

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4

Monday 19 June 2000

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

TRANSPORT, AND ROADS

The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. I. Cohen
The Hon. J. Hatzistergos

The Hon. J. H Jobling
The Hon. P. T. Primrose

PRESENT

Department of Transport

Mr P. Hayes, *Acting Deputy Director-General*

State Rail Authority

Mr R. Christie, *Co-ordinator General*

Roads and Traffic Authority

Mr P. Forward, *Chief Executive*

Mr P. Scarlett, *Director, Finance*

Waterways Authority

Mr M. Taylor, *Chief Executive Officer*

Mr K. Bywater, *Finance Manager and Corporate Services Manager*

Marine Ministerial Holding Company

Mr B. Stanwell, *Finance Manager*

Ministerial Advisers

Ms L. Hunt, *Chief of Staff*

Ms L. McNamara, *Senior Policy Adviser*

Mr S. Kennedy, *Senior Policy Adviser*

Mr V. Beri, *Senior Policy Adviser*

Mr S. Carroll, *Policy Adviser*

Ms D. Rigas, *Policy Adviser*

CHAIR: The Minister has advised that he is unable to attend this hearing. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the portfolio areas of Transport and Roads. Part 4 of the resolution referring the budget estimates to the Committee requires the Committee to hear evidence on the budget estimates in public.

Under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council, this Committee has resolved to authorise the media to broadcast sound and video excerpts of its public proceedings held today. The Committee's resolution conforms with the guidelines governing the broadcast of proceedings adopted by the Legislative Council on 11 October 1994. The attendant on duty has copies of those guidelines. I emphasise that only members of the Committee and witnesses appearing before it may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery are not considered to be part of the proceedings and, therefore, should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee, as with the reporting of both Houses of Parliament, you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation is placed on anything that is said before the Committee.

While there has been provision in previous years' budget estimates resolutions for Committee members and substitute members to refer directly to their own staff at any time, there is no such provision in the current resolution. Members and their staff are therefore advised that any messages should be delivered through the attendant on duty or the Committee clerks. For the benefit of members and Hansard, and the effective operation of this Committee, it is important that departmental officials identify themselves by name, position and department or agency before answering each question.

There is wide latitude allowed in asking questions on any of the budget estimates and related documents before the Committee. However, when a member is seeking information in relation to a particular aspect of a program or subprogram, it will help the departmental officers and the Committee if the program or subprogram is identified. The Committee will commence questions on the rail part of the portfolio, followed by Roads and Traffic Authority issues, and then Waterways matters. As you are aware, two hours has been set aside for the public hearing. If, at the conclusion of the hearing, members have not exhausted the questions to which they require answers we may decide to conduct additional hearings. I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Mr Christie, as one person who was happily caught up in Thursday's debacle, before specific questions are asked can I confirm that the press release in yesterday's *Sunday Telegraph* was accurate when it said that you agree that the public anger about the system is justified and what has been happening is unacceptable?

Mr CHRISTIE: That is correct.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: That is a fair expression of your view?

Mr CHRISTIE: That is true.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: What have you determined to be the cause of last Thursday night's rail chaos? What do you perceive to be the means and costs by which you will attempt to overcome this matter?

Mr CHRISTIE: The cause of the problems last Thursday night rested with a leak in a pneumatic pipeline that serves the points and signals at Turrella and Tempe. The effect of that leak was to render inoperable the points at Turrella and Tempe and the signals. At that location a pneumatic system is fed from compressed air in a pipeline which drives both points and signals. Unfortunately, there was an underground leak. The pipe is buried at the location and as a result I have instructed some changes to be made in that area and that there be checks of other locations.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: In hindsight, do you believe that the response time by those charged with remedying that particular problem, and the subsequent points problem, was adequate?

