

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

Tuesday 19 August 2014

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

TRANSPORT, THE HUNTER

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. N. Maclaren-Jones (Chair)

The Hon. N. Blair (Deputy Chair)
Dr M. Faruqi
The Hon. A. R. Fazio
The Hon. P. Green

Mr S. MacDonald
The Hon. P. G. Sharpe
The Hon. M. S. Veitch

PRESENT

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, *Minister for Transport*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

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

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

CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing of the inquiry into the budget estimates 2014-15. Before I commence I acknowledge the Gadigal people who are the traditional custodians of this land, and I pay respect to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. I welcome Minister Berejiklian and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure in the important portfolio of Transport.

Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearings will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that you must take responsibility for what you publish about the Committee's proceedings.

It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing. So I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments you make to the media or to others after you complete your evidence as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the Secretariat.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In these circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take the question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any messages from advisers or member's staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the chamber and support staff and the Committee clerks.

Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. Finally, I ask everyone to turn off their phones for the duration of the hearing. All witnesses from the department, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn in prior to giving evidence. I remind the Minister that she does not need to be sworn in as she has already sworn an oath to office.

TIM REARDON, Deputy Director General, Policy and Regulation, Transport for NSW,

DAVE STEWART, Secretary, Transport for NSW,

HOWARD COLLINS, Chief Executive, Sydney Trains,

PETER ROWLEY, Chief Executive, State Transit,

CHRISTOPHER LOCK, Deputy Director General, Transport for NSW,

FERGUS GAMMIE, Deputy Director General, Transport Services, Transport for NSW, and

RODD STAPLES, Project Director, North West Rail Link sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Transport and the Hunter open for examination. The questioning of the portfolio of Transport will run from 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., questioning of the portfolio of Ferries, Rail and State Transit will run from 10.15 a.m. to 11.15 a.m. and questioning for the Hunter will run from 11.20 a.m. to 11.50 a.m. There will be no questions from government members.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, will you confirm to the Committee whether Angela Diamond from Diamond Communication Services has undertaken work for Transport for NSW or one of the cluster agencies in your portfolio?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Hon. Penny Sharpe that is a matter for my department. I understand my office has not taken any consultancies in the past 12 months so I will pass it over to Mr Stewart.

Mr STEWART: I can confirm that Ms Diamond has worked for the department. She was employed to undertake communication services. Can I say that we go through very strict processes in relation to engagement of consultants and contractors? In fact, we report these in our annual report so you will see them both on the e-tender site and in our annual report.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Was a tender put out for the work that she undertook?

Mr STEWART: Again my understanding is that Ms Diamond was appointed following the tender processes of the department.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you take that on notice and confirm that to the Committee?

Mr STEWART: I think we have actually answered that as a question on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, you have answered a question on notice but it did not actually provide that level of information, which is why I am asking it now.

Mr STEWART: Again we followed our tender processes. We engage many consultants. These consultants are published on the e-tender site—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am quite familiar with the site.

Mr STEWART: And also as part of our annual report.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you indicate whether there was a request from the Minister's office in relation to appointing Ms Diamond?

Mr STEWART: The Minister's office does not request us at all to appoint consultants, and I can confirm categorically that I have had no requests.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you know whether anyone else has?

Mr STEWART: I am not aware of any request.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you check?

Mr STEWART: My view is that there have been no requests. In my time as secretary I will re-affirm that the Minister's office has not asked me at all to appoint anyone.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You or any of the officers in your department?

Mr STEWART: That is my understanding.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you confirm that for me on notice?

Mr STEWART: That is my understanding.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Terrific, thanks. Minister, have you ever been involved in or attended any fundraising events or activities organised by the Millennium Forum?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If your question is whether I have acted appropriately in relation to—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, my question is whether you have attended any events and in what capacity?

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: Point of order: Is this question within the terms of reference of the inquiry?

CHAIR: During budget estimates wide latitude is given in relation to questions, and the Minister is able to answer as she wants.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Hon. Penny Sharpe in relation to your question there are strict rules around what Ministers do and do not do in relation to fundraising activities in relation to donations. I can assure the Committee that at all times I adhere to those guidelines in the strictest possible way. I take my job extremely seriously and I ensure that all guidelines are followed not just by me but also by my office.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is very good, Minister, but that is obviously not what I have asked. I asked: have you been involved in or attended any fundraising events or activities organised by the Millennium Forum?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, I put to you—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes or no. It is actually a very straightforward question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And my answer is also very clear and to the point. And that is in relation to all matters regarding fundraising and donations—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not my question. I want to know whether you have attended any, which ones they were and will you detail them to the Committee?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I again assure the Committee that everything I have done is within the strictest guidelines. I also appreciate that within the Transport cluster Minister Gay and I have a \$14 billion budget between us. I am sure the Committee has many Transport questions it would like to ask.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you do not get to ask the questions. If you want questions asked, you could have had your dixer. You will not tell me whether you have attended any Millennium Forum events? You will not provide that to the Parliament. You do not think that is necessary?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What I think is necessary is to provide to you, the Committee and the Parliament my absolute assurance that every activity I have undertaken as Minister—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, some of your colleagues have given a lot of assurances recently and that has not really—

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: It is absolutely disorderly that the member asks questions of the Minister, the Minister begins to answer and then is interrupted mid-sentence. If the Hon. Penny Sharpe wants answers to her questions she needs to show some respect to the Minister and give the Minister the opportunity to answer the questions without being interrupted.

CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. It is fair to allow the Minister some time to answer the questions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Or not answer, as the case may be.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is nothing further I have to add to that. I do not think it is appropriate for me to have a running commentary on every single function I have ever attended in my time as a Minister or a shadow Minister. I put to the Committee that every single action I have undertaken is completely within the guidelines, completely within the rules and completely within my Ministerial responsibilities.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, have you been involved in or attended any fundraising events or activities organised by the North Sydney Forum?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again I refer the member to my previous answer. In relation to any functions I have attended or any activity I have undertaken it has been completely within the guidelines, completely within my obligations as a Minister. I have a very important job to do as the Minister for Transport. I love my job. I treat it with the utmost respect it deserves and I think it is important for the Committee to scrutinise me on the massive budget we have and the issues that really matter to people—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you do not pick the questions we ask or what we choose to scrutinise you on. This is a public forum. This is actually the role of the upper House to review the executive, which includes asking what fundraising events you attend particularly in relation to your portfolio. I put to you with either the Millennium Forum or the North Sydney Forum whether any of that funding was used in relation to your election campaign?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again, I put to the Hon. Penny Sharpe that every activity I have undertaken has been completely within the guidelines.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can I just stop you there. I apologise to other members of the Committee, but you are not answering the question. I think it is fairly straightforward and if you were going to be transparent and we had nothing to fear that you would be able to answer these questions in some detail rather than providing a covering statement that has clearly been well rehearsed. Minister, was any of the money raised at the events that you have been involved in through the Millennium Forum or the North Sydney Forum used in your election campaign?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: I cannot see how an election campaign of an individual member of Parliament is relevant to the budget estimates in the portfolio of Transport that we are here to examine this morning and I seek a ruling that the question be ruled out of order.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: To the point of order: When we are looking at the situation currently in New South Wales where there are allegations flying around about funding from property developers to members' campaign funds in order to curry favour, I think any member who has done the right thing would have no problem in answering the question.

CHAIR: I do not think that relates to the point of order.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: To the point of order: It is abundantly clear that the Minister has answered that question in that she has not been involved in any of that fundraising activity, as she has answered in the first four questions of this estimates and I think the questioning should be directed towards the portfolio in which the Minister has responsibility.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: To the point of order: The guidelines are very clear that we have to direct questions to the portfolio. The Hon. Penny Sharpe must make the link as to why this line of questioning is being put to the Minister.

CHAIR: Order! Any questions relating to activities before the Minister became a Minister are out of order.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Not necessarily before she became a Minister, but I am happy to move on. Minister, can you confirm whether the mayor of Randwick, Scott Nash, was part of the group of people who attended a recent holiday in the Cook Islands that media reports indicate you also attended?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is no doubt—it is on the public record—I attended a colleague's fiftieth birthday celebration; actually a colleague of yours in the upper House. I took four days leave to do that and one of those days was a weekend so I took three days off work to attend that. I paid at my own expense. I attended in my own time.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, Minister. I am not actually questioning your work ethic or your leave. I am asking whether the mayor of Randwick, Scott Nash was there while you were there?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not think it is appropriate to me to add anything further on the record about a private trip paid for by myself in my private time and I would appreciate respectfully that there are some questions which deserve to be left in the private arena.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: This is a direct question in relation to your portfolio area. During the trip did you or Mayor Nash discuss the issue of the light rail project and concerns that Randwick Council may have had about that project?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again can I put on the record that what I have said about my private activities is on the public record and, secondly, I do not know about you, but when you take time away from work, the point is to take time away from work and that is all I will say about that issue.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you will not confirm whether you had conversations—

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: This is directly relevant.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: The Minister has answered the question. I cannot see where you can get further with this question. Also, the question is pertaining to a private trip that the Minister has clearly illustrated was taken in her time at her own expense. I cannot see the link to the budget estimates that we are to examine here today.

CHAIR: I ask the Hon. Penny Sharpe to rephrase the question so it does not pertain to the Minister's private activities.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It does directly pertain to this. Minister, has your ministerial office intervened directly in the negotiations between Transport for NSW and Randwick Council in relation to the car park at Rainbow Street?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I place on the record that my instruction to people in the department and Transport for NSW, especially to the Transport Projects Division of which Chris Lock is the head, is that they consult extensively with all stakeholders in relation to the light rail project and Mr Lock will be able to share with you the number of meetings Transport for NSW had.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not my question, with respect.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But I think it is relevant.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is what involvement your ministerial office has had and whether it has intervened in negotiations. I understand that negotiations had stalled over a period of time and I am interested in what involvement your office has had in relation to the Rainbow Street site, which, as you know, is not without controversy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly I appreciate that there is controversy, along with many of the public transport projects we run, and that is the challenge of running major projects. I am very proud of the record we have in running major projects and I have to say—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, please, I ask you to answer the question. I only have a very short period of time to get through all of the questions.

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: You have wasted the first 10 minutes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have got plenty of questions.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In answer to the member's question, can I ask Mr Lock to please explain in detail—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, I do not really want Mr Lock to explain in detail—thank you very much, Mr Lock. I have lots of questions for the Minister. I am asking about your office intervening in relation to the negotiations. Did they, yes or no? It is a question for you, not for Mr Lock.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In relation to any matter regarding any project and any stakeholder, all the meetings we hold and all the discussions we hold are completely within the guidelines and are completely in order to benefit the project and the people of New South Wales in relation to public transport. I am not quite sure of the tenor of the question. Of course I would instruct my department and my office to make sure we talked to all the stakeholders to ensure that projects run as smoothly as possible and certainly I wish to again stress to the Committee that all meetings that have been held by either the department or my office have been done completely within the guidelines and the rules and completely with the objective of making sure that our public transport projects run as smoothly and efficiently as possible. I have to say that many—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Terrific, that is great, Minister. Thank you. As a result of the instruction of the Premier in relation to office diaries, when these are finally made available, which I believe will be sometime in October, will you ensure that all meetings and discussions that you had with the mayor of Randwick, Scott Nash, in relation to the light rail project will be recorded when you release your diaries?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As with this and all letters, of course I will completely comply with those disclosure requirements. That is my responsibility to do so as a Minister. I take that very seriously and those disclosure requirements commenced on 1 July and I have ensured that my office has already put in place processes that we completely comply. In fact, even the Transport for NSW staff here and heads of agencies are aware of those requirements to the extent that if there are external parties coming to those meetings those relevant disclosures have to be made.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is Transport for NSW planning to charge commuters for obtaining an Opal card after the program is fully rolled out?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have no plans to charge for Opal cards. We made a specific policy very distinct from Victoria and other jurisdictions where people have to pay for an Opal card. We have no plans whatsoever to charge people for Opal cards.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have a copy of a briefing note to you from the General Manager, Customer Experience and Government Services and in the advice it suggests that there is no fee for acquiring an Opal card during the customer transition stage, which lasts until the middle of 2014, so I can confirm for you, even though it has been contemplated clearly, that you are not going to be charging for Opal cards?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know what document you have in front of you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: A briefing note 13/00485. It is a briefing note that went to you from the General Manager, Customer Experience and Government Services in relation to a request from the Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPC] around an update on Opal?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My answer remains the same in that we have no plans to charge anybody for the Opal card. In fact, that was one of the clear distinct policy decisions we made in relation to creating incentives for people to use the Opal card.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you be able to provide the Committee with the date when you actually made that decision. You can take it on notice; I do not expect you to remember it now?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, I certainly do not but I do not know what relevance that has to anything. I am certainly happy to again stress that we have no plans to charge anybody for the Opal card.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine but can you take on notice when you made that decision? You would have had to sign off on something, I am assuming?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure that is the case. It could have been discussions we held with our people. I am not even sure there was a formal decision taken in writing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In writing I have that you were contemplating charging people for the Opal card after the rollout was completed. I want to know when you decided you definitely were not doing that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When you say "you", do you mean the department or me?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The department?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Exactly, that is not me. I cannot take that on notice because I do not know that there was a formal decision made.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Stewart, can I ask you to take that on notice and get back to the Committee?

