the bus companies at Castle Hill in the past couple of years and the council to increase the efficiency of the buses and the increases in buses around Castle Towers. Those things go on as a matter of course.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Another submission refers to reconfiguring the motorways to assist in the movement of buses. One proposal was about the M2 exit ramp to Epping station, and it was argued that it is being underutilised. Can you comment if it is being considered making changes there and any other changes to favour buses using the motorways?

Mr WIELINGA: The M2 motorway company has submitted a proposal to government for widening of that motorway. There are discussions underway at the moment about potential public transport infrastructure or road-based public transport as part of the widening proposal. Those discussions are ongoing at the moment.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So the operators have put into Cabinet to widen the motorway. By how many lanes do they want to widen the motorway?

Mr WIELINGA: That is still being confirmed. The scope has not been sorted out. They have a proposal for some lengths of those motorways to be widened by one lane in each direction. We have gone back to them and said, "Let's also talk about buses and public transport on the corridor". So the scope is still being discussed.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You may have covered this and I may not have understood, but can you clarify with this additional lane in each direction is it for the full length of the M2? It does not sound like you are saying it is to be a dedicated bus lane; it just sounds like it is an additional lane for any traffic.

Mr WIELINGA: The original proposal just had an additional lane. What I am telling you is that we are discussing the possibility of a dedicated bus lane as well or as a substitute for that. Those discussions are ongoing at the moment.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you are saying the RTA is putting forward two options. One is that the additional lane could be a dedicated bus lane or on top of the additional lane there could be a dedicated bus lane.

Mr WIELINGA: It is not quite that far advanced. We are still doing the initial modelling to see what could be possible in the corridor, and we are talking to the motorway company about that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Has this gone to Cabinet yet or at this stage is it still discussions between the M2 operators and the RTA?

Mr WIELINGA: The Minister for Roads has announced that we are looking at widening the M2 but the detail is still being discussed. Cabinet has given us approval to go and negotiate scope with the motorway company. We are doing that at the moment.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do we assume from those talks that the operators and/or the RTA have concluded that there is not sufficient space on the M2 roadway to construct dedicated bus lanes?

Mr WIELINGA: We built a transitway out in north-west Sydney, the North-West transitway. We have put bus lanes on Epping Road. I think it is commonsense to look at the bus connection in between those two, and we are simply doing that. It just makes good sense.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You are certainly looking at it, I have understood that, but it seems that you could conclude from what you are saying that you do not believe that it is possible to have a dedicated bus lane on the existing M2.

Mr WIELINGA: I am simply saying there are a number of possibilities. Perhaps the best way to answer that question is to give you a practical example of what we are trying to achieve. You can have a situation where you have existing infrastructure, roadway, and you are looking at improving the reliability of public transport on that roadway. You ask the question: How can we better utilise that road space? What are the things that we can do with the utilisation of those lanes to get a better outcome for everybody? Is there a scenario where we can provide dedicated bus lane capacity and still get general traffic flows? Victoria Road is an example of that with the bridge project. On our website at the moment we have the Spit-Military Road corridor where we set those objectives. It is all about the better utilisation of that road space. A good example of that, which I think you have heard before, is that the one bus lane on Sydney Harbour Bridge carries more people than the other seven traffic lanes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You just said it is better utilisation of the infrastructure, but what I heard you saying when you were describing the plans for the M2 is about the expansion. It does seem as though it is quite different.

Mr WIELINGA: I am saying to you that it could possibly be both. It could be one or the other. We are looking at the scope at the moment.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: A number of submissions from individuals and from WESROC raised the issue about pending oil shortages. When you have your combined meetings to what degree is the issue of future fuel supplies factored in to your decisions?

Mr GLASSON: The issues of both climate change and energy prices are clearly part of the discussion that is ongoing now around Sydney and its future. I think the matter right now is that we do not yet understand in fine detail what the ultimate effect of some of those things will be, but certainly we understand that over time that could well indicate a shift to greater use of public transport and that is something that we have taken into account in our forward views. One thing that is always difficult—and we have had increases in public transport usage in the past couple of years—is that we do not know, for example, what the impact right now of this global financial crisis will be. We do not always know whether some of these are step changes in usage or whether they are simply changes that ultimately will fit into a longer range average.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I want to ask a question on the issue of bus congestion in the CBD. You were saying that you thought you had enough kerb space to cope. In the longer term has any consideration been given to having underground bus terminals in the CBD?

Mr GLASSON: Not at this time. The Government's announcement in the mini-budget to build a CBD metro as the commencement of a series of metros into the future, I think, from a transport planning perspective is a better outcome than investing in underground bus terminals. I think there is a clear view right now that over time metros provide a much better complementary transport system with heavy rail than does heavy rail and buses. Metros are very expensive and they take time to deliver.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: So you would envisage, perhaps, something like buses not having to come all the way into the CBD?

Mr GLASSON: The CBD Metro already flags the potential to have a large bus terminal at Rozelle, where the Victoria Road buses now terminate. That detailed work is yet to be completed but, I do not think anyone sees buses competing with pedestrians and motor vehicles for space in the CBD as the answer for 30 or 50 years time. I think philosophically metro is a preferred investment rather than underground bus terminals.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Also, would that not lead to a more efficient use of buses? I catch buses into the city quite frequently, and they go along okay until they hit Broadway and then they slow fairly dramatically, even though they have bus lanes. Would you be able to use the capacity of the buses more efficiently by turning them around at Rozelle and getting them out and doing trips more quickly?

Mr GLASSON: Ultimately with metros, the concept is as far as possible you would integrate local bus networks into the metro stations and avoid the number of buses that would come towards the city.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I also wanted to ask you about the issue of getting metro passengers on and off quite quickly. In New South Wales we have a system where we require passengers to prove they have a ticket to access the metro. If you look at the metro systems in some major cities overseas, for example in Vienna, no people are staffing the entries and exits to the metros. People buy tickets from machines and validate them by punching in a machine like a Metro 10 on a bus and then they have inspectors who check. As a result, you have an easy flow in and out of the metro stations. You do not have the bottleneck of people having their tickets checked and having to put them in machines to get out. Has any cost benefit analysis being done to see whether that system would be better in improving peak flows of passengers on and off metros or other train systems?

Mr GLASSON: Certainly heavy rail, metros and buses, and that is the objective of the Government in the recent expressions of interest that have gone out for a new ticket system.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: One other thing I wanted your views about, a lot of people have asked why we cannot quarantine land for railways, whether light rail or heavy rail, when roads are being built. They often cite the example of Perth, where expressways are going out with rail links in the middle. I think that is fine, but suburban sprawl in Perth is into greenfield areas and it is also a lot flatter there. So, they can basically draw a line on a map and do whatever they want to. How does our geographical layout in the Sydney basin and our existing urban sprawl impact on our capacity to do that sort of thing?