Mr CHRISTIE: It was a difficult situation because it affected so many points and signals. Normally an incident that occurs may affect one signal or one set of points and, although it is never easy, it is an easier problem to deal with. This incident affected the whole of the Tempe area, the Illawarra line and the East Hills line. The first priority was to get trains moving to the East Hills line. That was done manually at Turrella. The points were adjusted manually. Those trains were operated, I think, after a period of 20 to 25 minutes. But, unfortunately, during that period there was a bank-up of trains trying to get onto that East Hills line.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I can assure you that there was a considerable bank-up—as one who enjoyed being there!

Mr CHRISTIE: It would not have been an enjoyable experience.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I will come to that in a moment. Are you satisfied with the information—or, might I put to you, lack of information—given to passengers on platforms and trains during that chaos?

Mr CHRISTIE: No, I am not satisfied with the information that was given. In some cases, as far as I can ascertain, no information at all was given; and in some cases the information given was not accurate.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I can certainly confirm the latter part of your statement, because from Town Hall we were directed onto a train to Central, arriving at platform 19, where, we were told, there would be a train waiting to go forward on the inner western line on platform 20. Those who travel by train know that platform 20 goes round the city loop the other way. It seems that a lot of money will be required to fix the problem. When might we expect some improvement in the information service? What sort of costs would you anticipate?

Mr CHRISTIE: I cannot answer the second part of the question because I do not have a handle on costs. But I have made it very clear to CityRail that I expect an improvement in this area and that there needs to be a change to the way in which information is transmitted to stations, so that they are given a better idea of what they can tell passengers. Bear in mind that very early in some of these cases it is not clear what is happening and what is causing the problem. But I am taking steps with CityRail to attempt to improve that level of information. I think that is critical in getting people confident in the rail system.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Accepting that it is critical, when might we expect a report from them to you, and then you to the general public? What are we talking about—three months?

Mr CHRISTIE: Probably less than that. But can I say it is like some of the other problems in the rail system: there will need to be some more training done. It is not something that will improve overnight, because so many people are involved in these matters and in transmitting information to the public that it would also involve some improvements, I suspect, in training. So it would probably be a gradual improvement that we would be looking for.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Are you saying that the training has been inadequate for some time?

Mr CHRISTIE: I suspect that it is not adequate, and I suspect that the flow of information is not adequate either.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: The obvious thing that concerns a lot of passengers is whether CityRail has contingency plans to move passengers by alternative means when a substantive delay, such as this, occurs. Do you have such plans? Were they implemented in this case?

Mr CHRISTIE: I understand they do. In fact, quite often in these cases they are able to get buses in place. But it is particularly difficult to get buses during the period of a peak, when most of them are occupied on other work. But they do on occasions, I know, provide busing around these incidents.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: If you have such a plan that is able to be implemented—and I accept that you may still be coming to grips with this—could such a plan be made available to the Committee, to confirm that it does exist?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will find out what I can from CityRail and provide the Committee with further advice on that matter.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: The obvious reason for my pursuing this question is that in a little over 90 days a major event is to be hosted by this city. I bear in mind, of course, your former role with the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority [ORTA]. Can you tell me what contingency plans are in place in the event of such an unfortunate incident occurring during the Olympic Games?

Mr CHRISTIE: Contingency plans are being developed in ORTA for failures in the system. Those plans are based on the Olympic period, not the day-to-day running of the SRA. I am addressing the day-to-day running of the SRA at the moment.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Has ORTA discussed with the SRA the cost implications of such a plan?

Mr CHRISTIE: ORTA has discussed the Olympic period with the SRA and how contingency planning will affect that period. We are talking now about the day-to-day running of the SRA.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: My concerns about the Olympic period are as follows: the time schedule, whether a plan is in place; and precisely what the SRA would do if such a failure occurred.