Mr STEWART: I think the Minister has been very clear. One of the most amazing things I have seen in New South Wales is the way Opal has been rolled out. It has been a very prudent and diligent way and I am very impressed with the way that Opal has been taken up by customers. At the end of the day it will provide huge benefits for our customers. I think the Minister has been very clear.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: That is fine, Mr Stewart, but what we would like is for you to take on notice and get back to us with the date when the decision was finalised that you were not going to accept the advice—

Mr STEWART: Well, could you table the document?

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: —for briefing note 13/00485.

Mr STEWART: I am happy to take that on notice but could you table the advice?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, I am happy to provide it. It was provided in a Government Information (Public Access) Act I received from the department. I am happy to give you all the details.

Mr STEWART: Thank you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, the environmental impact statement [EIS] for the North West Rail Link states that some bus routes will be reconfigured to take people to the station rather than straight into the city, which currently occurs. This means that commuters will take a bus and then a train. Will commuters from the north-west have to pay two fares rather than the current one when they change across two different modes?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Commuters in the north-west will have exactly the same fare structure as anyone else in the State. There is no difference whether you live in the north-west, the south-west, Western Sydney or anywhere else in New South Wales. The key driver in relation to our fare policy has been that no matter where you live or what mode of transport you use, you will be clear about the pricing regime and the fare structure. That is why the Opal system—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not sure that is going very well.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure what you mean by that comment. When we came to government we inherited more than 100 paper-based clumsy ticketing products. We have had to streamline that into one product through the Opal network. I am very pleased with how that rollout is going. As you would know—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question was whether people—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I finish my answer?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No. I have asked a very specific question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And I would like the opportunity to finish my answer.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: My point of order relates to my earlier point. The Minister was giving a detailed response to a very specific question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And it requires a yes or no answer.

CHAIR: Order! The Hon. Penny Sharpe will come to order. The Minister should be allowed to answer the question. I ask her to be brief to allow the member to ask further questions.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was going to make the point that as shadow Minister for Transport the member would appreciate the complications involved in introducing an electronic ticketing system. The Labor Government did not manage to do it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are people going to have to pay two fares if they go from a bus to a train? Please confirm whether that is the case.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No matter where you are in Sydney, if you go from a bus to a train obviously—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: When the North West Rail Link is operating people who now travel by bus to the city will have to take a bus to the station and then transfer to the train to travel to the city. They now pay one bus fare. Are you proposing to charge them a bus fare and a train fare, which will be more than their current bus fare?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You are implying that they will pay more, which is not necessarily the case. With the Opal system it depends on the distance they are travelling.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I will redirect the question to Mr Staples. Has any modelling been done on the change to the fare structure for people in the north-west? Have you done any modelling to establish how many people will travel by bus and then transfer to the train?

Mr STAPLES: A part of the planning for the North West Rail Link we have done passenger forecasting, which we released as part of the environmental impact statement. The assumptions in that are consistent with the Government's policy.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Have you tested people's willingness to pay more?

Mr STAPLES: Our focus is on representing the fare structure that the Government is implementing with the Opal card and our modelling is based on that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So even though people will have to pay twice you have not done any modelling about whether that will be a disincentive.

Mr STAPLES: We have done modelling based on the fare structures that have been rolled out with the Opal card.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How much extra will it cost commuters based on those assumptions?

Mr STAPLES: People will use the Opal card and clearly it will be well and truly in place by the time the North West Rail Link is opened. As is the case for the rest of the users on the network, it will depend on the trip—whether passengers are travelling to the city, Macquarie Park, Epping or Castle Hill. It will depend on the individual trips and whether they drive to the station or get a bus.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: As we know, many bus services go from the north-west and there is the T-way, which works quite well. People now have a direct service to the city and they pay one fare. I am particularly interested in how many of those people you think will change their travel, how much extra they will have to pay and whether there is a willingness to pay. Are you saying that that material is not available?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will raise two points in relation to that issue. First, people will still have the choice whether they use only the bus to come to the city depending on where they live. Secondly, the Government is providing 4,000 extra parking spaces as part of the North West Rail Link project. People will have choices about how they use public transport. That is in addition to the convenience of the rail network. It comes down to people looking at the options, seeing what is best for them personally and weighing that up. Our job as a government is to provide efficient mass transit options for the people of the north-west, which is what we are doing with the North West Rail Link. That has been a long time coming. I am very pleased with and proud of the work that the North West Rail Link project team has been doing. I assure customers that they will have the option of a direct bus route depending on where they live and a parking space at a station. They will have more options than they do today. They will also have complete transparency with regard to how much it will cost.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But you will not tell us today how much it will cost them.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There are many suburbs and streets in the north-west in which people live. You can use our website today to work out what people will pay depending on where they live. However, there are many different permutations and combinations to consider in answering the question you have asked.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How does that work when compared to the proposed light rail project for the eastern suburbs? You have announced that commuters in the eastern suburbs who change from a bus to the light rail network will have an integrated fare. In your opening statement you said it would be the same for everybody. I would argue that that is not correct.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When I said "the same for everybody", I meant that no matter where people live in greater Sydney or the regions they will know exactly what they are paying. We are not discriminating against people living in the north-west versus people living in the south-west or elsewhere. That was the point I was making.

I will ask Mr Reardon, as the head of policy and regulation, to deal with bus and light rail fares. Essentially, when we were looking at the Opal fare structure and the service provided we found that a light rail service is comparable to a bus service. To maintain simplicity and after considering the cost structure of providing those services we determined that it was appropriate to deal with light rail fares in the same way that we deal with bus fares. That is a simple, distance-based system, but it also reflects the cost structure of providing light rail and bus services. I will ask Mr Reardon to elaborate on that point.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If Mr Reardon wants to elaborate he can provide that information on notice. What is the anticipated shutdown time for the Epping to Chatswood conversion for the North West Rail Link and when it is expected to happen?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask Mr Staples to add to my response. As you know we have a preferred tenderer for the operation of the North West Rail Link. We are still in the contract negotiation stage; we have not yet signed the contract with that preferred tenderer. Once the contract is signed I will be able to provide further details to the public. Mr Staples might like to add to that.

Mr STAPLES: The only thing to add relates to the nature of the work that will be undertaken on the Epping to Chatswood rail line. That is principally around installing things such as screen doors and new signalling systems to allow the new automatic trains to operate on that line. There is certainly technical work to

be done in that space. However, as the Minister said, we are still finalising the contract with the preferred tenderer. Once that work is complete we will disclose the contract details.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not after the contract details. I want to know how long the line will be out of action and what alternative will be provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I make it clear that that is the subject of contract negotiations. Each tenderer puts to the Government their recommendation on how they will deliver the project. That includes things like how they will deal with interim solutions or the shutdown period. It is part of the tender process and that is why we cannot provide those details today. We will be able to share them once the contract has been signed. We will provide details to the community about what is in the contract in terms of delivering the project and the operations once the line is operational. Touch wood, that will be in 2019.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am confused about the Government's position in relation to ridesharing. Do you agree with the comments made by your colleague the Minister for Finance and Services, the Hon. Dominic Perrottet, about supporting the ridesharing service Uber X, or do you agree with the actions of your colleague the Minister for Roads and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, who has Roads Maritime Services officers fining drivers who are providing services through Uber X and other ridesharing arrangements?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is no doubt that this is a difficult area of public policy. I will get Tim Reardon, who is head of policy to—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to know your position given that your two Cabinet colleagues are diametrically opposed in terms of their actions and words.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As you know, amendments to the Passenger Transport Act are now before the upper House. For the first time, that legislation will make booking service apps—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is very welcome and I thank your office for the brief provided to me. I am asking particularly about ride share.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was getting to the point of trying to answer the question. I want to make that point clear, that everybody is now open in relation to booking services and apps. In relation to driver authorisation, however, the Government is still wrestling with the notion of ensuring customer security, safety and accreditation issues and in the interim it is still not legal for drivers to be driving unless they are authorised under the New South Wales legislation and regulations. On that basis Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] is still imposing restrictions on those people who do not have proper driver authority. This is an issue in progress and the Government is considering future steps and what customers want and obviously we are undertaking these issues in a very logical manner, but I completely appreciate the complexity around those issues. On the one hand—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, Minister, you have not quite answered what I was getting at but that is fine. Minister, do you agree with your colleague the Hon. Catherine Cusack that the response from Transport for NSW in relation to the regional air services tender debacle in Moree, and ensuing difficulties that resulted for the Moree community, was "abysmal" and do you agree with her that the people of Moree are owed an apology for being stranded in relation to air services?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is no doubt that in recent times the State of domestic airlines and intra New South Wales services has been difficult because of market forces as well as a number of other complex issues. If the Committee is amenable I would like Tim Reardon, who heads up the policy team and who is responsible for aviation regulation, to brief the Committee on the status. There is no doubt that it is difficult for communities who are remote and isolated to access aviation services. That is why we have 14 regulated routes in New South Wales.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It was a quick question and I have one minute left. I have my last question for you: You previously committed to developing a customer score card, it was mentioned in previous annual reports and in the budget papers. However, this year it appears that there is no mention of the development of a customer score card. I know that there has been a lot of work done in relation to measuring customer satisfaction. Can you supply an update as to whether a score card is still being considered?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is definitely the case. If I am not mistaken, the secretary might have something to add, we are intending to disclose customer information regarding satisfaction surveys.

Mr STEWART: Absolutely. One of the key things is measuring customer satisfaction. There is no question that we will be advising of the current round of customer satisfaction results.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There is a lot of documentation that talks about the development of a customer score card. I have seen the customer satisfaction surveys. Is there an intention to actually provide a customer score card in a clear way rather than a report on the various indices of how people are feeling about their trains?

Mr STEWART: Again, my view is very clear, those results are public and they are very clear.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is a score card going to be produced?

Mr STEWART: We are looking at providing the results of the customer survey against every mode of transport, including those services provided by government and those provided by the private industry. We will be providing that customer service level. It is very clear.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But the idea of a customer score card is not still the intention, is that right? I am not trying to be tricky. There has previously been a lot of mention in various communications from the department and the Minister and in annual reports about the development of a customer score card, it seems that has disappeared.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to confirm we have a customer satisfaction index which was released last year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not a score card.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Good morning, Minister. I am going to start with your favourite transport project, not mine, the North West Rail Link.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not have a favourite, they are all my favourites.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: The North West Rail Link boring machines are about to enter the ground. People along the Epping to Chatswood stretch are getting fed up with the lack of information about when the line will be closed and for how long it will be closed. You have just said that even though the preferred tenderer has been announced you still do not have a timeline for the closure of that line. Could you tell us when you will have the timeline?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. I am anticipating that we will have a timeline in the next few months. We are getting to a position where in the next few months we will be finalising and signing the contract.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, could you give us a more accurate time than just a few months? Will it be August, September or October?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If I could explain why I cannot give you an exact date. It is my job to ensure that we get the best price on behalf of the taxpayer, it is my job to make sure we get the best customer service levels we can and, therefore, it is our job—actually Rodd Staples's job as the head of the team—to make sure that we negotiate the best outcome. Once those negotiations are final and a contract is signed I will be more than happy, in fact I am chomping at the bit, to share all the information we have, not just in relation to service disruptions, for want of a better term, in relation to the Epping-Chatswood rail section, but in relation to service offerings for customers. That will be apparent in the next few months and as soon as we sign the contract I will provide that information.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: At the community meeting at Cheltenham in May the North West Rail Link project director Mr Rodd Staples was asked about—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We had a very fun time.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: We did—evacuation procedures for trains on the North West Rail Link and specifically whether there will be a walkway for people to disembark in case of an emergency or whether people will have to leave from the front or rear of the train. Mr Staples' response was very vague, along the lines that nothing had been finalised. Can you confirm that it will be the private operator that will decide on how evacuation will work?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If you do not mind I will ask Mr Staples to answer that question because he is an expert in relation to that issue and Mr Collins might want to respond from his experience in London on a fully automated system. I will throw the question to Mr Staples and then to Mr Collins.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: My question is: can you confirm that the private operator will decide on how the evacuation will work, yes or no?

Mr STAPLES: There are a couple of concept points I need to make first. The question of the presence of a walkway in the tunnel or not: there is a walkway currently elevated on the side of the Epping-Chatswood rail line and part of the question concerned whether there would be a walkway in the new tunnels.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Mr Staples, my question is really simple, could you confirm that the private operator will decide on how the evacuation works?

Mr STAPLES: I can confirm that as part of the overall evacuation procedure there will be a walkway available in the new tunnel as well as the existing tunnel. There is a continuous system right through. As I outlined at the time, it depends on the nature of the particular incident as to how evacuation procedures occur. The operator that we are procuring and finalising the contract details for will have the day to day responsibility of managing incidents. They have to work with emergency services in doing that, they have to be an accredited party to operate the rail service and they have to convince our national rail regulator they have put together all systems and processes to manage safety effectively: that is, day to day safety and how they respond to incidents. We have confidence in the processes that we have put in place.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, do you think that outsourcing safety requirements to a private company could be construed as a breach of the Government's duty of care to the public?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Staples and Mr Collins may want to add to this, but all requirements in relation to safety and customer service are key criteria the Government establishes and for us everything we do in transport—I cannot stress this point enough—and anyone who has been in my shoes knows that safety is always number one. Safety is what keeps transport ministers awake at night. I am not part of the negotiations for reasons around probity, but I know through the team the criteria we set to everybody involved in the project, whether in the construction phase or the operations phase, is that safety is number one. In relation to the safety of automated systems if you look around the world some of the safest systems in the world are automated and have the platform screens and ensure customer safety first and foremost.