Mr GLASSON: Mr Wielinga might want to add to this, but certainly the topography here is more challenging for railway construction than it is for road construction. The geometric constraints around railways, both horizontal and vertical alignment, are far different than the constraints on motorways. They are not always directly compatible. In relation to Sydney as a built city, the reason our costs have gone up so much in having to tunnel for motorways and for rail projects is simply that the surface land is no longer available. To the extent that it is available in outer areas, it is being identified and preserved, including both the south-west and north-west, for service expansion for future public transport corridors. Do you have anything to add?

Mr WIELINGA: We do look at corridors and try to have joint corridors. A practical example of that is many of the large public utilities tend to follow transport corridors, particularly road corridors, as well. From time to time we look at locating road and rail corridors together. Jim mentioned geometric differences for those two modes. For a road project we can have a kerb radii of about 650 metres on motorway standard. For rail it is closer to 3,000 metres, so it is very often difficult to get compatibility between the two. The cost of land in urban areas is a significant issue, and having the right confluence at the same time where both projects are happening at the same time is an issue in itself. But they are engineering difficulties that have to be dealt with. It is not quite as easy as you think. Every now and then we give a young project manager a crack at it and say how can we make these things a bit more compatible, but they have not bettered us old blokes yet so we will keep trying.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: I want to touch on the M2. My understanding was when the former Coalition Government entered into the contracts for the construction of the M2 there were compensation arrangements if competing public transport was put in over the life of the tolls on that road?

Mr WIELINGA: Yes. It is called a material adverse event clause. It is in the M2 contract. It is not as straightforward as simply happening if you put a public transport corridor in there. The motorway company would need to demonstrate it had a material adverse event. Our judgement of the rail projects that have been looked at to date is that that clause would not have been triggered but you do not know until you test it.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: So, there was a risk with both proposals for the north-west that because of those contractual arrangements additional cost could have been incurred?

Mr WIELINGA: Yes. I do not want to go into the legal niceties about it. The short answer is yes, there was. Given the sensitivity of the issue it is probably not wise that I say any more about it at this stage.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: Were those risks factored in at any point when the north-west, either light or heavy rail, was being developed?

Mr WIELINGA: These things are always looked at as part of these project considerations. We provided some advice to the Ministry of Transport when it was looking at the rail project about that motorway deed. It was simply a due diligence exercise that we needed to do. There are always risks associated with big projects. That just happens to be one in this one.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: Were there any discussions at all with the M2 group.

Mr WIELINGA: About that particular issue?

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: Yes.

Mr WIELINGA: No, we took the benefit of our own legal advice.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: The Richmond line duplication, the proposal is still to proceed with a duplication to Schofields. Perhaps you can clarify this. The land releases in that area around Schofields and Riverstone, is it considered that with the land release program in that area that the duplication as far as Schofields will be sufficient to meet the needs of population growth in the medium term?

Mr GLASSON: Mr Dawson is probably best to speak on that.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: Is it your view that the duplication to Schofields and not proceeding all the way to Vineyard will be sufficient in the medium term to meet the population growth and demand?

Mr DAWSON: I guess the short answer to that is yes. The test we did in doing the infrastructure analysis of the north-west sector was to look at the infrastructure and ask what infrastructure is required for the new population growth in that north-west sector. I probably need to stress that the north-west growth centre is a subset of the north-west sector and the north-west subregional plan. Having said that, we believed our population in the north-west growth centre would contribute about 10 per cent growth to that whole duplication process to Schofields. Considering the north-west, we have already rezoned 1,000 lots in Colebee. There are about 4,500 lots that should be rezoned and service-planned for North Kellyville in the next couple of months. We are now working on Riverstone and Alex Avenue, and they will be on exhibition, we hope, before Christmas.

When you consider the pipeline of that lot production, the take-up and, as my colleagues have said this morning, the now extended take-up because of the various financial markets and other constraints across the whole of the economy, I think that 10 per cent over a course of probably 15 or 20 years is quite reasonable. The short answer is yes. I think the existing rail service that borders the very large two precincts in the growth centres of Riverstone and Alex Avenue will service that adequately.

It is important to note, too, as my colleague Mr Ray said, that we implement the plans of the Department of Planning. One of the major cornerstones of those plans is jobs closer to home. The structure plan, which the Department of Planning has given us to work with, shows a hierarchy of town centres and employment areas. Both those town centres and employment areas will provide substantial employment in that north-west sector. Most recently the Government has released Marsden Park industrial lands, which is on the south-western boundary of the north-west sector. So there are a number of employment areas and centres that are coming out in this new planning regime, which is somewhat different from what has happened before. So the transport needs, I think, are very adequately served for our current release program.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: I want to ask about the busways from Rouse Hill town centre to Parramatta. In terms of capacity and in light of the fact that there are proposals for additional bus services, what

would be the maximum capacity and how far off are we from reaching that in terms of the number of buses travelling on that busway?

Mr GLASSON: I have not looked at the maximum theoretical capacity of that transitway, but it is certainly well in excess of anything that is operating today. My current view would be that it will continue to absorb capacity as demand increases and we will continue to put additional buses against that as the demand builds.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: The car parks that are located along that busway appear to still have capacity for additional patronage. Is there a particular point at which you expect those things to meet capacity?

Mr GLASSON: I do not know the precise answer to that, but they are at-grade car parks at the moment and they have the capacity to be redeveloped as multi-deck car parks into the future. The philosophy on the north-west transitway has been a combination of end-to-end services and integrated services going off the transitway and into the urban areas surrounding there, to reduce the need for people to drive to get to the transitway.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: A submission that was made talked about allowing access for hire cars onto the transitway. Has any consideration been given to those sorts of proposals at this stage? For instance, on the M2 hire cars and taxis are now allowed in the designated bus lanes. Has consideration been given to a similar arrangement on Windsor Road into Parramatta, and likewise to Blacktown?

Mr WIELINGA: No. We have been reserving that corridor for buses at this stage. We want to see how the growth continues. When you are looking at the capacity of those lanes, if you are looking at a typical general-purpose traffic lane in motorway conditions that can take a little over 2,000 vehicles an hour, if you look at a bus taking an average of three car spaces, you can get at least a third of the number of those buses, so you get many hundreds of buses in those lanes in any one hour. They are nowhere near that sort of usage at this stage; there is a lot of room for growth on those dedicated bus lanes into the future. I think it is important that we preserve those corridors for that bus usage, and that is the attitude we are taking at the moment.

CHAIR: Mr Dawson, could you explain to the Committee the current status of the Growth Centres Commission and its relationship with the Department of Planning? There is some evidence that it has been "absorbed" into the department. Can you spell out what has actually happened?

Mr DAWSON: Yes. The Minister announced, I think about two weeks ago, that the Government would like to expand the Growth Centres Commission's practices, expertise and experience statewide, and to do that they would merge the omission with the Department of Planning. The status of that at the moment is that the director general of the department, Sam Haddad, and I are working through those issues and working through how best to do that merger. I am not sure of the exact timing of it, but it looks like it will be a relatively seamless merger and I think it will strengthen those organisations to come together under the one roof.

CHAIR: Was that part of the mini-budget process? Is that part of a cost-saving exercise, or what is the theory behind it?