Mr CHRISTIE: During the Olympics ORTA will have a fleet of 3,800 buses. That is not to say that all those buses will be available for the SRA. The normal day-to-day operation of the SRA will mean that many of the buses that will be brought to Sydney for the Olympics will not be in Sydney; they will either be in the country or interstate.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: In your new role with the SRA, what steps will you be taking, and when, to ensure that contingency plans are in place and operative?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will be pursuing that matter with the SRA. Bear in mind that I have been in the job only a week. Acquiring buses is the only contingency that can be adopted because the SRA does not necessarily have alternative tracks that it can use. If it does, it will use them. If those alternatives are not available, buses will be brought in if they are available. The private bus fleet and the government bus fleet in Sydney are almost always in use at peak times, not during off-peak times.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Having regard to the Olympics period and bearing in mind your former role with ORTA it surprises me that you did not complete with SRA a guaranteed contingency plan to cope with a disaster such as the one that occurred on Thursday night.

Mr CHRISTIE: Let me answer your question again. You obviously did not understand what I said.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I did understand but you did not give me the answer that I wanted.

Mr CHRISTIE: I will answer your question. I answered it earlier and I will do so again. During the Olympics period—which is what is being discussed between ORTA and SRA—ORTA will have at its disposal quite a number of buses that are not available at normal times. One would expect, as part of the contingency plan, that some of those buses would be used. Those buses will not necessarily be local buses; they will be coming from interstate and from the country. They have been freed up because of school holidays during that period. The other issue, which I will now address, is what are the SRA's plans for contingencies during a normal week.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Let me put it in simple language. I put it to you that it seemed reasonable to assume that, when you were in charge of ORTA, you would have had lengthy discussions with those who were then in charge of SRA; you would have put in place a contingency plan for such an occurrence during the Games period; and you would have details about and knowledge of that plan. Now that you are with the SRA you should be able to produce such a plan.

Mr CHRISTIE: Let me explain it again. We have a plan to use those buses as part of a contingency plan. Those buses are available to ORTA during the Games period.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Are you saying that those buses would have been able to handle the Thursday night problem?

Mr CHRISTIE: They certainly would have helped. But bear in mind that rail numbers are so great that it is fairly difficult to get enough buses at any time to handle that number of people. However, during the Games period, ORTA will have a large number of buses at its disposal. It will be able to make quite a number of those buses available to the SRA to move people.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: How long would you have a call on those buses and how long would it take to get them operational?

Mr CHRISTIE: They would be there fairly quickly.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: What does that mean? Does it mean within two hours?

Mr CHRISTIE: Less than that.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: An hour?

Mr CHRISTIE: Less than an hour. It would depend on where the incident occurred. If we take the Thursday night incident, we would have had them operational probably within 20 or 30 minutes.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: You would have had in place enough buses to move all those people?

Mr CHRISTIE: They would have been gradually brought in, yes.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: You said that you wanted to see significant improvements in the quality of the rail system over the next 12 months. Clearly, you will have to find an enormous sum of money to do that. From where in the budgetary figures do you propose to take that money, or will you be seeking supplementation from the Treasurer?

Mr CHRISTIE: I am not sure at this stage whether I will need supplementation. I have some doubts as to whether the allocation of funds between priorities has been correctly made. My first requirement is to look at how the money is being spent and to determine whether it is being spent in the right areas before I require an increased allocation.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: When do you think you will be able to give the Committee some guidance on that matter?

Mr CHRISTIE: Mr Scarlett, Director of Finance, Roads and Traffic Authority, will be looking at that issue and giving me some advice on it in due course. I am unable at this time to say when I will be in a position to give you a definite answer on that issue.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: What have you requested of Mr Scarlett?

Mr CHRISTIE: I have asked him to look at the allocation of funds to determine how they are being spent and what they are being spent on so that I can form some view as to whether or not they are being spent in the right places.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Is Mr Scarlett able to indicate when he will be in a position to advise Mr Christie in relation to those funds?

Mr SCARLETT: I started with Mr Christie only this morning. It is too early for me to indicate clearly how long it will take me to get a handle on that issue. Obviously I will apply myself to it early and quickly in order to reach a conclusion. It would be remiss of me to give you an indication at this stage in view of the fact that I joined the ministry only this morning.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I accept the fact that you joined the ministry only this morning. Did Mr Christie ask for a report by a specific date?