It is certainly the world's best type of service we are bringing in. I cannot stress enough how much emphasis the entire team puts on safety. It is one of the key values that we have in transport. It is a key value that every single agency and every single CEO abides by. As the Minister I believe it is something we all wear, whether a customer service attendant at a station or an executive making decisions or me, I want to assure you and the Committee that is something we do not outsource and we are certainly make decisions around.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: You are outsourcing it and you are comfortable with this decision?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are outsourcing the operations but that is done around the world.

Mr COLLINS: If I may add to that.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: No, I have my answer.

Mr COLLINS: Just to let you know that many of the states have a different model than we have here. Mr Staples and I work closely together and the North West Rail Link, as far as I am concerned, bringing on platform screen doors, which I have used in the past, is a major step forward in safety. I think it will be

remarkable what benefits we get out of this. The project has been managed very well by working with all parties, including the regulator.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: My question was more about outsourcing safety and whether the Government is comfortable with that duty of care, but I have an answer. Minister, is there enough capacity at the Chatswood station to accommodate all disembarking passengers from the private Metroshuttle?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly, and if you look at the recent timetable change we implemented for 2015 and future timetable changes our key driver is sufficient service frequency to enable platform interchange between the two services at Chatswood. We believe we can undertake that efficiently and have customers wait no more than three minutes—that is the objective. As you know, the Government has plans for Sydney Rapid Transit, a second harbour crossing, which will make that interchange redundant. Obviously the next major project after the North West Rail Link, if the community supports us in March, is Sydney Rapid Transit. If we are successful at the next election we will start work immediately to progress that project.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: That project may be 20 or 30 years in the making.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, not at all.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: You have to first sell the electricity assets to fund that. Till that happens, we are speculating.

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: Point of order: Is the member asking a question or making a statement?

CHAIR: Please allow the Minister to answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This is an important point and I want Mr Staples and Mr Collins to contribute. If we are successful at the next election, we have plans and resources to start work immediately on Sydney Rapid Transit. It is not in the distant future, and we can start construction within two or three years.

Mr COLLINS: I have spent a lot of time with Mr Staples in work to understand issues at Chatswood. I have had a lot of experience in dealing with large crowds at major stations. I am satisfied with the plans and progress. The long-term plan is to have a through-service into the city, which is very important. We are working on detailed modelling and we understand the service provision and how to work with the two teams at Chatswood. There are no safety issues, as far as I am concerned.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, are there plans to extend the North West Rail Link to St Leonards?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Currently, the North West Rail Link goes from Chatswood to Rouse Hill. There are no plans beyond that, but we are looking at the future with Sydney Rapid Transit. We have done preliminary work on where and how Sydney Rapid Transit will extend from the North West Rail Link. We do not have decisions yet, but if we get the tick in March we will expedite work in relation to what happens beyond Chatswood. It is government policy that the North West Rail Link is from Chatswood to Rouse Hill, but Sydney Rapid Transit means it will be extended to Bankstown. Rapid transit, which involves reconfiguring part of the network, will extend to Bankstown.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Sydney Rapid Transit—or can I call it "Sydney's private shuttle"—is the second harbour crossing, as announced by the Government. You just said you would be ready to start work in two or three years, depending on what happens at the election.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Ready to start construction; we have already started planning.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Has the Government prepared a business case and a cost-benefit analysis for this plan? What alternatives were considered?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That preliminary work is in train. I will ask Mr Staples to comment on the preliminary work. We need the community's tick to expedite those plans. Getting the North West Rail Link up and running involved detailed work around a business case and the other stages of a major project. We

have learned from the experience of the South West Rail Link, the North West Rail Link and the light rail projects. For Sydney Rapid Transit we will undertake similar modelling.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Do you have a business case and a cost-benefit analysis?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not yet, no.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: But you have made the decision to go with this plan and start construction in two or three years, without having a business case, a cost-benefit analysis or consideration of alternatives?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I refer the member to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan, which we released at the end of 2012. It included our plans for the second harbour crossing and reconfiguring the line to Bankstown. This is not new; we have been working on it since we came to government. It is important for Government not just to plan and execute current projects but also to plan a future pipeline. We work with the community and external stakeholder to be a step ahead. We have been planning since we came to government. We are now at the stage of getting to the next level of planning work, but it is not new. We have been public about the stages.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: You have been public about it, but you still do not have a business case or a plan.

Mr COLLINS: Can I talk to that, because I think your point is important?

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I am running out of time so I will move on to my next question. Minister, within the plan for the Sydney Rapid Transit, why is almost 50 per cent of the private Metro network cannibalising existing heavy rail lines instead of expanding and improving the rail network to areas that need it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know what you call building the South West Rail Link and the North West Rail Link, but heavy rail includes rapid transit and double-deck systems. With Sydney Rapid Transit we are building a heavy rail network. I want Mr Collins to talk about rapid transit and the three-tier system we have. He is one of the best rail operators in the world and we are lucky to have him.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I do not want to know details.

Mr COLLINS: I will give you a straightforward answer.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I want to know why the Bankstown line will be converted to a Metro line.

Mr COLLINS: Throughout the world it is often the most efficient and cost-effective way to convert existing lines to give them the latest signalling systems and technology. It also gives the North West Rail Link a link to the city and out the other side. Operationally that is ideal. It is better than constructing a separate line. I think people will benefit from it.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: We can also use technology to improve existing lines.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Which we are doing. We are investing billions of dollars in upgrading existing rail lines as well. We have done upgrades on the Western line. We would not have been able to run Waratah trains without the upgrades. We are investing in signalling, in maintenance and substantially in improving the existing network to improve the number of services. Bringing on 1,000 extra services in October last year was no mean feat. I cannot remember the last time a government introduced 1,000 extra weekly services in one go, with minimal disruption to the community.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I refer to recent correspondence from the Southern Tableland Rail Users Group, otherwise known as STRUG, which I am sure is short for struggles. They claim that rail commuters from Goulburn have been disadvantaged by recent changes to the rail timetable in favour of freight services. They state that on the current timetable commuters from Goulburn to Exeter with an 8.30 a.m. start in Sydney are in the ludicrous situation of having to drive almost an hour to Moss Vale or Mittagong in order to catch an earlier train to get them to Sydney prior to 8.30. This is because the previous 4.59 a.m. service has been rescheduled to depart from Goulburn at 5.31 a.m., 32 minutes later. The connecting service now gets in to Central at 8.34 a.m. There appears to be no logical reason why commuters—and there are a lot of them—between Goulburn and

Exeter should be inconvenienced in this fashion. They believe this train should be urgently rescheduled to an earlier departure time to allow commuters to be in Sydney for an 8.30 start without having to drive long distances. Minister, have you met with STRUG and what actions are being taken to address these concerns?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am aware of the concerns expressed by that group and I am aware of their desire for a rescheduled timetable. Introducing new timetables is extremely complex and I appreciate that in some parts of the network people feel that they preferred the old system compared to the new one. Our job is to make sure that we are delivering benefits to the vast majority of customers, but I completely understand that there are people who want us to review their part of the network and I have instructed Transport for NSW as well as our agencies to consistently monitor the timetable. We are able to tweak that every year in October, which is generally the time that we do that.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Are you tweaking this?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot confirm what is occurring there in the future. We take all that on board. I do not know if Mr Stewart or Mr Collins want to comment about that.

Mr COLLINS: Certainly my colleagues in NSW TrainLink understand these issues. I know there is a connecting service each day which only arrives four minutes later into Sydney Central. It is a very complex matter. We have got to bring in the South West Rail Link fairly soon; that will be probably the next big timetable change that we need to make. We take on board all sorts of feedback from our customers, but, as the Minister says, it is a very complex railway, particularly here where we are trying to squeeze everything through Central. It does sometimes mean that one or two services have to be adjusted. But we are very happy to take on board and share any information with groups, and certainly we are considering the majority of people. I appreciate the people of Goulburn have concerns there.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I appreciate your comments and the difficulty of your job but why is it that regional and rural people always do the squeezing?

Mr COLLINS: I think a lot of some of those journeys have improved over time—certainly regional railways. Obviously upgrading the system gives greater capacity to the network and that allows us to slot in both suburban services, which are obviously carrying the heavy load, plus the regional rail. At the moment it is very difficult to squeeze in trains because the suburban service obviously takes up a vast majority of those paths. Over the next few years you will see improvements to track, to signalling and I am sure we will offer a better regional service out there.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: That is my other point. News of another rail crossing for Sydney Harbour is wonderful for the future, but regional and rural areas have been waiting for their upgrades time and time again. Why should this be quicker than their priorities?

Mr COLLINS: My experience is that not only do you build new lines— and I have been involved in building a few new lines in my time—but you also upgrade the capacity of the existing network. It is a dual challenge that we have. I am very keen to ensure that areas that only have, let us say, 20 trains an hour at the moment get greater capacity through upgrading signalling. Those are plans we are working on very hard with my transport colleagues. We obviously have the rail future strategy, which I am directly involved with, and I think we will see, not in the long term but in the mid-term, some improvements which will gain greater capacity. We are a growing network; we need to provide more space for our trains to get on the system.

Mr STEWART: Can I just add to that? I think you appreciate we are also investing heavily in fleet— new inner-city trains, we are refreshing current train sets. So I think what we have got are the ingredients of success for the future.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: With all due respect, yes you are, and that is fantastic. I am not trying to take away from what you are doing in Sydney; I am just saying that regional people are becoming the second cousins in this transport system. On the South Coast line it is not unusual to have to catch a bus and then a train to get to Sydney. If you are in a wheelchair that is complicated issue. You should be able to go from Nowra to Sydney line in a train on one line and it should be accessible to the most disadvantaged.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I also stress that the reason we established NSW Trains was to specifically focus on our regional customers. With the recent timetable change, for example, we have reduced

travel time from places like Wollongong to the Sydney CBD. Of course we have more work to do but investing in new fleet, providing more express services, providing more parking around key stations, are things we are delivering for regional New South Wales. To be investing \$2.8 billion in carriages specifically for people that you are talking about is a huge investment of government—one we are very pleased to make because I do not believe the Oscar carriages, for example, were really suited for intercity travel; they are more a suburban train, and that is why we are acquiring a new intercity fleet. Those Oscars will serve a suburban purpose and we will be able to use the new rolling stock more suited for our intercity customers because we completely appreciate that if you are sitting on a train for an hour and a half, two hours, you expect a certain level of service.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You are lucky if you are sitting on a train just for two hours from the South Coast; it is three hours and over on most occasions, and that might also involve a bit of bus travel. Talking about regional and rural areas and dealing with the Opal cards, it has been most distressful for many aged people who have been told that they cannot get an Opal card at the railway station. I will give you an example because I am sure you would have heard it through the media. In Nowra aged persons are incredibly distressed that they go to the railway station like the good old days to buy a ticket to get on the train only to find out that they cannot have access to an Opal card at the ticket office.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I stress, and this is an extremely important point, that pensioners continue to use their paper pensioner excursion tickets. Whatever you can do today in terms of purchasing your ticket, you can do in the future. I stress that—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You cannot do it on a bus, Minister.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If I could answer the question. By the end of the year we will have a gold Opal card for our seniors. Seniors currently do not have one.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Will that be posted out to them? Where will they purchase them?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will be providing details of that closer to the time. But I stress that even when the \$2.50 Opal card comes out you can still use the existing paper system. I want to stress the point that from 1 September we will be retiring about 14 types of paper tickets. But there are still more than 20 types of paper tickets available. So we are still in transition. I stress to all of our seniors and pensioners—and in fact we put out a fact sheet about this some weeks ago to allay any concerns—whatever pensioners and seniors do today they will be able to do beyond 1 September and they will be able to do beyond the gold Opal card.

We know that not everybody will want to take an Opal card if you are a senior or a pensioner. We want to make sure our customers have a lot of time and have a lot of access points to get those services and I want to assure you that we completely appreciate that—I will not say all seniors and pensioners—a vast majority do not like change and are used to doing particular things. Therefore, I stress that they will still be able to continue purchasing their pensioner excursion tickets wherever they purchase them from today.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: One of the issues is that you can only get the Opal card online on many occasions. A lot of people are not even online, particularly pensioners.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is not the case. I got mine by ringing up and having it posted to my home. If you do not want to get it online you can ring and get one. But we have now also got 1,000 retailers, many of whom are very close to stations or bus interchanges—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In Sydney or—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Everywhere. We have got kiosks in regional areas. But remember, currently it is only adult full-paying customers who are being encouraged to use the Opal card. Obviously we want everyone to feel comfortable in using the Opal system, but please remember that if you are a full-paying adult customer, like I am, the options you have currently are you can ring up and get one posted to your home so you do not have to leave home, you can go online and do it, you can go to one of the 1,000 retailers, which includes Woolies and 7-Eleven or Westfields, and you can also go to one of the, I think we have got, 48 pop-up kiosks at stations that have been there for some weeks and will continue to be so in the future. So I think there is abundant choice.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I am not trying to take you apart on those issues, but when you are elderly and you are in a home and you need to travel to Sydney for a medical appointment and suddenly the system has changed, your world is turned upside down. I am just trying to make sure that you are looking after those people.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Absolutely, and those customers need to be assured that they can continue to purchase paper tickets today, beyond 1 September and even beyond the gold Opal card coming out.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Constituents also have written in about the quiet carriages; they cannot make out the signs indicating such carriages exist. The end result is that some passengers in quiet carriages are unaware that they are in one and then cause tensions and tempers to erupt because of noise. I believe in Melbourne the V/Line also has quiet carriages but the markings around the door are quite distinct and big and there is writing over the doors with a colour border advising travellers that they are entering a quiet carriage, and even as lately as I have become visually challenged what is the Government doing to make a better marking for notification that such carriages exist?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We took on that feedback very early in the piece because initially, as you know, it is a self-regulatory process, so we expect customers to respect each other and respect the quiet carriage. We have improved signage. I do not know if Mr Collins would like to talk about that.