Mr DAWSON: The announcement was made just prior to the mini-budget, if I remember correctly, the week before the mini-budget. There are clearly some cost savings in doing that. There are some duplication of administration staff and some other things between the Growth Centres Commission and the Department of Planning, so there will be some savings in that merger.

CHAIR: Do you know how much it is meant to save?

Mr DAWSON: I think the Minister announced on the day that she estimated around a \$3 million saving and that that saving would be redirected to focusing on getting some other outcomes within both the Growth Centre Commission's work and the Department of Planning's work.

CHAIR: Mr Dawson, can you advise the Committee on the dollar amount of infrastructure levies collected that relate to the north-west growth centre, and also what those levies have been expended on to date?

Mr DAWSON: To date there has not been a cash contribution as part of the levy system within the Growth Centres Commission. That is because of a small anomaly in that the first precinct that has been rezoned

and service-planned in that area of Colebee is subject to a voluntary planning agreement that was prepared with the Department of Planning around the time of the establishment of the Growth Centres Commission. So, while there is no cash contribution, the landowners within the Colebee precinct, I understand, have started work on that infrastructure that is funded through that voluntary planning agreement.

As I said a minute ago, elsewhere in the north-west, the North Kellyville precinct will be, we believe, rezoned with its infrastructure package, development control plan and section 94 plan in the next few months. Other areas will come on exhibition also in the next few months. To date no cash has been collected in the north-west sector, but there are works in kind that are underway.

CHAIR: What are they?

Mr DAWSON: I would have to take that on notice. I need to check the voluntary planning agreement with the department and the developers to see what works have actually commenced.

CHAIR: Mr Schur, you might be the best person to answer this question. A number of the local government councils have testified about their concern for their own financial positions at the pulling out of infrastructure projects. For example, Baulkham Hills council testified that, "The new release areas where council has already outlaid \$40 million in anticipation of those areas coming on stream, that is \$40 million that we cannot recoup unless those release areas proceed. We cannot turn off all of that growth because the State Government has turned off the transport infrastructure. I make it very clear: no council can take that sort of financial cash flow strain without serious repercussions." Other councils made similar submissions. Is the Government concerned about the financial position of councils who find themselves very worried about their financial position because of the transport infrastructure not going ahead as they thought it would?

Mr SCHUR: I am not sure I understand the relationship between the two. Can you elaborate?

CHAIR: Given that local government councils are financially stretched, as they see it, because the State Government has failed to go ahead with plans which they were predicating their own development works upon, I am wondering whether the State Government is concerned about that financial stress on councils who are left in that predicament.

Mr SCHUR: I am not certain how decisions that the Government made relating to the mini-budget and to transport in the area impact on decisions that local government will make about the infrastructure in which they need to invest in those areas.

CHAIR: That is what we are here to talk about and that is why this inquiry has been established. If you cannot help us you cannot help us.

Mr SCHUR: You are asking me to comment on a view expressed by someone. I do not understand.

CHAIR: Do you not see a link? The councils and communities of the north-west sector have invested on the predication of plans that have been delivered to them for a long time in anticipation of transport infrastructure being part and parcel of the development and growth of those areas. That infrastructure project has now been pulled out. Councils are saying that they have already expended many millions of dollars that they cannot get back unless they proceed with that transport infrastructure as part of their development.

Mr SCHUR: I reiterate what my colleagues have said. Alternative transport strategies are being put in place as a result of the decisions flowing out of the mini-budget. I cannot elaborate on it any more than that.

CHAIR: Some witnesses talked about alternative plans—for example, the buses to be provided to the north-west sector—as being only interim plans. Can any of you comment on that? Are we looking at a time scale where the bus plan, or plans, will get us over the period of the more substantial infrastructure or rail link? Many witnesses seem to think that that is essential to ensure the fulfilment of plans for the north-west sector. Is that the way in which the provision of extra buses is seen?

Mr GLASSON: At this point I cannot give you that definitive forward time. I think the Government has made it clear that it will commence investment in the Metro Strategy. The extent to which those metros will be developed and the sequence in which they might be developed will depend on future funding and a whole

range of things. I think the Government signalled its clear intention that its strategic preference over time is to develop metros in the west, in the north-west and in some of the other major corridors.

CHAIR: One of the main bones of contention about the road system out there is the non-provision of west-facing ramps on the M2 and the M7 at Baulkham Hills. Mr Wielinga, can you explain why there are no west-facing ramps? What is the current status of that project and will it ever go ahead?

Mr WIELINGA: It is being looked as part of the proposal that we now have from the motorway company.

CHAIR: Is there any timetable to show whether that might proceed? For how long will the company Transurban look at it?

Mr WIELINGA: At the moment we are negotiating the scope, which I mentioned earlier. Clearly, there will also have to be negotiations about the finances associated with it. I will not predict a time because I do not want to set a timetable for completing those negotiations. It is not a smart strategy to go public on that. It will take many months to work through the scoping issues, the modelling and all those sorts of things to get the deal done.

CHAIR: There is nothing in the pipeline to complete the scoping study over a period of months?

Mr WIELINGA: No. I said earlier that we were looking at those Windsor Road ramps on the connection to the M2 and we are looking seriously at the ramps on the M2 side where the M7 finishes. We think that is important infrastructure and we hope to include it in the package that is being looked at.

CHAIR: Could you go back one step and tell us why they were not built in the first place?

Mr WIELINGA: You would need to find out from the Government of the day that put up the M2. I was not around then and I do not know why it was not done.

CHAIR: Why has the Roads and Traffic Authority agreed to take over Schofields Road from Blacktown City Council, but Baulkham Hills council has a problem with congestion on the Norwest Boulevard? For example, it says that it carries eight times the volume of the traffic on Schofields Road. Could you give us an explanation of the rationale for the decision-making process? Which roads does the Roads and Traffic Authority look after and which roads does it not look after?

Mr WIELINGA: From a strategic point of view that is at the top level. We have what we call State roads, at the second level we have regional roads, and at the third level we have local roads. For obvious reasons, the State roads are those corridors that carry heavy traffic volumes and large freight movements and, as a general principle, they tend to join up areas or towns of significant size. Regional roads, which are council roads, tend to join up smaller centres. They do not have as much national significance or state significance as the State roads. The local roads service only local communities.

That is only a broad definition. There are some rules that help us to classify roads when we are working with local councils. Schofields Road is part of the expected road hierarchy in the north-west development. We have been working with the Growth Commission. Significant investment will be required as it is a key road that we expect to be servicing that north-west development. That explains why the States are taking it over. I do not have any detail about the Baulkham Hills example. I will need to come back to you on that.

CHAIR: That would be appreciated because obviously that is one of the big congestion points to which a number of witnesses have referred. I refer to another Baulkham Hills council issue. The council has undertaken route development strategies for Seven Hills Road and for Showground Road, which is another high-profile problem area, although they are both State roads. Council believes it is facing an unfair cost burden for putting together road development strategies. Do you have a comment to make about that?