Mr SCARLETT: At this stage he and I have discussed the issue. He indicated to you the type of information that he requires. It is an issue that I need to look at so that I can work out how quickly I can get back to him. It is too early to give you an indication now.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: What do you think would be a reasonable time within which to return that document to Mr Christie? You must have some idea in mind.

Mr SCARLETT: I would have to come back to you on that.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Six months or three months?

Mr SCARLETT: Certainly not six months or three months. It would be unreasonable for me to give such an indication. It is something that I need to look at. I will come back to you with an answer.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: If you said three months it would at least give us an indication of when to expect a report. Rail commuters would certainly not like uncertainty in relation to this issue, which is likely to

cost a large sum of money. I refer to the Manly JetCat services. Mr Christie could you, or one of your officers, inform us of the current status of the program to replace the Manly JetCat service?

Mr CHRISTIE: I am not in a position to answer that question. I will take that question on notice and obtain an answer.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I also place the following questions on notice. When will the new ferries be in service? What is the current estimate of the total cost of the program? What is the anticipated journey time for the new craft and the carrying capacity of each craft? I would like you to compare the anticipated journey time with the current time taken by existing JetCats between Manly and Circular Quay? Can you also compare the carrying capacity between existing JetCats and the proposed vessels?

The Hon. I. COHEN: What about the environmental impact?

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Yes, could you also advise of any environmental impact that may flow from the new ferries?

CHAIR: Those questions have been placed on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Mr Christie, I refer to the North and Western Bus Lines—another matter you may need to take on notice. Following the purchase of North and Western Bus Lines, did State Transit dispose of a number of that company's Leyland buses?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will take the question on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: How many were sold? Why were they sold? I have been led to believe that in State Transit's purchase of the company the buses were valued at \$120,000. I am led to believe they were sold for \$70,000 each. Therefore, I would like to know the reason for the difference between \$120,000 and \$70,000? I also put those questions on notice.

CHAIR: They are also put on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: The next question would normally have been directed to Mr Simon Lane, but perhaps someone else may be able to answer it. Mr Christie may have the answer. I am looking at Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, and the tabling document. It is my understanding that Ms Kathy Jones has been employed by State Rail as General Manager, Corporate Affairs and Communications. Am I correct in that understanding?

Mr CHRISTIE: Certainly there is a Ms Kathy Jones, but I am not sure of her title.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Could you tell the Committee the position's total remuneration? What are the prescribed duties of that position?

Mr CHRISTIE: I would like to take that question on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Thank you. Subsequent to that, was the position advertised?

Mr CHRISTIE: I do not know.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Was Ms Jones interviewed by a panel prior to her appointment and who was on the panel? Again, you may want to take these questions on notice. Is Ms Jones employed directly or through her company, Kathy Jones and Associates? Has State Rail ever employed or contracted the services of Kathy Jones and Associates? The question then would be when, what for and at what cost? Is it correct that Ms Jones commenced work with State Rail on 18 April? I could stand corrected on that. Is it a fact that at that time Ms Jones was still employed by the Airport Line Corporation? I was led to believe that she was there until about mid-May. When do you understand she terminated her employment with the Airport Line Corporation? Were concerns raised that Ms Jones' dual employment may have breached public sector guidelines and could have raised a potential conflict of interest?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will undertake to provide you with answers in relation to that.

CHAIR: Mr Christie, I want to follow up Mr Jobling's question about contingency plans when there is a problem with the trains running. Recently I caught the Xplorer from Canberra to Sydney. There have been problems with the Xplorer and it has not been running on some days. I learnt that the taxi drivers who collect people from Canberra and Queanbeyan are the people who are advising the passengers that there are no trains on that day and that they will be going to Sydney by bus. That comes as a bit of a shock to people in the Canberra and Queanbeyan areas because if they cannot catch the train they are often quite happy to make some motor vehicle arrangements. Is communication to passengers when there is a problem another issue that your inquiry will look at in trying to get a better system?