Mr COLLINS: We certainly took on board the view that there was not enough signing. We have got more labels on the windows. We have also carried out an extensive training of guards—2,700 across the Sydney Trains and New South Wales train network have been on a program that includes announcing when they are travelling on those trains about quiet carriages. I have been up to Newcastle. I have been extensively on the network and I have heard those announcements. There is obviously more we can do and we are certainly looking at what we can do particularly with new trains.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Have you done something with the doors so that people can quickly identify them before they hop on the train?

Mr COLLINS: Certainly, there is a lot of labelling. If you look to these doorways they have about six different labels on them which I am keen to perhaps consolidate. But I will certainly take on board any suggestions groups have to make this clearer. It is actually a very successful program. I think 99 per cent of travellers are finding it, and certainly myself, when I am on a quiet carriage we all seem to respect each other. Occasionally it kicks off but it is a very rare event.

Mr STEWART: I think if my memory serves me right when I was travelling from Penrith a couple of Saturdays ago the quiet carriage was clearly labelled on the door.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Excellent.

Mr STEWART: That was my recollection.

Mr COLLINS: There is a big sticker on the window glass I think as well.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And sometimes inside there are details as well. When I have often got a train up to the Central Coast or other places I have noticed the details as well. Mind you, I avoid quiet carriages.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In terms of Newcastle and the planning of the new railway line there, will you take you take the Committee through what probity processes were used when entering into the idea that you would cease the railway from Wickham and devised the idea to resite it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly, the Hon. Paul Green, as you appreciate this issue has been around for a long time. The key decision the Government took was around revitalising Newcastle which was a government decision. My role in that decision is to deliver the transport outcomes that come as a result of that. Key agencies that were involved in the question: how do we best revitalise Newcastle determined that truncating the line was part of that process, not all of it but part of it. So my job is to make sure that truncation happens smoothly and as efficiently as possible and that the interim services are there for customers to ensure smooth transitions. Certainly I appreciate that there are people for and against that issue. My experience on the ground is

that the vast majority of people in Newcastle support the decision. I appreciate that people in other parts of the Hunter are concerned about the interim arrangements and that is why we are working very hard to ensure the community that we will have smooth transition.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I am not questioning that, I am just asking the process of probity through those issues

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sure. Do we still have time to answer that question?

CHAIR: Time has expired but you can answer that question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Mr Stewart, do you want to comment on that?

Mr STEWART: Again with all major projects we have got very clear processes in contracting. I just want to make it very clear to the Committee, that these are well recognised. When we go into—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Can we put a flow chart on record of the probity that was moved through?

Mr STEWART: I am quite happy to provide an answer.

CHAIR: Unfortunately time has expired for questions in relation to the Transport portfolio.

(Short adjournment)

CHAIR: Welcome back. As there are no further witnesses to swear, we will take questions from the Opposition.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Prior to the time starting, are we able to very briefly provide further information on two questions that we were asked?

CHAIR: No, unfortunately not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, on Tuesday 26 July 2011 you were the special guest at the Millennium Forum. Can you guarantee that there were no prohibited donors at that event?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: All donations are a matter for the party organisation. In the Liberal Party they are not matters for individual members of Parliament. But I do want to stress again to the shadow Minister that at all times my office and I have complied with all the guidelines and all the rules that are in place.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine, Minister. I appreciate that, and I have heard that line several times. What I am asking is a very straightforward question. Can you guarantee that at that function on 26 July there were no prohibited donors in attendance?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: All matters relating to donors, as they should be, are matters for the party organisation. They are not matters for individual members of Parliament. In the Liberal Party we have strict rules around what is appropriate for members in relation to those issues.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is clear that many people in the Liberal Party have been circumventing those rules and what I am asking you here today is, as Minister, to guarantee that you personally did not know or did not witness any prohibited donors being at the event on 26 July 2011, not what your office has done; you personally? Minister, you have been around for a long time, you know a lot of people, you are very close friends with the people who used to run the Millennium Forum. Can you guarantee that at that function there were no prohibited donors?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly as far as I am concerned everything I have done is completely within the guide the lines. All issues relating—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you are not prepared to make that guarantee?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: They are matters for the party organisation. As members of Parliament we are not allowed to accept donations personally, which is—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not what I am asking. I am asking—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But you are.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am asking about an attendance at an event where you were the star guest. I want to know whether you were aware or whether you can guarantee there were no prohibited donors there?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And I want to make the point to you very clearly that I think the question you are asking is: have my actions as a Minister and as a member of Parliament—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, that is not what I am asking. I am asking whether you can guarantee it.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: We are going back to the start of the day again. At the very least the interjections by the member are disorderly, not considering the efforts of Hansard become inhibited by constant interjections and talking over the Minister. I ask that if the member is going to ask a question in which she has asked five times now—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And not received an answer.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: And the Minister has provided detailed answer, at the very least she could listen to what the Minister has to say and allow her the opportunity to answer the question which she has asked on five previous occasions now.

CHAIR: Order! I take it that the point of order relates to interjections, which I uphold. The Minister has answered the question but the member is entitled to continue to ask the same question if she wishes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So, Minister, you are not able to guarantee there were no prohibited donors at the event that you were at?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What I am saying is that they are matters for the party organisation. They are not matters for Ministers or individual members of Parliament and I am very clear in my personal responsibility about that.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: But the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] thinks they are the responsibility of individual members of Parliament and Ministers?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am certainly not going to comment on proceedings before that body.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have some questions for Mr Collins.

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: A Transport question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You could have asked questions but you chose not to.

CHAIR: Order! Does the member have a question?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, I do. Mr Collins, you were appointed to Sydney Trains in February 2013, that is correct, is it not?

Mr COLLINS: I certainly was given an offer letter and I accepted a contract, which I started on 1 July last year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: On that basis can I get you to confirm a number of appointments that have been made within Sydney Trains? Can I confirm that Stewart Mills, the Director of Maintenance at Sydney Trains, was appointed in March 2014?

Mr COLLINS: That is correct.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: He formerly worked on the Tube Lines in the United Kingdom?

Mr COLLINS: He worked for a private organisation called Tube Lines and we went through a formal process of interview with a number of candidates who applied for the job, through the normal processes, managed and supervised by Transport for NSW and certainly we went through the standard interview process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can I confirm that Robert Groves, the Director of SEQR, was appointed in September 2013?

Mr COLLINS: Robert Groves, who worked I think for Thiess and other organisations, Australia citizen, certainly went through an interview process. He was found to be the preferred candidate.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can I confirm that Andy Thomas—

Mr COLLINS: Andy Thomas does not work for me. Andy Thomas actually works for NSW TrainLink.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Peter Bragg, Group Manager of Sydney Trains?

Mr COLLINS: I do not know directly of Peter Bragg's appointment process but I will take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Pete Allaway, General Manager at Sydney Trains?

Mr COLLINS: I became aware after he was successful. Again he went through an interview and selection process, as with many of these appointments; over 45 per cent of Sydney Trains in senior management are new. They come from a number of areas—Telstra, Qantas, New Zealand, all around. The most important thing is we have selected the best candidates for the job, combined with good rail people, who remain within the organisation, and that is why we are seeing some really good progress in our performance.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can I confirm the appointment of Stuart Middleton, the General Manager, Operations at Transport for NSW?

Mr COLLINS: Again, he was appointed following a selection process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What about Gavin Panter?

Mr COLLINS: I understand that he is the signalling manager. Again, he was appointed following a selection process. In total we examined about 6,000 CVs and conducted several hundred interviews. This involved huge organisational change across Sydney Trains, Transport for NSW—

Mr STEWART: The advice I have is that 480 executive and management positions at Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and Transport for NSW were advertised and we received more than 17,500 applications.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What about Jason Bridges, the manager of the Rail Management Centre? I think he was involved in the restructure.

Mr COLLINS: I believe he was appointed through that process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am interested in this group of people particularly because they are from the United Kingdom. That is a very large number of appointments to very senior roles. Did you know any of these men previously?

Mr COLLINS: I knew some of them previously; I probably knew two of those appointees. Many of the appointments were not connected with me personally. As an organisation we have sought to find the best people for the job. Many of those people you mentioned are Australian citizens. Like a lot of people in Australia, we were not born here. Where I have been directly involved working for Transport for NSW I have certainly looked for the best people.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you outline your role in relation to the recruitment of, in particular, the more senior people? How does the executive recruitment process work for you as the chief executive officer? What is your role in the selection process, particularly for this group of people?

Mr COLLINS: I had no role whatsoever in the recruitment of many of the people you have mentioned other than knowing they were successful. I will talk about one specific role in the executive team. Obviously we carried out an executive search and long and short lists were provided. We went through a process with a colleague of mine who works in a senior position within human resources at Transport for NSW and we shortlisted on that basis. We then carried out a structured interview process involving not only the recruitment agency but also two members of the panel. I have done this many times over many years. We certainly look for those competencies and skills that people can demonstrate during interview.

Mr STEWART: These are appointments made by Transport for NSW and I approve them. I am happy to talk through that process. At the end of the day, while there are independent panels involved in a very clear merit-selection process to get the very best people to run our transport system, those contracts are with me and they go through a process. You would appreciate that we conduct formal interviews and psychometric testing and we talk to referees. We want the very best people to operate our transport system.

Mr COLLINS: My latest appointee came from Cronulla shire and is a good Australian citizen.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you guarantee that appointments to all of these positions have followed the process required for the recruitment of executives in the government sector?

Mr COLLINS: As far as I am concerned it was a fair and equitable process. I am particularly keen to ensure that we get the best people, from around the world if necessary. We now have a good mixture of people. As the secretary stated, Transport for NSW appointments are ratified and confirmed by him following my decision.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The most senior positions obviously report directly to you. At what point do you meet the applicants individually during the recruitment process?

Mr COLLINS: It depends on the circumstances during the structured interview process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you do not meet them informally.

Mr COLLINS: That may have happened occasionally. For example, I did not know Rob Groves and I had not spoken to him prior to his appointment. Mr Mills worked for Tube Lines Limited, a separate organisation, and I may have met him since my appointment.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The number of drug and alcohol tests performed on rail employees was always publicly available on the Transport for NSW website. It detailed the number of test undertaken on drivers and contractors, and it included alcohol and drug tests. That information has not been updated since March 2013. I have examined the site but I cannot find that material. I know that changes were made in relation to the national regulator. However, that information does not seem to be available from the regulator either. Where is that information and can you guarantee that the testing regime is meeting at least the minimum standards? I am happy to be corrected, but I have looked and I cannot find it.

Mr COLLINS: We certainly have not changed the policy with regard to making that information available and we definitely monitor the situation. My executive and I undertake a weekly review of the number of tests carried out, the number of positive results and how we can improve the situation. In fact, we have had discussions with the trade unions about how we can improve with possible swab testing and moving forward. We have carried out 25 per cent of those tests and we continue to do that. It is a regular feature of people's safety check.

Mr REARDON: When the national rail safety law commenced and the office of the national rail safety regulator commenced, we ensured in New South Wales that our drug and alcohol testing regime was enshrined and we continued with that process. The minimum requirements are still there.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you follow it up in relation to the public nature of it and get it updated? If you are collecting the data you can do that.

Mr COLLINS: In agreement with Transport for NSW we will make sure that data is available through the normal procedures.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you recently announced an additional 60 transport officers will be recruited in addition to the 150 originally envisaged. As you are no doubt aware I have had much to say in relation to the transport officers. Aside from wanting to deal with fare evasion, which is the public explanation in relation to why you have gone for an extra 60 at significant cost, is this an admission that the system is not working in relation to security and compliance on the network?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Quite the contrary, for us it is validation that it is working. I am happy to explain to the Committee why. The 150 transport officers we had were collecting more infringements than the previous entire cohort of transit officers under the previous Labor Government. We have seen a huge boost in compliance. Clearly fare evasion continues to be an issue that we need to deal with. I am pleased with the work the transport officers are doing. The other key difference, and the reason why we are putting on an extra 65, not 60, is because we want to ensure all the regions are covered in addition to all modes of transport. Previously transport officers—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you have sworn blindly for the last two years that 150 would be adequate, that 150 would work, and you are now saying that you could not cover all the areas and you need to expand that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not at all.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There must be more of a reason than simply wanting to collect more infringement notices.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The reason is that clearly the existing number of transport officers is doing a better job than we anticipated and I also want to stress that we committed to really clamping down on fare evasion. It is a big issue. We lose tens of millions of dollars each year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to provide to the Committee what you estimate are the losses in relation to fare evasion this year and the previous two years? I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will try to get the answer prior to the conclusion of the session. I want to stress that previously, under the Labor Government, there were no specific transport officers or transit officers on ferries, buses or light rail—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There were ticket inspectors. I am asking about the future, not the past, which is one of your favourite things to talk about.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is important to note—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why have you backflipped on your original plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Because the network is growing. We have seen an increasing number of people using the system. We now have extended light rail on the network. We have more than 9,000 extra weekly services and the numbers of people using public transport are increasing. That is why we have decided to increase the number of transport officers. Of course they work hand-in-hand with the Police Transport Command. Police now control of security on the network. I am sure Mr Collins will want to comment as well.