Mr WIELINGA: We always work closely with councils in developing these strategies. You would need to appreciate that even though many of these roads are State roads, councils are the road authorities, they undertake the works and they do planning work for the works. However, the State Government funds those works. A number of councils have good road strategies and road building and road maintenance capacity, and we work closely with them.

CHAIR: I refer to the cash back issue on the M4 and the M5. The RTA's figures show budgeted repayments of \$102 million in 2008-09 for the cash back scheme on those toll roads. Is that figure accurate?

Mr WIELINGA: I cannot confirm it down to the nearest cent, but it is certainly somewhere in that ballpark, yes.

CHAIR: It has gone from about \$11 million in 1996-97 to about \$102 million in 2008-09?

Mr WIELINGA: I do not think those figures are correct. It is about \$70 million a year on the M5 and about \$30 million a year on the M4. Those figures have grown marginally over the past few years. If you are looking for some sort of a profile we would be happy to provide it.

CHAIR: I would appreciate that. A number of witnesses have said to the Committee that are being discriminated against between those who use the toll roads in the north-west sector and those who use the M4 and the M5. Do you have a view about that? Is there any concern about equity for those who do not have many public transport options? There is a need to use vehicles instead of public transport as it does not exist to any great extent and people in that part of Sydney feel that they are being discriminated against.

Mr WIELINGA: Cashback on M4 and M5 is government policy. I have no comment on that government policy.

CHAIR: Are the agencies aware of evidence put to the Committee last week by Mr Chris Stapleton, who has been working on a proposal for raising the integrated transport strategy? He put to the Committee some detailed ideas about a north-west sector regional plan, which included a network of new bus routes. Has anyone looked at Mr Stapleton's work in relation to the north-west sector? Do you have any comment on it?

Mr GLASSON: I have not looked at the specifics that Mr Stapleton put before the Committee.

CHAIR: Would you be interested in seeing his work?

Mr GLASSON: Of course. We are always looking for improvements to the way we deliver bus services to the community.

CHAIR: In relation to buses for the north-west sector, different ranges of statistics have been delivered to the Committee. In the recent transport budget estimates hearing the Minister advised that 57 additional buses have been approved for the M2 corridor since April 2006. Then the Government's supplementary submission to this Committee advised that 20 new buses for the M2 corridor will operate from February 2009, and that 100 new buses were announced last month in the mini-budget. Can you give us specifically the number of additional buses that have been approved for the north-west sector since April 2006?

Mr GLASSON: I am happy to take that on notice and get back with a precise figure. What I need to understand is your definition of the north-west sector because we run a lot of buses out there to local destinations. We run buses on the transit way, we run buses on the M2, we run a lot of school buses, school specials, out there. If you can give us the boundary, we are happy to give an accurate response on that.

CHAIR: If we could use the definition that is used by the Growth Centres Commission, I guess that would be a start?

Mr GLASSON: Well, the Growth Centres Commission is mainly greenfield areas. We are talking about that section probably from West Pennant Hills Road potentially?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr GLASSON: Out through Castle Hill to Rouse Hill?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr GLASSON: Certainly in terms of the networks that operate there, if you want the north-west transit way as the western boundary of that and the services that effectively run between the main north rail line and that north-west transit way, we are happy to give you something in relation to that area.

CHAIR: Yes, that would be good.

Mr GLASSON: And route bus services rather than school specials?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr GLASSON: Okay.

CHAIR: When you provide that could you give us an indication of where the 100 new buses that have been referred to would be used within those boundaries?

Mr GLASSON: Okay. I cannot give you a time commitment on that because that is something we are working through with the operators right at the moment. You have a 4 December cut-off for responses?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr GLASSON: I cannot give you a guarantee that all of that is resolved prior to 4 December, but we will certainly give you whatever we can.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Mr Wielinga, I want to clarify a response you gave in answer to a question from Mr Robertson about the material adverse event [MAE]. You stated, "We took the benefit of our own legal advice." In the context in which you made that comment did you mean that the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] initiated the MAE or was it the M2 operator?

Mr WIELINGA: No. It was simply about the interpretation of the clause in the deed. No more than that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So it was the M2 operator who initiated that MAE?

Mr WIELINGA: No. No MAE has been initiated.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: No, not initiated. When I said, "initiated" I meant included in the contract or part of the arrangement? We have an MAE there, whose idea was it to put it there?

Mr WIELINGA: I do not know. It would have been a government decision at the time the contract was created.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So it came from the government of the time, not from the operator?

Mr WIELINGA: Well, the contracts are differently structured, depending on the time they were created. It is common for these sorts of contracts to have a material adverse event clauses in them, but the actual construct of those clauses would have been decided at the time.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, but my question was who initiated including that in the contract? I understand that you are saying that it came from the Government?

Mr WIELINGA: I cannot tell you who initiated it at the time. I was not around at the time the M2 contract was created.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Mr Glasson, can you indicate for how many years hence your transport planning is undertaken?

Mr GLASSON: We have various time horizons.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: 5 years, 10 years, 20 years?

Mr GLASSON: Typically there is a 25-year horizon, which you work backwards from, and there is a shorter term today horizon that you work forward from and you look at those overlaps and interfaces within the five- to 10-year-time period to make sure that what you are doing today and what you are proposing to do are aligned with your longer-term strategic view.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: We know that the north-west heavy rail and the metro have been deferred or cancelled. Is your department working on any non-bus transport systems for the north-west, west or south-west? If so, what are they?

Mr GLASSON: Non-bus transport? Public transport systems?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, public transport systems that are non-bus?

Mr GLASSON: Certainly the work that has been done on the North West Metro was always intended to be completed in terms of a phase of that project development by around the end of November early December and that piece of work will be completed and finalised for the Government.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So it is being finalised at the moment?

Mr GLASSON: Up to a certain point in its concept development, correct. There is a joint Commonwealth-New South Wales Government funded study underway in relation to a west metro. In relation to the south-west, there has been a staged deferral of the rail in the south-west.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: But is anybody still working on that one? What I am hearing you saying—

Mr GLASSON: It remains current in a different staging pattern.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: People are working on it or is it just in a drawer waiting for a possible future Cabinet to activate it?

Mr GLASSON: I am not responsible for that detailed planning. That work was being done primarily by the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation, but I am happy to give you a status of that on notice.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you will take that on notice?

Mr GLASSON: Absolutely.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am just trying to find out what is presently being worked on. So, we are not sure about the south-west. What else?

Mr GLASSON: I would be fairly certain that it is still being progressed, but it will be being progressed against the set of timelines the Government has established.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When you say "progressed" that sounds to me like people are working on it?

Mr GLASSON: I would assume so, but I will take that on notice and come back to you.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Thank you. Is there anything else?

Mr GLASSON: In relation to both the south-west growth centre and the north-west growth centre we will be initiating some work early next year to look at the strategic bus plans, which will align with the reviews of the development in those areas.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The last one is a bus one.

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: We have people working on the North West Metro, and that will be completed in November-December. Do you anticipate that people will continue to work on it, or does that depend on what Cabinet decides?