Mr CHRISTIE: I am not familiar with the problem you have mentioned. Yes, I am concerned about that matter. We will be working hard with State Rail and Countrylink to try to overcome that.

CHAIR: That would be appreciated.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Mr Christie, my next question would normally be directed to the head of Countrylink. Could you tell us what you understand to be the rationale behind the reduction over the past five years in the number of pensioner seats available on the North Coast Countrylink services? Has there been a similar reduction on other XPT and Xplorer services, specifically on the Sydney to Albury to Melbourne service, the South Coast service, the Southern Highland to Canberra service, and the Armidale to North-West service? If I am correct in my assumption, will the reduction in available seats continue?

Mr CHRISTIE: I am not familiar with that matter. I will take the question on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I am sorry you are in a difficult situation without your colleagues to assist you. My next questions relate to the Rail Access Corporation—questions that I would have asked Mr Cowling. I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Volume 2, page 20-27, subprogram 67-2-1, Assistance for General Track and Freight Services. My question relates to contestable rail maintenance. Does the Rail Access Corporation anticipate compensation claims from the private sector following the Minister's decision and directive last month abandoning the outsourcing of railway maintenance? Given that \$3 million was paid out following a similar decision in 1997, what are the estimated minimum and maximum amounts of compensation that might be sought and what provisions have been made in the budget for this compensation?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will have to get you an answer on that; I do not have that detail.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I can quite understand.

CHAIR: That question will be answered on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Was the Rail Access Corporation board consulted by the Minister before the decision was taken and, if so, was the board conferred before the Minister made his decision? The second part of that question, which again I suspect you may like to take on notice, is whether the board considered any objective criteria about the impact of such a decision on passenger safety. In other words, what guarantees would exist that the decision not to outsource rail maintenance will result in an improvement in rail safety?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: If you could indicate any correspondence and details that relate to that matter, because the question of rail safety and passenger safety is paramount, to you and to this Committee.

Mr CHRISTIE: Yes, thank you.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: My next question would normally have been asked of Jock Murray and relates to buses. I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Volume 2. Is the Department of Transport examining ways in which transport concessions can be extended across the private bus industry in city, regional and rural areas?

Mr HAYES: The Public Transport Authority has been given the task by the Minister for Transport to review public transport concessions. One of the key items in that review relates to pensioner excursion tickets, how they operate, and inconsistencies with the current application between that concession in government-owned route areas run by the State Transit Authority and what is available in the private bus areas. An issues paper was released late last year which canvassed a whole number of fundamental issues regarding the operations of the concessions.

In response to that issues paper, there were submissions from a whole range of peak organisations and community groups, with the result that there were something in the order of about 300 suggestions aspects which were pursued by the review. Also running parallel to that was a round of public consultation which occurred in the Sydney metropolitan area as well as in rural New South Wales which sought the views of those communities on the way the effectiveness and efficiency of the concessions were being applied. At this point the results are being closely examined by the Public Transport Authority with a view to submitting firm recommendations to the Minister for consideration.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I turn now to taxis and hire cars. Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, page 20 2, states:

In 2000-01, progress will be made on reforms in the taxi and hire car industries.

Can you tell me what reforms are anticipated? What is the anticipated cost of those reforms in this financial year? What moneys have been earmarked to fund these reforms?

Mr HAYES: The main area of attention by the department in relation to the taxi and hire car industries flows from the 1999 report by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. The report was commissioned by the Premier, with the support of the Minister for Transport, in order to conduct a competition policy review. The key recommendations of IPART's review related to the need for better service quality improvements within the industry, as well as greater accountability and enforcement by the department. In terms of the specifics raised in a question, I am prepared to supply an answer on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Can you amplify what you mean by "enforcement by the department"?

Mr HAYES: Currently the department, under the Passenger Transport Act, has specific functions for enforcement in terms of driver conduct, accreditation of networks and associated matters. There has been a need for the department to increase its focus on the enforcement side, and those sorts of issues are currently being looked at.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: That is what the department does now. That is the department's enforcement role. Specifically, in which area are you saying that greater enforcement must take place?