Mr COLLINS: Yes.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have seen a marked improvement in the way that issues are dealt with and the way we are able to identify people doing the wrong thing. That has given me a great level of assurance. I do want Mr Collins to make a comment.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, commuters identify security on the network as their number one issue. In a survey that the NRMA did 13,000 people responded—

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: Point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to address that issue.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: She is answering the question.

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: Is that a question or a statement?

CHAIR: I could not hear the point of order due to the interjection by the Hon. Penny Sharpe.

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: Is it a question or statement?

CHAIR: It was a question. The Minister was about to answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have no doubt that security will always be an issue for customers. You always think about that when you are using public transport. Mr Collins will comment.

Mr COLLINS: Let me give the Committee some background. I used to be general manager for revenue protection in the United Kingdom, I had a lot of contribution to seeing how the transport officers work. The great news is that they are not only doing a good job protecting our revenue but they are much more customer focused and friendly. I have been out and worked with them in teams. What we have done with these

additional 65 officers is look at the way they operate so they can operate in smaller teams. I have seen the new technology they have brought on board and it is a great move forward.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, I have seen it. It looks like it is working quite well. Can I stop you there and ask you specifically about that: Are you confident that the transport officers are not targeting the easy targets? I am aware that there are significant problems in relation to people jumping gates, following people through and as you know their powers mean if people walk off there is nothing they can do about it?

Mr COLLINS: This is where the lessons learnt in the UK are useful. We work collaboratively with law enforcement officers, police. We have carried out a number of joint exercises recently. With the police we have dealt with a number of offenders. The great news is that as we start to invest in new technology, what is known as the euro gates, the better gates which will come in under investment in the future, it will be difficult—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Where are the euro gates being installed?

Mr COLLINS: They will be installed across to the network over time. They have much higher paddles.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you talking about the gates that are going to be installed on the North West Rail Link—

Mr COLLINS: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: —or are you talking about Wynyard, Town Hall and Circular Quay?

Mr COLLINS: I understand that long-term the gates we have here, which are more like an old Ford Falcon than a modern equivalent, we will need to change out. We are going to see those appear at Central Station and a number of other locations.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the time frame for that?

Mr COLLINS: It will take several months. We have a lead time on order for a number of them to be installed. I know my colleague, Fergus Gammie, is working on a program to extend those further.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to provide to the Committee the cost of the replacement of those gates?

Mr COLLINS: Answering your question—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The answer would be, yes, are you willing to provide it to the Committee?

Mr STEWART: It is part of the rollout of Opal. As we are rolling out Opal we are changing the technology. The new gates will be rolled out as part of the \$1.2 billion Opal project.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is within the \$1.2 billion of the Opal program?

Mr STEWART: Absolutely. So we are rolling out new gates as part of—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you provide a list of when and where?

Mr COLLINS: The important thing is that all networks that have this form of technology have benefited not only from the Opal product, which is a fantastic product, but also using some of the other products that will come on board. It is part of modernising the system. My experience in the UK has been that using the more modern gates, which has great advantages, will mean that the example you talked about earlier, which is about jumping gates and barriers, we have had a lot of success—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine.

Mr STEWART: Can I go back to the transport officers?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes. I would like to go back to the transport officers.

Mr STEWART: I think it is interesting. I have seen transport officers in action.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So have I, there are many of them often, 32 at Town Hall in one day.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Me too.

Mr STEWART: The customer service on the train from Glenfield was first class. They were walking around talking to customers making sure they were paying the fares, it was an excellent process. I watched them at Broadway on buses with the same high level of customer service making sure we are getting our revenue measures.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Fare evasion is one thing but antisocial behaviour and dealing with people's genuine fears—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is why police are there.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: As you know they are chronically under-done in terms of the number of staff they have got.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is incorrect.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It absolutely is not.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I have said on the record, it is an obvious point, nothing replaces police powers. Police are the only ones—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When you have enough of them, Minister.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Absolutely. Can I say do not take my word, speak to Mr Max Mitchell who does an outstanding job in heading the Police Transport Command.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Don't worry, I will be tomorrow. Mr Mason is not here today but I am going to ask the question in relation to where we are up to in relation to XPT replacement?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is no doubt that we are moving through a process of looking at all our rolling stock. I am pleased that the Waratahs on the suburban network are now completely rolled out. I am pleased that we are procuring the intercity fleet—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am asking about the XPTs, Minister, as I have at every budget estimates.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am getting to that. We have commenced a procurement process for the intercity fleet.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am aware of that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The next thing for us to look at is XPTs. That is why we established NSW Trains as a separate entity, to look at our country and regional intercity passengers. Obviously that did not occur previously. It is something this Government is looking at. We have not made any announcement in regard to that but I can certainly say—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you provide to the Committee a time frame in relation to an announcement around the XPT intercity fleet?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, I cannot.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Stewart, are you able to?

Mr STEWART: We are continually working on our regional rolling stock strategy, when we have finished that detailed work we will make that available.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Previously there have been significant reports provided—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Which your Government failed to implement.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: —in relation to the need to replace the XPT fleet. It is not unreasonable that I ask what the time frame is. It is incredibly important in terms of regional travel within the State. I am sure the Minister would say she cares about that deeply, but I am concerned that three years into the Government's term we are yet to get any information around the replacement or upgrade or dealing with the XPT fleet. I am looking for a time frame.

Mr COLLINS: There is such a huge backlog of work to be done here. There are trains which when I arrived had been running around for 30 or 40 years. I appreciate your concern about XPTs. We focused on completing the Waratah rollout, which has gone extremely well. We have focused on the intercity fleet which has moved forward and certainly the plan to deal with the next priority, which has to be the XPTs—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: With due respect, we have heard we have quickened the process to put in a second harbour crossing, yet this dire situation that we have not addressed sits on the back burner. Surely, if we are going to be fair to the people in regional and rural areas, we would have a date for looking into this, given that previous Government left it. When will you deal with Countrylink so that rural and regional commuters get first-class services, like everyone else?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would like to make a point in relation to the second harbour crossing. That is because part of that project—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I was happy for Mr Green to make a point, but can we stop there.

CHAIR: Order! You allowed the member to ask a question and therefore the Minister has an opportunity to answer it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That project will involve three new central business district stations. That will increase capacity on the entire network so we can run more trains to the heart of Sydney, including from the inner city.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: We are not talking about timetables, but the quality of product we are giving regional commuters. It is 30 years old.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I understand that.

CHAIR: Order! Allow the Minister to answer.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Documents show that maintenance is increasingly a problem and there is still no plan. I turn to bus companies operating under the new bus contracts. How many of them have been fined for failure to meet their contract key performance indicators [KPI]?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not know. I pass the question to Mr Gammie to answer. He is from Transport Services and responsible for maintaining those contracts.

Mr GAMMIE: We have just completed the process of transitioning the companies on to the new contracts, so some operators have only been operating under the new contracts for a number of months as there are 15 regions. We have a KPI regime, which is based on factors operators have control over and that affect customer performance—for example, on-time running.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am rapidly running out of time and am aware that some have only just transitioned and that some have been in place for a while. Of those, have any been fined for not meeting their KPIs?

Mr Gammie: This relates to performance and it is an abatement regime. We monitor performance. We start with a transitional period to allow operators to bed down new contracts.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: How long is that?

Mr Gammie: Generally that is three or four months. When some contracts have been in place for longer we work through an abatement process where there are KPIs they are not meeting.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Can you confirm that no-one has been fined as a result of not meeting their KPIs?

Mr Gammie: No, I cannot confirm that.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: On notice can you provide to the Committee the number of fines, which operators have been fined and how much the fines are?

Mr Gammie: I need to clarify whether that information can be provided under the commercial contract.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Minister, do you believe that if companies are being fined for not meeting their KPIs the public would not be informed unless you choose to release that?

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: We have key criteria in place that the companies must adopt, as does the State Transit Authority. Whether it is the STA or the private operator—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I am familiar with that, but my question is whether the public would know that.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I am not sure.

Mr Gammie: The commitment is that we provide information on performance to the public and the thing—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I want to know whether they are fined for failure to perform.

Mr Gammie: The contracts do enable that. Where they do not perform, an abatement regime will be applied. The information we supply publicly is around performance. The key one is on-time running. The operators have raised their standards to meet the new targets in the contracts. I do not have the details of how much it has been abated with me.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Please take on notice whether that information is going to be made public. If it is public, please provide the details I have asked for.

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

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Minister, will you deliver six new ferries by the end of 2016?

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: We are undertaking the procurement process now. Mr Lock is in charge of the procurement process.

Mr Lock: We have had an industry briefing with potential ferry manufacturers. We have appointed the naval architect to design the reference design, as we call it, for the new ferries. We are doing harbour trials of a hull design to ensure that we do not impact the harbour through the wash. We have every expectation of going out to tender in the next few weeks and that the local market will meet the timetable for the new ferries.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: You believe the boats will be on the water at the end of 2016?

Mr Lock: I have every confidence there will be boats on the water in 2016.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: All six?

Mr LOCK: That depends on the company that wins the tender. If they have two docks they might be able to deliver all six, or it might be five. We will let the tender box tell us.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Rowley, can you tell us the patronage figures for the late-night buses from Kings Cross.

Mr ROWLEY: Friday night services are averaging 60 passengers and Saturday night services are averaging 120 passengers.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Per bus?

Mr ROWLEY: No, per night.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many services?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The frequency is every 15 minutes.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Minister, the 2014-15 infrastructure budget statement about renewing Newcastle states that: "By liberating the existing heavy rail corridor land will be released and made available to realise its economic potential." Earlier this year the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure had no qualms about stating that the closure of the Newcastle line was to make land available for development. Will the Government admit that cutting this line has nothing to do with improving transport but is to do with selling off public land to private developers?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It has always been the case that the policy around truncating the Newcastle line is one part of, but not the whole of, the revitalisation policy for Newcastle. It is no secret that the Government as a whole took a decision to revitalise Newcastle. The part of the decision in relation to Transport was to truncate the line. If you are asking if it was a Transport decision, no, it is a decision to revitalise Newcastle and Transport is a part. The job of my team is to make sure we do that as efficiently as possible. We are essentially delivering on behalf of the Government that part of the project. Our job is to truncate the line, put in interim measures that are satisfactory, particularly for those people from the Upper Hunter region. Another task is to implement light rail. Obviously it is not a Transport decision; it is a revitalising Newcastle decision, of which Transport is a part.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: The traffic assessment in the review of environmental factors for the Newcastle rail line truncation estimated that about 77 per cent of the total daily train passengers might be potential customers for the post-construction shuttle bus for the future light rail. That is a loss of about 23 per cent of public transport patronage; almost one in four passengers will start driving. How do you reconcile this with the New South Wales Government's stated goal of increasing public transport patronage?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My intention as the Minister is to increase public transport patronage, in particular in Newcastle and the Hunter. That is why we have spent a lot of time and money—for example, in upgrading the Hunter rail carriages. The first renewed carriage went in to service last week or the week before. We are investing heavily in the Hunter when it comes to public transport. My intention is to increase patronage in every region. I am looking forward to announcing to the community the detailed interim arrangements. For me, the connections for people alighting from a train and getting on to a bus are a key issue. I appreciate the angst some people have around that, and my job is to make the transition as smooth as possible. As you are aware, we have held community consultations around the Wickham Transport Interchange to make sure we get community feedback on not just the design of the interchange but also what people expect from the service.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: But your own report says that this will reduce public transport patronage, so how do you explain that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure the report says it. I am not sure what report you are looking at, but certainly our intention is not only to cater for existing customers but to encourage others to use the service. I am happy to put on the record, as I have said publicly previously, that not only are we looking at the changes in the heart of Newcastle but also the broader bus network and future light rail extensions. This is part of revitalising transport in the Hunter region as a whole. We know Newcastle is a significant part of the Hunter but it is not all of the Hunter and that is why, whether it is timetable changes, Hunter Rail carriages,

intercity fleet, we are investing heavily in the region. This is an opportunity, for example, to look at bus routes that have been in place for decades where community feedback says please look at where people are going; make them more amenable to us, and we are looking at all those things.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Would you agree that Newcastle and the Hunter is a major centre for New South Wales and crucial to the economy of New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think that goes without saying and I can answer that question in both my capacities as the Minister for Transport and the Minister for the Hunter.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: A yes or no would be fine.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Obviously yes.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Can you name any other major city in the world that has cut its train line that takes people right into the heart of the city and replaced it with a two-kilometre shuttle service?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There are many examples around the world where rail lines have been sunk or changes have been made to facilitate better transport. In relation to Newcastle, I again want to stress that the first objective of the government was in relation to revitalising the city, and the decision to truncate the line is part of that.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Could you name any one example in the world where they have cut the rail line right into the heart of the city and replaced it with a system that will reduce patronage?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I have said, there are a number of cities that have either sunk the line or made different arrangements. Can I also stress that many modern cities are moving to light rail as the preferred above-ground option. The light rail project we have announced is simply the spine of a network, similar to the spine that we have built in Sydney. I am anticipating extensions to that light rail network in the future. In fact, there is a global trend towards light rail as the best way to move people around above ground because it is sustainable, less intrusive and feedback from customers is that they prefer that in a modern city as a preferred method of transport.