Mr GLASSON: No. At the moment the focus of those people will switch to the CBD Metro, which, as has been announced by the Government, is proceeding.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: They will no longer be working on the North West Metro. They will be just finishing that one.

Mr GLASSON: That is my understanding.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You spoke about the West Metro, and there are people working on that at the moment. Will that be concluded? Is that ongoing?

Mr GLASSON: No, that will be concluded. That is a joint study that is being funded by the State and the Commonwealth.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When will that conclude, please?

Mr GLASSON: I think there are various time lines for various stages in that, but it is sometime early next year, early to mid-next year. Michael?

Mr SCHUR: Yes. We are trying to coincide this with a submission to Infrastructure Australia. The work is being done to coincide with our ability to meet the deadlines for submission of the State's version for Infrastructure Australia.

Mr GLASSON: Do you have a specific date for that?

Mr DUNCAN: I am sorry, no. We can provide that information.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I would like to check with Mr Schur about the comment he has just made about Infrastructure Australia. I understood it was only the Rozelle metro, which I understand you are calling the CBD Metro, which is going forward to Infrastructure Australia. But from your answer, I thought you may have been referring to these other metros.

Mr GLASSON: The West Metro.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So the West Metro and the CBD Metro are both going forward to Infrastructure Australia?

Mr GLASSON: That is correct.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are those projects publicly released? Once you finish them and the proposal is put before Infrastructure Australia, are they released in any form?

Mr DUNCAN: Yes. The Infrastructure straight submission, which was made in June this year, is on the Infrastructure Australia website.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: But Mr Schur said that they are still working on the plans that are going to Infrastructure Australia.

Mr DUNCAN: Yes, developing the cost-benefit analysis and details.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: That is what I was after. Is that going to be made publicly available?

Mr DUNCAN: That is really a matter for Infrastructure Australia, but in many cases those projects would be subject to a private-public partnership [PPP]. I imagine there is a certain amount of detail, so that will not be released because of possible future tendering and PPP processes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The old commercial in confidence?

Mr DUNCAN: It is simply to make sure that there is a good commercial outcome if they are in fact PPP-type projects. It is also a matter for the Commonwealth as well.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I want to ask about a second harbour crossing. Is any work being done on a second or other harbour crossing for any form of private or public transport?

Mr GLASSON: In terms of right now, I think in relation to the rail and the metro projects, there are no further works beyond the finalisation of the current works being done on the North West Metro.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Apart from the North West Metro, which would involve a crossing, that is the only study that has been undertaken?

Mr GLASSON: Yes, but I cannot comment on road programs.

Mr WIELINGA: We are not doing any.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: What new CityRail stations are being planned for the CBD?

Mr GLASSON: The Metropolitan Strategy proposes new stations within the CBD area.

Mr DUNCAN: That information is available on a press release. We can provide that.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I was interested to know about CityRail because there had been previous plans for further CityRail stations, as I understood it.

Mr GLASSON: At this stage, I am not aware of any plans for new CityRail stations in the CBD that are being progressed right at this moment.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Will you inform us with regard to proposals relating to the very fast train and whether there have been proposals for various very fast train projects? We will start at the one from Penrith. Could you inform us where that project is up to?

Mr DUNCAN: That project is subject to an unsolicited proposal.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am sorry?

Mr DUNCAN: It is subject to an unsolicited proposal. However, the West Metro project will be looking at that corridor, and that is where the study is currently going, from the Government's perspective. That is a joint project funded between the Commonwealth and the State.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am sorry; I did not fully understand that. It is an unsolicited project.

Mr DUNCAN: The very fast rail project is subject to assessment as an unsolicited proposal.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Did you say that it is being assessed with the work that is presently being undertaken on the North West Metro?

Mr DUNCAN: No, it is a separate process as an unsolicited proposal. It is a stand-alone assessment.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So it is a stand-alone assessment?

Mr DUNCAN: Yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: How did you get an unsolicited project into the system?

Mr DUNCAN: They are submitted by the private sector to government, traditionally, and then government puts an assessment or an evaluation process together. We need to have approval from Cabinet or from the budget committee to assess it. Then it goes back to the budget committee for final conclusion.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you have any other unsolicited projects involving some form of public transport before Cabinet, even though they might be PPPs, or that have reached some stage within the transport planning process?

Mr DUNCAN: I am not aware that there are any public transport projects before Cabinet at the moment. However, I can certainly check. We receive unsolicited proposals from time to time and they go through a commercial-in-confidence assessment and then are finally evaluated and provided to Cabinet for decision.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is there any other very fast train proposal being considered, or that has reached any stage within the planning process?

Mr DUNCAN: I am not aware that there are any at the moment, other than the one that we have referred to. I know there have been in the past, and those processes are complete.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Mr Wielinga, just to clarify with regard to the M2 upgrade, you provided considerable detail about that. I did just want to check about the time line and where that is up to with regard to going to Cabinet. Could you just explain the process with the operator, who will be looking at it and making decisions on it, and when that will occur?

Mr WIELINGA: I mentioned earlier that the first stage was to look at the actual scope of the project—what physically had to be built. That involves a combination of looking at options, traffic modelling and a few other things. It is an interactive process with the motorway company. At the end of the day we would be looking at what is best from the community's point of view for the scope of the project. That could involve general traffic lanes, public transport lanes or a combination, or one or the other, or whatever. I also mentioned that earlier. Then there would need to be a formal assessment. I was not able to put a firm timetable on it. It is a negotiation and I am not going to set an artificial time line for the benefit of the motorway company. I just do not think that is wise.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Not even this year, next year, or five years?

Mr WIELINGA: I said in answer to an earlier question I expected the process to take several months.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Does that several months include going to Cabinet and getting it signed off?

Mr WIELINGA: That is the interaction with the motorway company, to develop a concept, and that goes—

Ms LEE RHIANNON: And then from there, it involves several months?

Mr WIELINGA: Cabinet has to decide whether it thinks it is appropriate or not. Then there will be some final negotiations, if they give us approval to proceed.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Who initiated this? I am just feeling from your language that initially it came from the M2 operators, but when you talk about "we", I am wondering whether the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] initiated the plans to expand the M2.

Mr WIELINGA: No. There was an unsolicited proposal from the motorway company that went into the centre of government. The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] was asked to take a look at it, and where we are at is as I describe now.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am sorry I do not have map because although I know my geography reasonably well in the north west, it is not perfect. I am trying to get a sense of the time lines. You do forward planning and we have had various rail lines proposed and cancelled, but you are saying that you have a 25-year horizon within rail line to Castle Hill, the north west heavy rail line and whatever other heavy rail line proposals have been on the books. What is your order of priorities for those?

Mr GLASSON: Now?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes. If your Minister says, "We are going to get into heavy rail", what is your first priority that you could pull off? I know that that obviously depends on budget, et cetera, but considering you are doing 25-year planning I assume you would have a priority for the heavy rail projects.

Mr GLASSON: I think the Government's priority for heavy rail within the period of the forward estimates and the State infrastructure strategy is articulated and it is around clearways and the south-west rail.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am talking about the north-west here.

Mr GLASSON: The Government's preference, as I understand it right now, is for metro rail in the north-west, not heavy rail.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am aware of that. I know that all those heavy rail lines are not being proceeded with at the moment but I am trying to understand your 25-year planning process. There have been various proposals for various heavy rail plans. While the Cabinet is not proceeding with them, they are still sitting on your books somewhere and I am trying to see if you have those prioritised in any way.

Mr GLASSON: To be specific to the north-west, no. The north-west is a preference to a metro, not a heavy rail. We do not have currently in our strategic forward plan a heavy rail line to the north-west.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So even stretching over those 25 years you are not factoring in heavy rail at any time.

Mr GLASSON: No because the Government has given an indication that its preference is for metro to the north-west, not a heavy rail line. Can I just clarify that to the extent that the Government clearly is still committed to the amplification of the Richmond line. This comes back to the issue of the map and the geography. The Richmond line is the part of the rail system that effectively divides the growth centres commission—

Mr DAWSON: The roads of the north-west.

Mr GLASSON: This is where terminology and geography become important in understanding exactly what we are talking to. In terms of the growth centre commission, the heavy rail Richmond line is through the centre of the development. There are still plans to sequentially amplify that line as development occurs within the growth centre. In terms of the north west, as people discuss a rail link of some sort from the Epping area out through Castle Hill towards Rouse Hill, then at this stage there is not, as far as I am aware—there is a heavy rail plan there which was part of NRAT, but that is not an active plan because the Government subsequently indicated a view that its preference will be to develop a metro in that area.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So if the Minister asks you about your transport plan in 20 years time, you are still talking metros rather than heavy rail.

Mr GLASSON: Correct.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Mr Wielinga, you spoke earlier about the road hierarchy. How many councils in the Sydney basin do work on State roads?

Mr WIELINGA: I would need to come back to you on that. The vast majority of them do it in the Sydney area because there are quite a few State roads because of the dense population. But I will need to confirm that with you.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In terms of the planning process when councils do that work, is the planning done at the council level or in conjunction with the RTA? How does that work?

Mr GLASSON: Their work tends to focus around the maintenance strategies associated with the road network. Their asset managers work with RTA people in our regional offices and there is a bit of a joint exercise in that planning going forward. When you are looking at maintaining road networks it is very important to have a good connection between that strategic planning work for forward maintenance and actually doing the work. You get your best practical policy when those things are combined in asset management and somebody has responsibility for the performance of the road and on a condition basis over a period of time. We take great care

to cooperate with councils and we take care to ensure that their engineers are involved in that planning process as well as the doing of it.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: How does the funding work in these processes?

Mr WIELINGA: As a general principle, we fully fund State roads. On regional roads we have a couple of grants. We have what are called block grants where a lump sum of money is given to each council depending on an agreed formula with councils around the State that they can use for maintenance and traffic facility purposes. There is another program called the repair program and that is allocations to council for specific minor construction activities on that portion of the network, fixing up a bridge, a bit of pavement rebuilding, those sorts of things. Areas of councils get together and determine the priorities of that work in conjunction with the RTA.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: The M2 third lane was introduced westbound from Lane Cove Road to Beecroft Road. It is my understanding or I thought there was a proposal to extend that to Pennant Hills Road.

Mr WIELINGA: Yes, there is. It is part of the proposal from the motorway company that we are currently looking at. That particular portion of the motorway was done quickly. You probably appreciate that westbound there are a number of entry ramps in that area and the conflict of traffic coming out of those entry ramps needed to be dealt with fairly quickly. We wanted to do that as part of opening up the Lane Cove Tunnel project to help improve traffic flow. We used line-marking adjustments to get the outcome. The lanes were a little narrow. We adjusted the speed to reflect those new lane widths.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: But the proposal is to eventually extend that to Pennant Hills Road?

Mr WIELINGA: That is correct.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: Is there a time line or is it part of the negotiations?

Mr WIELINGA: It is part of the negotiations we have been talking about today.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: As part of those negotiations are you also looking to possibly implement distance tolling on the M2, bearing in mind that you are discussing exits on Windsor Road from the western side?

Mr WIELINGA: Government has said that it would like the RTA to achieve fully cashless tolling on the motorways initially, and we are working with the motorway companies to do that as a first step. Our intention at the moment is to monitor the effectiveness of time-of-day pricing on the harbour bridge, which will come into play early next year. Then I am sure government will start making decisions about whether it wants to extend or not based on those experiences.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: I understand the timing but I am talking about distance rather than time. For instance, the M7 is distance tolling.

Mr WIELINGA: It is.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: The M2 is not.

Mr WIELINGA: That is correct.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: I am just wondering whether that will be a subject of those discussions that you are currently having with the operators.

Mr WIELINGA: It is currently not part of those discussions. I am not saying it never will be but it is currently not part of those discussions.

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: And not anticipated to be in the short term?

Mr WIELINGA: No, but it is something that could be looked at in the future.

CHAIR: It would be helpful to us if your officers—you may need to take this on notice—could provide us with your understanding of the transport movements for all the north-west sector, including the number of movements from within the sector to the CBD. We have various submissions that have certain statistics in them as to the transport patterns. Would you be able to assist us with those on notice?

Mr GLASSON: Yes, we can certainly provide you with something that talks about the contained transport movements within the area versus the movements outside the area, the extent to which they are CBD focused or Parramatta or, indeed, a range of other centres across Sydney. It is something we will provide on notice.

CHAIR: That would be of assistance, thank you.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I want to ask you about the Baulkham Hills council supplementary submission, which, at page 6, makes the point about the critical load stress on major State roads in the council area, particularly Showground Road, Memorial Road, Burns Road, Windsor Road—and it goes on and on. What is the current Roads and Traffic Authority and projected future Roads and Traffic Authority financial allocations for widening and upgrading those roads.

Mr WIELINGA: I will have to come back to you with the detail. I should say the Government's a 10-year program is detailed in the State Infrastructure Strategy. You can look at Budget Paper No. 4 to see the current allocation on projects.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My understanding is the Roads and Traffic Authority is not allocating funds for the expansion of those roads. I would like some clarification on that rather than you sending me off to documents that do not say anything about them.

Mr WIELINGA: I said I am happy to give you an answer to that question but was explaining to you where you can find out information.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If I could ask Mr Glasson about the harbour crossing. I am going back now to be north-west heavy rail, which has been abandoned by the Government. I want to ask a question relation to the second harbour crossing. My understanding—and it has come from a few different sources and is one of the major reasons you cannot comment—is that the Government abandoned the north-west heavy rail link because of the cost of the second harbour crossing. I want to understand when a second harbour crossing becomes necessary as part of a proposed heavy rail to the north-west. What sort of capacity requirements necessitate a second harbour crossing?

Mr GLASSON: On the RailCorp network it will be in relation to the ability to run trains through the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the city circle. Currently, the Harbour Bridge has a limitation of three-minute headways—in fact the signalling system has a limitation of three-minute headways. So, the maximum capacity in either direction across the Sydney Harbour Bridge is 20 trains an hour, and I think that ultimately becomes the guiding factor on when you need to go for more capacity across the harbour.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you be able to define that capacity constraint and link that into the projected amount of people who would need to be transported down a proposed north-west line?