Mr COLLINS: I can give you one example. Croydon, London, took over the heavy rail network and we put in light rail—a great success story. It allows people to travel and interchange more effectively with that town centre.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Most of the cities have added to the rail networks, not truncated their lines.

Mr COLLINS: It is part of a package.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Given that two Liberal Hunter members of Parliament and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle have now resigned—

CHAIR: I remind the member that we are discussing the Hunter in the next portfolio.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I am talking about transport now.

CHAIR: As long as it relates to ferries, buses or State Transit.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: It is related to that. Minister, given that two Liberal Hunter members of Parliament and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle have now resigned amid allegations of taking donations from developers, do you believe it is now time to reassess the decision to truncate the Newcastle rail line?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The decision to revitalise Newcastle, including the future of the rail line, has been a subject of public debate for decades in Newcastle. There is no doubt that there are supporters of the proposal and there are also people who do not support the proposal, and I completely accept that. As a government, all that was considered in the decision-making process. But I stress that the previous Premier, Ms Keneally, the previous member for the seat, Jodi McKay, and the previous transport Minister, Michael Costa, were all in favour of proceeding exactly the way this Government is proceeding. There is no doubt this is

an issue that has been around for a long time. It was not a decision that the Government took lightly, as you appreciate; it was well into two and a bit years into our term before we took the decision because we wanted to make sure it was the right decision. It is not a decision we took lightly.

Certainly, for my part, I am someone who is a huge supporter of public transport, a huge supporter of more people on the network. This was not a decision that I participated in lightly; it was a decision that we looked at carefully and we took the decision based on what we believe is in the best interests of Newcastle, but also taking into account the issues and concerns that people outside of Newcastle have in relation to what it means for them, and that is not an issue that I personally take lightly.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I guess your response is that you will not reassess the decision.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No. We made a commitment to do that.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Can you confirm that Mr Jeff McCloy, Mr Tim Owens and Mr Andrew Cornwell were involved in decisions around the revitalisation of Newcastle and the truncation of the line? A simple yes or no would be fine.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Obviously, all stakeholders have been very public about their position in relation to this matter. Ultimately the decisions taken were the decisions of Cabinet and the decisions taken were decisions of people who sit around the Cabinet table—a decision for government. This was ultimately a decision for the Government and the Government considered all arguments, all the reports that have gathered dust over the years and certainly we considered feedback from all stakeholders across the spectrum—those who supported it, those who do not and those in the middle. It is interesting that during the customers' feedback on the Wickham station, a lot of the feedback has been around people commenting on the design they want.

It seems as though Novocastrians themselves want a say in how we deliver it, but I do appreciate that concerns exist outside of Newcastle and it is my job—and I take it very seriously—in relation to customers coming from other parts of the Hunter who want a smooth transition during this process. I have given an undertaking, and my department has as well, to spend a lot of time on how those interim services will work.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Would you say that Jeff McCloy, Tim Owens and Andrew Cornwell were involved in the decision to truncate the line? Yes or no?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot comment on that apart from saying that of course it was very clear on the public record what key stakeholders felt about the issue, whether they were supporters or people who do not support it. There has been debate on this issue for decades and, similarly, debate on this issue for the last five or six years quite intensively, starting with the previous Government. There is no doubt that key people in the region did state on the public record what their views were, and that is no secret—similar to what The Greens have done as well.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Can you confirm that the decision to truncate the Newcastle rail line was made completely free of the interests of property developers and commercial interests that would benefit from truncation of the line?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can say from my perspective, from everything that I have witnessed in relation to that decision, which the Government did not take lightly, that we took the decision as a government because it was the best outcome for the people of Newcastle. But, having said that, my job around the table remains not just the people of Newcastle but the people of the broader Hunter, and that was my job even before I became the Minister for the Hunter because, as Minister for Transport, I appreciate what a smooth connection on a mode of transport means for customers. We certainly do not want to lose any customers; in fact, our objective is to increase patronage, which is why we are investing heavily in the region. On that front, I have to say I support the position of The Greens in increasing public transport usage in and around the Hunter.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Consistent polls have shown that the community does not support the truncation of the line. My experience on the ground is quite different to yours: people around the Hunter and Newcastle do not want this line truncated. We already know from reports that this is going to reduce patronage in public transport. So for whom are you removing this line?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Just from the feedback that I have received as both the Minister for Transport and also Minister for the Hunter is that Novocastrians themselves support the proposal and want to see the city revitalised. But I completely accept that people outside Newcastle maintain their concerns primarily around connecting services, primarily around what it means for them, and I completely take that on board. In fact, I took that on board from the time that I was the shadow Minister because I was in regular contact with all stakeholders about the issue and I appreciate to this day the concerns that remain outside of Newcastle. But certainly the prevailing view from people on the ground within Newcastle itself appears to me to be "get on with the job"—that is the comment I get most frequently. But there is no doubt that people outside Newcastle maintain their concerns and that is part of the consideration we needed to take when as a government we made the decision. I completely accept that; I do not shy away from that and I fully accept the responsibility to try and make that transition as smooth as possible.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: The Opal card continues to be rolled out but we are yet to see any date on the horizon for the introduction of concession Opal cards. I understand that you have informally commented that they will be available by Orientation Week in February 2015. Could you confirm that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: At the moment the two Opal cards available are the full-paying adult ones and the child ones. I have announced publicly that prior to the end of the year the Opal gold card will be available for our seniors and pensioners. We are anticipating that in the early part of next year there will be concession cards available not only for students but for other concession holders as well. We have ensured that everybody who receives a concession today will continue to receive those concessions under the Opal system. I am able to give you further updates as the roll-out continues because along every step we are continually reviewing things like take-up, things like customer feedback. So I can confirm that there will be concession cards for every person who receives them now.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Do we expect them in February 2015?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not want to put a definite time frame on it because I cannot tell you today. But I will keep the community advised.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Why has it taken so long for concessional Opal cards to be rolled out? Why were they not released at the same time as the other?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: In comparison to Labor?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I say it is interesting that I have been asked that question. It is simply because we have made a definite policy decision as a government to have a very staged roll-out process. The reason is that the Government appreciates there are different levels in the community to people accepting change and the way that people take up new technology. We want to make sure that every category of customer is completely comfortable as we move that process. That is why from 1 September we are retiring some of our paper tickets but there will still be 20 types of paper tickets available. So the decision is simply to make sure that we are giving customers adequate time to deal with the technology change.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: Do you think it is unfair that the Government has not only restricted concession holders from purchasing tickets from machines for most of the day but they also now do not have the choice to buy a concessional Opal card?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The reason why we restricted purchasing tickets from machines during parts of the day was unfortunately too high a percentage of people were paying concession when they did not deserve to pay concession. It was part of our fare evasion strategy. We found a lot of customers unfortunately were, for example, purchasing a \$2.50 ticket when they were not eligible as a senior or a pensioner. That is the reason we did that but obviously it is important for us to make sure our concession customers have access to tickets and that is why it is a very staged process of the roll-out.

CHAIR: Time has expired for questions from the Dr Mehreen Faruqi.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: What is the figure for fare evasion?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have old 2012 figures at the moment but I prefer to give more updated figures, yes.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Has research been done on why there is fare evasion? What are the reasons for it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: Certainly, we know for a fact—and leading on from the question from Dr Mehreen Faruqi—a large proportion of people in the past were purchasing concession tickets when they were not eligible for concession tickets. Certainly in the past people were not appropriately dealing with gates and other issues which the Opal system to an extent will rectify. I will pass to Mr Collins or Mr Stewart if they want to add something further.

Mr COLLINS: Just on experience of rail systems obviously a percentage of people not paying their fares is made up of what they call recidivists who obviously believe they should not pay but I think what we found is now with more visible staff, with more gating which has come in and also a product like Opal which is easy to understand and everyone can get hold of, we will see those levels of loss of revenue reduce.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: It is important to research why and I want to make sure that the most vulnerable who get caught up in that system are being looked after. Mr Rowley mentioned the seats in the Kings Cross bus services.

Mr ROWLEY: Yes.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You said the buses run every 15 minutes but approximately how many seats per night are available in the total number of services on Friday nights?

Mr STEWART: There are 43 seats in every bus on a 15 minute frequency, so about 200 over a four or five hour period so you are looking at possibly 1,000 seats over that period.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: And only 60 have been taken up during the night?

Mr STEWART: That is right.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Is that sustainable? Is the service subsidised?

Mr ROWLEY: It is. We operate it as part of our network with Transport for NSW yes.

Mr STEWART: Can I give you an exact number?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Yes.

Mr STEWART: It is 61,312 people have used the additional bus services since 9 August.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Out of how many seats?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can we just confirm when you define the "extra" services as opposed to the services that were already in operation?

Mr STEWART: Yes.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Mr Reardon, what is the Government doing in relation to the loss of regular passenger transport in terms of air services to regional areas?

Mr REARDON: The regulation as we are aware is a light touch regulation for air services. When a service ceases in a regional area like we saw at Cobar, Cooma, Mudgee, Narrabri and Moree the Government immediately put in Land Transport to respond to that. In addition, we looked at the Passenger Transport Act and the changes we have before Parliament at the moment include, amongst other things, bringing the Air Transport Act into the Passenger Transport Act and putting in a requirement where we can have a temporary licence available so we can move more rapidly when there is a service failure from a commercial operator so that we do not have to wait for a full revoking of a licence to start an expressions of interest process for a new service and we can actually move quicker than that.

We continue to monitor those services in terms of their financial viability and passenger statistics on a quarterly basis and we will continue to do that around the State. In terms of the services where they have recently ceased providing in certain communities we continue to this day to offer an expression of interest process for any operator who may wish to fly to those locations.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Obviously if it is not financially viable those services will not be taken up by a private provider. Has the Government considered doing something like a CountryLink in the air?

Mr REARDON: We delivered the current policy. The current policy is a light touch regulation which is that these are commercial services and we provide the licensing instrument for the bridge between Kingsford Smith Airport and the regional location. Beyond that we observe what happens in other jurisdictions. As you are well aware there is a Committee that is currently considering those matters and we will await the outcomes of the Committee's report.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In terms of the future, is the Government doing any work on the very fast train concept?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In the past, both the former Federal Government and the current Federal Government had a process of undertaking phase one and phase two studies on fast rail. Certainly the previous secretary and now the current one are co-operating fully with whatever process the Federal Government wants to undertake. My personal view is that I believe definitely we should be looking in that space in terms of future corridor preservation. Certainly I think if you want to undertake a major project like that it does take years of planning and years of co-operation between at least four different governments—the Federal Government and the three eastern States. I have always encouraged my executives to be part of any process the Federal Government has going.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In terms of the derailment at Currabubula and the destruction it caused, you said at the time a report would be released on the causes. Have you released the report? If not, when will it be released?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is the report undertaken by the Independent Safety Regulator. Mr Reardon, do you have an update?

Mr REARDON: The Office of Transport Safety investigated it. It is actually Currabubula for that derailment. When the Office of Transport Safety releases its report basically it is ultimately placed into the public domain. I can take on notice where the release of that report is up to.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Thank you. In relation to the portfolio of Ferries, recently there was a concept to serve alcoholic drinks on public transport on the harbour. I note from information I have that Manly City Council did not like the idea. What is the Government's response to that concept?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would support examining any option on ferry services which enhance and improve the customer experience. I understand Harbour City Ferries submitted a proposal and it is really up to the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing to ascertain whether that is a possibility. I might be mistaken but I think the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing did not support the recommendation and actually had declined that recommendation. Certainly we have an independent body in place that looks at those processes. I am certainly not a Minister that will object to anybody putting forward a new suggestion and then the relevant bodies can ascertain whether it is in the public interest.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: A number of constituents have expressed their great concerns about the way in which the North West Rail Link is being implemented as a metro shuttle service between Rouse Hill and Chatswood, including the conversion of the existing Epping to Chatswood line into the metro. Their concerns are: passengers from Rouse Hill will have to stand for 37 kilometres to Chatswood and then wait on an overcrowded platform to join an already crowded train into the city; the proposed shuttle line does not officially integrate within the Sydney rail network; and, the proposed tunnels are not large enough for the operation of a double-decker service to permit future integration into the Sydney rail network. Do you have comments on these concerns?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. My experience with major projects is that you will never have 100 per cent support for anything you do when it comes to major public transport infrastructure. Certainly

the concerns you raise in your question are the three main ones and are issues that we are looking at very closely. We completely appreciate there is angst in some sections of the community around the interchange at Chatswood. We are working very hard on that. We appreciate there is some angst around the fact that we are doing single-deck carriages but that is what a modern rapid transit system does. I am happy for Mr Staples to add anything to that.