Mr GLASSON: I could go into the information and give you some detail.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The proposed heavy rail link to the north-west, as I think you mentioned earlier, was headed from Epping out to Castle Hill and Rouse Hill. There would be the option, would there not, to run it down the Epping-Eastwood line as opposed to the Epping-Chatswood line to deal with capacity constraints?

Mr GLASSON: There would, but I cannot tell you specifically what the opportunity is for capacity in that section of the network versus, I think it was, the Government's preferred position to direct those trains down through the Epping-Chatswood line.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am just trying to understand, though, there are options there?

Mr GLASSON: Yes. I am happy to come back to you, as I do not know the specific limitations.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Perhaps you could also come back to me in relation to the clearways project and what that will be doing in reducing some of the congestion on the existing network?

Mr GLASSON: I am happy to do so.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Specifically as it relates to the Epping line and the Northern line.

Mr GLASSON: Sure, I will get that information from RailCorp.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In relation to a couple of costing issues from the north-west line itself, the north-west projects, I think I mentioned to you earlier I would like to get some details in relation to some of the costs and I wanted to expand that for the north-west metro and for the north-west heavy rail line—what the total cost was for not only staffing but also advertising, the helicopter campaign, which we are all very fond of, Vic Larusso, the contractor that has been engaged in relation to each of those projects, and any other costs that are attributable to both the north-west metro and the north-west heavy rail projects, and could you also provide the Committee with a breakdown on each of those specific costs for each of those projects that have been abandoned by the Government?

Mr GLASSON: To the extent that we are collectively responsible for those costs, yes, we will gather them together and provide them.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: The Jim Steer report, could you also provide us with a costing in that regard, which is probably a subset of all that, including his personal expenses? It is probably a subset of what I just asked for?

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If you could categorise that as a separate item as well, that would be good.

Mr GLASSON: Yes.

CHAIR: Mr Wielinga is probably the best person to ask this. We had some evidence from the Bus and Coach Association and also from Busways in relation to the north-west transit way. Mr Mellish informed the Committee that it is slower for passengers to travel on the transit way than on local roads. The bus priority system that was supposedly introduced for the transit way was modified to wait for the integrated ticketing project, which failed. Mr Glass of Busways said that the RTA is working with the bus company to try to improve the situation but, "... it is at a situation now where at night we can travel faster on the adjacent roadway than by using the transit way." Could you give the Committee an update on where you are in trying to improve speeds?

Mr WIELINGA: I know some work is under way but when you are driving on that transit way in the middle of a peak period, with all of the traffic out on the roadway, clearly buses are getting an advantage on the transit way, and that is what it was all about. That is when most people are travelling. To say you can drive faster on the other roadway when there is no traffic on it, okay, fair comment, but we have said to the bus company out there that we will do everything to make that transit way work as efficiently as possible, and we are working with it to make sure that that happens I am happy to come back to you with an update.

CHAIR: Earlier, Mr Ray, you mentioned a review by Minister Keneally on the planning arrangements. Is there anything in that that specifically relates to the north-west sector, or is that just a general review that the Minister has asked you to undertake?

Mr RAY: The review will, as one of its focuses, have a focus on the north-west sector because of a range of factors that are listed before the decisions on the infrastructure, population, economic circumstances and the take-up of the lot, so yes, it will have a focus on it.

CHAIR: We have noted a number of witnesses have said a more integrated approach to transport and planning should be taken in New South Wales. Does the Minister's brief go to that question of maybe adapting a different model of delivering in a more integrated way transport infrastructure and planning in New South Wales?

Mr RAY: I do not think her brief goes to that extent. But the outcome of the review that is proposed may feed into some discussion within government about those things.

CHAIR: So it may point to that as far as your recommendations are concerned?

Mr RAY: There could be something of that nature but we would have to see exactly what the review brought forward.

CHAIR: What is the timetable for that review?

Mr RAY: We are looking to complete it in March.

CHAIR: One of the main themes of some of the witnesses has been delay for consultation with local councils and communities about even major projects. For example, the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils said of any consultation on the north-west metro, which I think the then Premier said was the biggest infrastructure project planned for Australia, that there was only "piecemeal" discussion or consultation with even those councils most affected. Can you explain how such a huge project can be worked up to the point where it is being announced by the Premier of the day without significant consultation with key stakeholders like local councils?

Mr DUNCAN: My understanding is there was consultation, and particularly the section from Epping to Rouse Hill was a concept plan approval and there would have been the appropriate consultation for that process—in fact, that was carried out previously by the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation. I also understand that prior to September the North West Metro project had a consultation session in the north-west sector as well with many people in attendance. It was held at Norwest Business Park. I can get you further details about the levels and contacts of consultation, but particularly the concept planning approval process from Epping to Rouse Hill was appropriate and in line with normal other planning practice.

Mr RAY: And in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

CHAIR: It is interesting that many witnesses have said that they are astounded at the lack of consultation. I would be interested to get the details of that.

Mr DUNCAN: I will undertake to do that.

CHAIR: Likewise, on a more local basis, the West Pennant Hills Valley Progress Association testified that they had some issues with the Ministry of Transport; that they had to go through a lot of layers of consultation with the ministry before they felt that they got a fair hearing. Do you have a comment about that?

Mr GLASSON: They are referring, I believe, to the consultation around the four regional integrated networks, which includes West Pennant Hills. That is a very detailed consultation. We work with the bus operators to develop a concept for changed services; we do a letterbox distribution of that information to every household within the catchment; we do briefings; we have public meetings; and then we receive written public submissions in relation to those new networks, that being typically running to 2,000-plus submissions. There is then a very detailed process of considering those submissions.

But I think in relation to West Pennant Hills the issue was partially contaminated by a separate proposal by Baulkham Hills Shire Council to introduce some bus lanes within West Pennant Hills itself, which met with some very strong public opposition, as I understand it, and I think there was some uncertainty between residents as to who was responsible for which part of the process.

CHAIR: In the Government's supplementary submission to this inquiry there is a reference to the continuation of the program for land acquisition for future transport corridors so that the options are kept open

for the future. As well as land acquisition, is there any other planning work that will continue to go ahead in anticipation of one day perhaps the North West Metro going ahead?

Mr RAY: In the context of the long-term nature of the Metropolitan Strategy, the 25-year horizon, and also the sub-regional strategies, yes, we look at the long-term possibilities, and obviously the Government is keen to preserve its options in relation to the corridor that has already been identified.

CHAIR: How do you relate that to the local communities? How do you keep them in touch with what is happening or what is not happening and what the time line might be into the future?

Mr RAY: As soon as we are in a position to be more definite about exactly what the acquisition time line will be, we would be making some sort of public statement in relation to that.

CHAIR: If the circumstances allow the Government to go ahead at some stage in the future with the North West Metro—the preferred option—or, indeed, the heavy rail, do you have any estimation of how long it would take from such a decision being made to the time that it would be up and running?

Mr DUNCAN: As I understand it, the work that has been done to date would not be wasted if it was to proceed at a later date, and it would be approximately 12 to 18 months to actually start construction. I think that would then lead to a five- to six-year time frame for delivery, as I know it at the moment. So any work that is done to date could be readily re-established and we could move through that type of time line.

CHAIR: There was presumably a group of people working on the project. What has happened to them? Has such a group been disbanded?

Mr DUNCAN: That group is a combination of people from different government agencies and contractors. They have a body of work they are completing at the moment, which is a product definition report, and they will also be working at the moment on the CBD Metro project.

CHAIR: How many people are in that group?

Mr DUNCAN: I cannot tell you exactly how many are there.

Mr GLASSON: It fluctuates, depending on what contractors are there.

CHAIR: How many were in the group at the time that the decision was made that it would not go ahead?

Mr GLASSON: It was in the order of 80 people in total. It was of that order of magnitude, within a few either way.

CHAIR: With the CBD Metro, would that require most of those people to be retained on that project?

Mr DUNCAN: Certainly it is the same style of work. The information that was developed for the North West Metro is readily transportable into that project. So I would say almost certainly, and once the construction starts substantially more people in the period of that project.

CHAIR: What is the estimated start-up date for construction?

Mr DUNCAN: I do not have an official date but it is likely to be sometime in 2010, as I understand the announcement.

Mr GLASSON: That is my understanding.

CHAIR: Mr Ray, with the Metropolitan Strategy, in the supplementary submission from the Government you advise that the assumptions and forecasts for population and employment would obviously have to be revisited in light of the deferral of the North West Metro and the reduced plans for the duplication of the Richmond line. Are you in a position to give an estimate by how much the population and employment forecasts will have to be revised in the wake of those decisions?

Mr RAY: No, that is the purpose of the review that I spoke about earlier.

CHAIR: In relation to the Harbour Bridge that my colleague was talking about in terms of the capacity and the future operations of the bridge, can you advise how many toll-paying peak period trips are made over the bridge on an annual basis?

Mr WIELINGA: I will have to come back to you with the annual figure, but the traffic volume on the Harbour Bridge is about 165,000 a day; 85,000 in the direction towards the city. So it is around 85,000 a day.

CHAIR: With respect to the recent announcement for time-of-day tolling for the Harbour Bridge, can you provide the Committee with the figures—I think it is 12 million—of the estimated number of motorists who you expect will be changing their travelling habits as a result of the new policy?

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

CHAIR: With respect to the buses and the congestion on the roads in the north-west sector, do you have a comment about the submission by Hornsby council, which said that even though 100 extra buses are to be put on, they had put in a submission to the Unsworth inquiry that said that the main roads in their shire are so congested that current bus operators are unable to reliably meet their timetables, and certainly we had quite a bit of evidence about delays and crowded buses. They said that creating strategic bus corridors by providing a few bus priority lanes, as mentioned in the Unsworth report, will not address the underlying problems with the main road network. What is the agency's response to that problem, which quite a few witnesses have put to the inquiry?

Mr GLASSON: The philosophy around the strategic bus corridors is to create more reliable trunk spines for buses for people moving across the regions and to centres across the broader metropolitan area. It is also about minimising that congestion disruption by giving priority and having systems to monitor the bus against the timetable. The comments of Hornsby council, I am presuming, also go to local bus networks and buses being caught in general traffic congestion on local roads rather than on State roads, and that that is a matter of the limited road space available and that congestion occurs at different times in the day. There is a lot of congestion in those local areas after the morning peak, associated with schoolchildren going to school et cetera. The timetables are adjusted from time to time to try to take those into account, but clearly they cannot deal with delays on particular days that are a result of accidents or incidents, or weather.

Mr WIELINGA: With regard to the congestion issues, a couple of programs are going on at the moment that affect the north-west. You mentioned the strategic bus corridors. That certainly is one of them. Corridors 3, 4 and 42 are out in that area, and we are looking at bus priority measures in that. They include bus jump stops, and they include better coordination of traffic signals. They include some marked bus lanes, as you suggested, to give priority to buses. There is also a pinchpoint program that is being planned at the moment and it will work up over the next couple of years, where we are looking at corridors, and looking at minor construction activities to include traffic flows, like intersection problems and those sorts of things. So there will be some activity there in the next two or three years.

You will probably be aware, Madam Chair, that we are also installing the PTIPS system in the buses at the moment. It is a priority system for buses. What we have done is that we have put a system with GPS locators into buses. They talk to the traffic signal system that coordinates the traffic signal. As a practical example, when a bus drives up to a traffic light the system knows whether the bus is on schedule or not. If it is running a little bit late, it can talk to the traffic signal in front of it and say, "Give me another 15 seconds of green slime and let me through the traffic signal." We have put that into about 400 buses at the Mona Vale depot at the moment, and it is working well. We are combining that with these other corridor strategies to get the best reliable traffic time that we can out of buses. So it is a combination of some physical infrastructure and some technology to get the best outcomes that we can.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: This is probably more an information request. It probably comes from my lack of knowledge in relation to all proposed metros. We have the north and the north west metros, and we have the west metro and the CBD metro. Would you be able to provide information as to how the metros integrate with the existing heavy rail system and to each other, as appropriate?

Mr DUNCAN: Some of that is work in progress at the moment. There are certainly some early indications of where these metros could go, in the urban transport statement going back to 2006, and there was

also a brochure done for the north west metro which has a bit of an outline of that. At the moment that would be subject to further design. It is intended to have touch points at various stations, such as Wynyard, Town Hall and Central, for the existing line. If you have stations, there would be direct connections into those stations.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If you could clarify that, that would be excellent.

Mr DUNCAN: Yes, we can do that as part of the answers.

CHAIR: With respect to the mini-budget that was handed down the other day, is it possible for you to provide the Committee with a list and details of the transport projects that will be delivered to the north-west sector and the timelines for each of those projects?

Mr SCHUR: Yes. Again, you can work on the assumption that everything that appeared in Budget Paper No. 4 in the 2008-09 budget papers remains in place, other than decisions that were taken as part of the mini-budget.

CHAIR: If there is any variation from that in relation to the cost and the estimated completion date, if you could provide that information on notice. With respect to the State Plan, we received information that North Sydney is missing from the State Plan altogether. Has that been rectified?

Mr RAY: I am not aware of that. Obviously, I will look into that. I cannot comment.

CHAIR: The mayor seems to think that it is missing from the plan altogether.

Mr RAY: She has not brought it to my attention in recent days.

CHAIR: In relation to the north-west heavy rail link, can you give us a specific time as to when the decision was made that that was not to go ahead?

Mr GLASSON: I cannot, off the top of my head. I would need to go back and look at the records. But I am happy to provide you with some advice. It would have been a decision of the Cabinet, and I simply do not have that with me.

CHAIR: We would like to thank you all for your attendance here today, for your submissions and for answering our questions.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.