Mr STAPLES: I think the whole plan you are referring to there is outlined in "Sydney's Rail Future" and certainly the experience I have had when we get out and explain to stakeholders about the overall strategy is a much better understanding and appreciation about what we are trying to achieve. Let us be very clear: There will be seats on these trains so it is not a case of everyone standing. When you look at the customer base that we are looking at in the north-west region from Rouse Hill through the Norwest Business Park and Bella Vista, which are employment centres in their own right—Castle Hill is a major retail centre, Epping is a major point of interchange, Macquarie University is a place of education, Macquarie Park is a major place of employment—and Chatswood, we have a lot of people actually getting on and off the line along the way, which actually underlines and supports one of the reasons why we would develop a rapid transport system as well. We spoke earlier about managing the interchange at Chatswood in the interim until such time as the harbour crossing is developed. We have done the work there to make sure that that does function in conjunction with Sydney Trains in terms of improvements on the North Shore so we have those issues in hand.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Thank you. I owe my colleague some time so I will allow her one question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you have spoken a lot about the issue for pensioners and travel. I put to you again at this Committee meeting that the change in relation to Opal and buses and the pensioners is causing a great deal of distress still. I regularly have people ringing and contacting my office with specific examples of how they have witnessed older people trying to get on the bus, pay their \$2.50 and being told that they cannot do that. I have personally witnessed people near where I live where the seller is a newsagent that is closed on Sunday afternoons again not being able to get on the bus. Given that it is still towards the end of the year before there will be a pensioner ticket available, what are you doing to actively manage the reality that pensioners are being thrown off the bus because they cannot pay their \$2.50 when they get on?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: What did you do? It took decades. You did nothing.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Butt out.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was about to thank the Minister for the entirely valid question until she got to the last sentence about people being thrown off buses.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: They are, Minister. I am not raising this to be silly. This is a serious matter.

CHAIR: Order! You did ask a lengthy question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Which I am allowed to.

CHAIR: I know you are. I am just saying the Minister should be given an opportunity to at least answer it. I remind all members in the public gallery to please turn off their phones.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly we completely accept, Ms Sharpe, that that change would potentially cause some angst for our pensioners and seniors; there is no doubt about that. That is why we gave months' notice. In fact, I personally wrote to a couple of hundred thousand—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, I am aware of all that, Minister. What I am trying to draw to your attention is that it is my understanding that it is still happening. I want to know whether there are things that you can do in relation to the buses that pensioners are on and whether there can be some leeway for them? It is causing a great degree of distress.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We certainly have put in a transition period but I do want to stress that no matter when an electronic ticketing system was coming on board a bus, we can only move to one system, which is the Opal system. That is why we have tried to explain to our customers all the alternatives and options they have. Certainly we have asked our drivers to exercise discretion in relation to seniors and pensioners to make sure that nobody is inconvenienced or stressed as a result. Certainly there was always going to be a point in time when people could no longer purchase from a State Transit Authority [STA] bus a pensioner excursion ticket.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But to replace one product with another and then leave them in the lurch is causing real difficulty?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is certainly not leaving them in the lurch. If I can give examples: We even wrote to stakeholders who represent older persons' organisations about information on the closest place that people could purchase these tickets. There is no limit to the number of pensioner excursion tickets customers can purchase, so if they do not want to go to a certain location—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I am fully aware—

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Thank you, Minister. I will claim my time back, if I could.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Okay, sure.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: What strategies or procedures do you have to deal with the spike in complaints about racial abuse on public transport given we have seen some disgusting examples recently?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I completely share the community's angst and outrage about people acting completely inappropriately in society generally but also specifically on transport modes. I know this is little consolation for people who experience that level of harassment but the positive news is that because of our extensive closed-circuit television [CCTV] coverage and because of working closely with police, the police in recent times have been able to identify and reprimand people accused of those things. I know it is not something you can explain to a victim who has suffered but from a position of ensuring that people doing the wrong thing are caught, it sends a strong message to the community that if you are going to act in that irresponsible, callous manner, you will be identified, you will be reprimanded by police and police will take the necessary action against you.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I refer to the Channel 7 news report that found the incidence of graffiti on Sydney public transport has repeatedly increased, up four times on a few years ago. I understand that Perth has trialled technology that detects graffiti and time stamps CCTV footage that can be given to police for examination. Have you considered any of this technology?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, I would like to refer this to Mr Collins because he is passionate about this issue, as am I.

Mr COLLINS: I am. It is wanton vandalism. It is nowhere near art, as far as I am concerned. I managed to rid it completely in London's Tube, believe it or not, even trackside. My intention is to work hard with the police and the community to understand these issues. We use the latest forms of detection. We are working with the police. We share our information across Melbourne, Brisbane and other locations as well. I am keen to ensure that this vandalism is removed from Sydney and certainly there has been a massive improvement. Since I have come here the train cleaning, use of CCTV and the reporting by our customers, who are our eyes and ears, have actually dealt with it. Yes, we spend millions of dollars still removing it, but I intend to ensure that we can improve it further.

CHAIR: The time has expired for the examination of the portfolio areas of Ferries, Rail and State Transit.

TIM REARDON, Deputy Director General, Policy and Regulation, Transport for NSW,

DAVE STEWART, Secretary, Transport for NSW,

HOWARD COLLINS, Chief Executive, Sydney Trains,

PETER ROWLEY, Chief Executive, State Transit,

CHRISTOPHER LOCK, Deputy Director General, Transport for NSW,

FERGUS GAMMIE, Deputy Director General, Transport Services, Transport for NSW, and

BILL TATNELL, Senior Regional Coordinator, Department of Premier and Cabinet, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: The Committee will now deal with the portfolio area of The Hunter.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: In your capacity as Minister for the Hunter can you tell the Committee whether you have ever met with Hilton Grugeon or Jeff McCloy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will answer that question in the same way that I answered questions in the previous session. As Ministers of the Crown and as a government we have obviously met extensively with all stakeholders in the Hunter region. I place on the record that as Minister for the Hunter I have met extensively with a number of stakeholders. I do not want to provide a running commentary of everyone with whom I have met.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: How many visits you have made to the Hunter since becoming the Minister responsible for that area?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask my team to confirm, but I have been there at least five or six times since becoming the Minister and I will continue to do so.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Are you happy to take that question on notice and provide the dates?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can confirm that I have visited six times. These are matters of public record. As all Ministers do, I issue press releases every time I visit the region. I confirm that I have visited the Hunter six times since being appointed a few months ago.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Can you provide on notice the dates of the visits and the people with whom you met?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will disclose all requirements in terms of my obligations. I am happy to reconfirm my six visits and to reissue the press releases.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why will you not confirm whether you met with Jeff McCloy? The answer requires a simple yes or no response.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have met extensively with a number of stakeholders.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Those meetings are all on the public record. The member asked me whether I would confirm the dates on which I have visited the Hunter.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: And the people you met.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: These are all matters for the public record and I am happy to do that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you confirm whether you have ever met with Jeff McCloy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again, I have met extensively with a number of stakeholders in the Hunter region.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: What is the problem with admitting you have met with the lord mayor of Newcastle as the Minister responsible for the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I could ask the member the same question; that is, why she is asking the question if it is no big deal. My point is that I have met—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I was hoping to get—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why not admit it publicly?

CHAIR: I ask Opposition members to organise themselves so that they ask one question each rather than two simultaneously. Would a member of the Opposition like to ask a question?

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: As Minister for the Hunter how many staff do you have in your ministerial office or in your department, if any, who deal with Hunter issues?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We do not allocate specific departmental executives to those areas; we deal with issues as they arise. I am happy for the secretary to answer that question. When I became deputy leader I was given an extra staff member and I have key people in my office who advise me on Hunter issues. As the member would appreciate, media staff, the chief of staff and advisers all lend a hand in dealing with each region. As I said, I was allocated an extra staff member when I became deputy leader. The number of staff is on the public record. It is not my job to direct my agencies with regard to how many people should work on an issue; that is a matter for the secretary of the department. However, I am confident that no matter which part of New South Wales I am working in—and particularly the Hunter—we dedicate staff as we need them.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not asking the question in relation to Transport. The question was about how many staff have been allocated to the Hunter given your ministerial responsibility for that region. Mr Tatnell is here, but is there anyone else we need to know about?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask the departmental secretary to answer that question. As far as I understand, we have not hired extra staff to undertake that role.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not asking about Transport. The role of the Minister for the Hunter extends beyond transport issues.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy for Mr Tatnell to answer any questions about the Department of Premier and Cabinet's responsibilities.

Mr TATNELL: The Department of Premier and Cabinet office at Newcastle has five staff. Their primary responsibility is to deal with complex interagency issues and coordination thereof. We have a staff member who is a regional liaison officer who dedicates a significant amount of time to briefings for the Minister for the Hunter and the director general of the department.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Can you provide a staffing profile for that office? You can take that question on notice.

Mr TATNELL: Certainly.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, have you met with the Hunter staff?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I meet with relevant staff within my agencies and the bureaucracy.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That was not the question. Have you ever met with the people in the office in the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I may have or I may not have.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Tatnell, has the Minister ever met with the staff in your office?

Mr TATNELL: Our staff have visited the Minister's office on a number of occasions and have held meetings involving a wide range of people.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Does that include meetings with the Minister?

Mr TATNELL: With the Minister's staff.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But not with the Minister directly?

Mr TATNELL: No, not with the Minister.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Has the Minister ever visited your office in the Hunter?

Mr TATNELL: Not the office, but she has visited locations close to the office. That is not unusual; we have had other Ministers who have chosen not to spend time at the Department of Premier and Cabinet office.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, how many times have you caught the train to the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If the question relates to my lifetime, I could not say.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, how many times have you done so since becoming the Minister responsible for the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have done it a number of times.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you take that question on notice?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot confirm that I—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you saying that your staff do not record in your diary how you travel from one place to another?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: While I have been the Minister and shadow Minister I have caught trains whenever I can.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That does not answer my question. Have you caught the train to or from the Hunter since becoming the Minister?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, I have.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Since becoming Minister?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am sure I have, but I cannot remember on which occasions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you take that question on notice?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure that I will be able to provide that information.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not personally write in my diary every time that I catch a train or a bus.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Your personal assistant would record how you get from place A to place B.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not always because I use public transport frequently—almost daily—and I do not document every time I get on a train, a bus, a ferry or light rail.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you are not able to tell the Committee whether you have caught the train to the Hunter since becoming Minister.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I recall travelling by train to the Hunter but I cannot tell you how many times. Some of those occasions have been publicly recorded because I have often done phone interviews while I was on the train. If the member is suggesting that I do not know what it is like to catch a train, that is certainly not the case.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You should infer nothing from my questions. I am simply trying to ascertain whether you have caught the train.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You should not make assumptions about what I am trying to draw from that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I simply cannot say when I have done so because I am a regular user of public transport and it is not my habit to document every time I sit on a bus, a train or a ferry. For example, I caught the bus to work today, but I have not written that in my diary. It is not something I do as a matter of course.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is safer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will take that as a vote of confidence.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How much extra funding has been allocated as a result of the Hunter Regional Transport Plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Do you mean in terms of the light rail and the truncation?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No. Leaving that aside, how many extra services will be redelivered as a result of that plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can provide a list of things that we have done.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I do not want a list of what you have done. I am happy for you to take the question on notice. How much extra money has been allocated as a result of Hunter Regional Transport Plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will provide an example. Procuring the intercity trains will help the Hunter, but it will also help other regions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine and I am sure you can separate it. However, I would like an itemised list.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: How could you possibly say that the Government spending \$2.8 billion on an intercity fleet—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It sounds like—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure how you could ascertain how the Hunter's component would be taken out of that \$2.8 billion.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is not really what I am asking, Minister. Minister, I am asking—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is what you are asking.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is not what I am asking. What I am actually asking is about bus services in the Hunter and how many extra bus services as well as how much money has been allocated to

provide extra bus services, and what the breakdown of that is because the Hunter transport plan is actually very opaque when it comes to any extra dollars being allocated anywhere.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I say, Ms Sharpe, you raise a valid question in terms of the additional services that we will be providing, especially once the truncation occurs. Can I assure you that we appreciate that is an additional operational cost and we are happy to meet that cost. I have not yet provided details of the interim solution. All we have provided at this stage is a date for the truncation. But, clearly, a key priority for me—and again I stress the comments I made to Dr Faruqi before she left—it is really important to me to make sure that people outside Newcastle, who need to use those interim services, have a smooth connection. I will be providing details to the community in the very near future about the frequency of service, the number of seats they will be able to access, and a lot of other details about that. Clearly, I am happy to provide at that stage the additional operational cost we will be incurring to provide those services, which we are happy to make—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am sorry, but I am not just talking about the truncation. I am actually interested in the Hunter-wide bus services, beyond Newcastle—the bus services that people rely on across the entire Hunter. I would like a breakdown, if possible, of how many extra services are going in there, not just to feed the line for the truncation for the last one kilometre at the end of the line.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to know that within the Hunter transport plan, how many extra dollars, if any, have been allocated? I am happy for you to take that on notice. That is what I am asking. I am not asking about what you are interested in doing.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you for clarifying the question. I was not sure where you were going with that, but I am happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sure. Minister, there is still no money in the budget for completion of the Lake Macquarie transport interchange, even though it remains a priority for councils in that area. Can you inform the Committee where you are at in terms of looking at the transport interchange?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sure. I am assuming you mean the Glendale interchange?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is called the Lake Macquarie transport interchange and Glendale, yes. It is known as different things.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes. I remember shortly after we came to government that we contributed \$15 million towards that upgrade. I understand the council has contributed some money as well. There is no doubt—and the last thing I said publicly about that issue when I was in the Hunter, actually the second-last time I was up there—was to say that it is definitely something we will look at. We appreciate how important that interchange is. I note the member for Wallsend also has made comments in the House and accepted that, regrettably under a Labor Government, that issue was not dealt with. We were very pleased to make—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am sorry, Minister. I am just asking you where you are at with it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, certainly. I am happy to say that we have made the \$15 million contribution.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What has been undertaken with that money?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are certainly working with the Lake Macquarie council and with Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] as well in order to progress work there. I am happy to provide the community with an update as soon as I have one.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There have been calls for extending a direct bus service from Newcastle through to the expanding suburb of the Minmi. Can you give up date about where that is up to?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure if Mr Gammie or Mr Rowley have anything to add to that, but certainly we are always open to looking at better routing and additional services to communities. I recall certainly signing correspondence in relation to that issue, but we are always open to looking at where communities are growing. Since we have been in government, we have introduced thousands of extra bus services.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am talking about Hunter bus services.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly, I am happy to look at that issue because part of our job is to ensure that growing communities are taken care of in relation to transport, and that issue is given consideration along with so many others.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Where is the Newcastle bus review up to?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly that review is being looked at in conjunction with the additional interim services that we are putting in, once the truncation of the line occurs. I am not sure if Mr Gammie wants to add anything.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the time frame on that completion of being released publicly?

Mr LOCK: No, sorry. I cannot yet.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes. Certainly we do not have a completion date for that, but I am happy to share with the community as soon as it is available. I guess your question pertains to this point: Certainly the feedback I received from day one of being the Minister for Transport is that many of the routes in and around Newcastle have been around for a long time and perhaps do not best serve the needs of the city. We have undertaken to look at the routes that will best serve the city. We are looking to increase services, obviously, when the truncation occurs, but I want to give you every absolute assurance that it is part of my DNA to encourage more people to use public transport. We have the resources to ensure that we do that as best as possible in the Hunter. We are certainly looking at the best way we can provide additional bus services.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, have you resolve the issue around Opal and time-based fares in the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are certainly in the process of looking at that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the time frame on that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly, we are looking at that. I can give you a specific date but I can certainly confirm that we are looking get that issue very closely.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will Hunter residents pay more as a result of the change?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Hunter residents will be informed in due course about what the arrangements are. As you know, Newcastle has very unique transport arrangements compared to the rest of the State. We are working through those issues. They are not easy issues to resolve, I have to say—very complex issues—and we are working through them. But I do not have a definite outcome yet because we are still trying to resolve the complexity of those issues.

CHAIR: Time has expired for questions from the Opposition. We will move to questions from the crossbench.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I have had representations from a number of very anxious Hunter constituents regarding the potential closure of Martins Creek Public School. Have you considered what the implications of this closure might be for the local community, in particular one of the special needs students there, in the Hunter? Have you discussed these concerns with the Minister for Education, if you have had any dialogue on that? I mailed to you directly on 18 June 2014 requesting a meeting in your capacity as the Minister for the Hunter, which either was ignored all was unanswered. Are you aware of that situation?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would like to think it is the latter. It certainly was not ignored because I read the letter.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Yes, I know it is inconsistent, probably.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes. I appreciate that. I did read the letter and I do understand the issues that the Minister for Education is looking at very closely. I have to say that I have not had direct involvement in that issue in my capacity as the Minister for the Hunter. It is an issue that I have left; however, I do know that it is critical issue.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Would you meet with these concerned constituents?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In the first instance I have sought—I should not say "have sought" but I will certainly seek advice from the Minister for Education. But I would just like to ask if Mr Tatnell has any update on that issue from a Department of Premier and Cabinet [DPC] perspective.

Mr TATNELL: No, I do not, Minister—no update on that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Okay. But I do appreciate it is an issue you feel strongly about. I do thank you for your correspondence. I apologise if you have not received a response but you definitely will do so.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I note that, appropriately, you have directed it to the Minister for Education. Unfortunately, the process is that we have used every Minister in connection with this to try to get a hearing for the constituents. I believe that they are entitled to be listened to.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sure.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Hence the reason I asked and invited you to maybe go one further and meet with them.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Minister, I refer to news reports that have stated that the Hunter Valley's \$5 billion thoroughbred breeding industry is under threat due to large alleged impacts from open-cut mining. What support has been offered by the Government to ensure that these concerns are addressed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If you are talking about stakeholder engagement, certainly I have had a very preliminary involvement in the issues of stakeholders at that level. The vast majority of my undertakings or my interactions with the Hunter community have been in terms of an introductory process. I will ask Mr Tatnell to perhaps comment on that further, if he has anything further to say about that.

Mr TATNELL: I guess in a planning sense there are a number of actions that certain people here would be aware of, but certainly the interim guidelines for allocation of coal resources is the latest initiative underway, which is apparently under consultation at the moment. This adds to a range of, I guess, planning activities associated with specific mining developments that involve the Land and Environment Court and the Panel Assessment Commission.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Can I just say a couple of other things and then ask you about that?

Mr TATNELL: Yes.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I further refer to comments by the Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association, who said: "Even before they were elected, the Coalition Government have recognised the importance of the thoroughbred industry and a strategic regional land use plan that identified the thoroughbred industry as a critical part of the New South Wales economy, so we would be looking for the next Planning Assessment Commission to follow the lead of the first Planning Assessment Commission and recommend that this mine does not proceed." The question is: When will the next Planning Assessment Commission begin and when will it be due to report?

Mr TATNELL: There are a number of Planning Assessment Commission activities on different mines at the moment and they have different time frames obviously and some of those are due—

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: With respect to my friend, I think the detail of the Planning Assessment Commission and time frames would be best put to the Minister for Planning. The first question in relation to the Minister's knowledge of the process is, I think, pertinent but we are now straying.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: You are just discussing it, you are not making a point of order.

CHAIR: Order! The Hon. Amanda Fazio will come to order.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Further to the point of order: The member is asking about the time frame and, with respect, the question is better directed to the Minister for Planning.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Would you like to answer any of that, Mr Tatnell?

Mr TATNELL: I could go into some detail but it is really a specific planning issue.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: I referred recently to the recent privatisation of the maintenance and operation of Hunter Water's 25 treatment plants. Minister, how will this privatisation and its proceeds benefit the people of the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This not an area that I have detailed information about but I will certainly say that every decision we have taken has been mindful of the benefits to the local community. We appreciate that people are doing it tough in terms of household budgets and certainly, as far as Government members are concerned, any decision we undertake is to improve, not only service delivery but also pricing structures for households throughout the Hunter. I will again ask Mr Tatnell if he can provide an update on that from a whole-of-government perspective.

Mr TATNELL: Not really at this stage. I read the media reports and I understand that it is contentious.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If I can provide some extra information that has come to hand. The decision to sell Hunter Water Australia was one made by the board of Hunter Water, not by the New South Wales Government, if that is the question you are asking, Mr Green. The New South Wales Government has no plans for any privatisation of Hunter Water.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: You may have heard recent reports about the loss of another 200 manufacturing jobs in the Hunter. Given this area has an unemployment level of around 9.2 per cent, what is the Government doing to keep people in work in this region?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There is no doubt that there are many challenges but also incredible opportunities in relation to employment in the Hunter. One thing that has struck me since I have been the Minister for the Hunter is that there are many new and emerging industries but there is no doubt that some industries are changing the way they operate. Certainly from our perspective, whether it is in the maintenance area or in infrastructure projects, we have seen a boost in jobs. However, I appreciate that there are enormous structural changes going on in the region and I think that a huge area of opportunity for the future is to look at industries like education and the university, to look at additional IT and tourism—to look at industries that are really changing in a positive way in the Hunter region.

There is no doubt some traditional industries are changing their operations because of changing needs and market forces. There is no doubt that our job is to make sure that we do what we can to encourage employment. I am conscious of that in my space in Transport but certainly in relation, for example, to the Hunter rail carriages, we were able to provide additional jobs in retrofitting those carriages and in other areas. Where those opportunities arise, we will certainly make every use we can of them.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Minister, you are a senior Minister in the Government and you have responsibility for coordination within the Hunter. Have you had cause to reflect on the issue of a number of development approvals and a number of planning decisions that have or have not happened that—in light of evidence coming out of the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the loss of two of the Liberal Party's members in the Hunter—should now be looked at again? I refer specifically to the Newcastle Urban Rail

Strategy; the Mount Thorley Warkworth extension; the Warkworth extension projects in Bulga; the Whitebridge development plan in Lake Macquarie; and development applications to increase the height limits for the GPT Group's urban growth sites in the city centre. I also refer to the vexed issue—for this Government—of the container terminal and the failure of the replacement, is the best way of putting it, of the container terminal with a coal terminal. They are all matters clearly now under a cloud at ICAC. What are you doing, as Minister for the Hunter, to make sure they are looked at again with a clean set of hands?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have been the Minister for the Hunter since the end of April this year, so for the last few months. Certainly, in that time, I have ensured that any issue in which I have been involved has been in the best interests of the Hunter. But as a Government, in terms of the revitalisation issue—an issue I am familiar with and I answered Dr Faruqi's question in a similar vein when she asked me—the Government took its time and thought long and hard about issues in and around Newcastle and my part of that project is to deliver the truncation of the line and adequate transport services.

Dr JOHN KAYE: We will come to that in a minute, Minister, but my specific question was in relation to revisiting those decisions, given what has emerged about some of the players in those decisions. My specific question is: Will you take to your colleagues what people in the Hunter are now saying: that there are real questions about the integrity of the decision-making in the Hunter and the only way to clear it up and restore confidence in the public decision-making process is to have a clean set of hands revisit all those decisions?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will say that, as a Cabinet, we take all decisions seriously, especially those affecting our regions and especially those to do with the Hunter. Every decision that Cabinet or the Government has taken has been a decision based on the merits of the case. Certainly from my experience in and around the Cabinet table, I can assure you that every decision we take is not taken lightly and that all the issues are considered. I have confidence that decisions taken by Cabinet have been in the best interests—

Dr JOHN KAYE: But given that three members of that Cabinet are no longer in that Cabinet, specifically related to matters coming out of ICAC, is there a chance, in your mind, that some of the information relating to those decisions may have been tainted?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly, there is nothing to give me cause for that.

Dr JOHN KAYE: You do not think that any of the decision-making was tainted, despite the fact that three members of the Cabinet that made most of those decisions are no longer in that Cabinet, specifically because of what happened at the Independent Commission Against Corruption?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I certainly cannot and do not propose to comment on matters before that body, as you will appreciate.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am not asking you to. I am asking you to comment on the decisions that were made by Cabinet and whether you feel there is a risk that those decisions may have been tainted and that there is an argument, therefore, to revisit them?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: All I can do is talk from my own personal perspective, I cannot comment on anybody else's views around the Cabinet table and I certainly will not disclose what is discussed in Cabinet. However, what I will say is that certainly from my perspective every decision we have taken on the merits has been based on the best information we have available and that every decision we have taken in relation to the Hunter or any part of New South Wales is based on the information put before us.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And that information was possibly tainted.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Well, that is your viewpoint; it is not mine. And certainly, I would argue that Cabinet decisions are based on the facts before us and the merits put before us and that is the process we follow.

Dr JOHN KAYE: The Premier called for both Andrew Cornwell and Tim Owen to consider their positions once matters had evolved from ICAC. They subsequently left. Their consideration presumably caused them, in the fullness of time, to leave those positions. As the Government's leading person in the Hunter, would you now call on the Liberal councillors on Newcastle Council to consider their position, particularly given that

their how-to-vote cards were endorsing Jeff McCloy and his how-to-vote cards endorsed those Liberal councillors?

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: Point of order: Will the Chair clarify: Is this within the references of the Estimates?

Dr JOHN KAYE: To the point of order: I am speaking specifically about what the Minister will do, as the Minister for the Hunter. I prefaced my remarks by saying: As the Government's senior person in the Hunter, as the Minister for the Hunter, will she now take an interest in her portfolio area by calling on those Liberal councillors to consider their position?

CHAIR: The nature of your question is outside the Committee's terms of reference as it seeks the Minister's opinion on a person. You may rephrase the question to relate to the Minister's portfolio.

Dr JOHN KAYE: As the Minister for the Hunter have you given consideration to the position of the Liberal councillors—

CHAIR: Again, I remind Dr John Kaye that he is asking the Minister's opinion about individuals. Are you arguing with the chair?

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am not arguing with the chair, but you may have misheard my question.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Throw him out.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I asked the Minister whether she had given consideration, as Minister for the Hunter, to the following issue.

CHAIR: I have ruled that question out of order. You are asking the Minister a question in relation to another individual. Do you have another question?

Dr JOHN KAYE: I have many more questions.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I suspend time for a second and apologise. I have been advised I have been to the Hunter five times. I am happy to give the dates now or to take it on notice.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I prefer you to take them on notice, Minister.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Okay.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Have you asked Mr Tatnell to look at the issues surrounding the election of the Newcastle council and the issue of the how to vote cards—

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: The member is now asking a question which is clearly, and you could argue that the last question was as well, in the portfolio area of the Minister for Local Government who we will have an opportunity to ask questions of. I note—

Dr JOHN KAYE: To the point of order. I was asking something specific: had the Minister asked Mr Tatnell, or anyone else in the department, whether they had given consideration to a matter.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Further to the point of order: That issue is about local councillors on Newcastle council—

Dr JOHN KAYE: To save time I am withdrawing the question.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Can I finish my point of order?

CHAIR: The member has withdrawn his question. The member's time has expired in relation to asking questions of the Minister.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I note the Government did not want me to ask that question.

CHAIR: When you are finished.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I have finished.

CHAIR: Time has expired for examining the portfolio of Transport and the Hunter. A number of questions were taken on notice to which you are required to respond within 21 days. The document tendered by the Hon. Penny Sharpe will be forwarded to the department and your office once it is approved by the Committee. Thank you for appearing today.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you, and thank you to all members for participating today.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