Mr HAYES: I am only too happy to supply an answer to that on notice.

Mr CHRISTIE: I ask the Committee whether I could take rail questions and then be excused.

CHAIR: I think that is fair enough.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Mr Christie, is CityRail still undertaking quarterly customer surveys?

Mr CHRISTIE: Sorry, I will get an answer on notice for you.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: That will then disclose, I hope, when the last survey was undertaken. With that in mind, Mr Christie, can you explain to the Committee why the authority will not allow these surveys to be released under freedom of information legislation?

Mr CHRISTIE: I will get an explanation for you on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, pages 20-28 and 20-29, subprogram 67.2.2. Mr Christie, what measures are planned to cope with the 30 per cent reduction in operating subsidies outlined in the budget? Specifically, what impact will these cuts have on commuters and country travellers? What caused the increase in State Rail maintenance costs in 1999-2000 from the budgeted \$110 million to the revised \$115 million? I note that this year's allocation in the budget is only \$115 million, which would appear to represent no change on the 1999-2000 outcome. Can you advise the Committee what impact this will have on the authority's capacity to undertake maintenance over the next year?

Mr CHRISTIE: That question deserves a detailed answer and I would like to take it on notice.

CHAIR: Mr Christie, one outstanding issue is that of a customer charter for CityRail and Countrylink, which this Committee has asked questions about previously. Will you undertake to find out what progress has

been made on producing a charter, it having been raised again by IPART? Perhaps you can take that on notice if you do not know the answer and provide a progress report to the Committee on when that might be implemented.

Mr CHRISTIE: I will do that.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, is the source of reference. Mr Hayes, can you tell us what progress is expected to be made on the development of the Liverpool-to-Parramatta transitway this financial year?

Mr HAYES: I have not got a handle on the detail, and I am prepared to take that on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Following on from that, obviously I need to place the residual questions on notice. What was the rationale for completing one section of the transitway before the remainder of the route had been determined?

Mr HAYES: I would like to give a detailed answer on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I will put my four remaining questions to you, as you might be able to answer them. Will the route for the entire project be finalised in the 2000-01 financial year? When is the project expected to be completed? When are the bus services expected to start on all or part of the transitway? At what stage are negotiations with bus companies about the operation of services on the transitway?

Mr HAYES: The department will provide an answer in response.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: My remaining question deals with integrated ticketing. For the record, Mr Hayes, can I confirm your position or title with the Department of Transport?

Mr HAYES: It is Acting Deputy Director-General.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: How long have you been in that position?

Mr HAYES: A period of two weeks.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: What was your position before that?

Mr HAYES: Director of policy.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Was your position advertised?

Mr HAYES: The director of policy position was, yes.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: As acting director you have a temporary appointment. Has the position that you have held for two weeks in an acting capacity been advertised?

Mr HAYES: No. The fact of the matter is that the current officer is on recreation leave, and as a result there is no requirement to perform a recruitment action.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2. Can you tell us whether the department is still co-ordinating the project to provide integrated ticketing to Sydney's public transport users?

Mr HAYES: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: As you are obviously familiar with the project, are you able to advise the Committee what stage the project has reached and when we might expect that public transport users will be able to benefit from the system?

Mr HAYES: I would like to take that question on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Do you have any information about the total expected cost of the integrated ticketing system and who is providing the system?

Mr HAYES: I would like to take that question on notice.

CHAIR: I refer to the State Asset Acquisition Program. Page 79 refers to several bridges on the Murray River. With respect to the Corowa, Euston and Moama bridges, could you advise the Committee when money will be spent on those projects and how much money has already been spent? Could you also advise the Committee about any problems in dealing with the Victorian Government in particular with regard to getting those projects to fruition?

Mr FORWARD: The Committee may be aware that with regard to the three bridges referred to—the Corowa bridge, the Euston-Robinvale bridge and the Moama-Echuca bridge—the Commonwealth Government has provided a level of funding under the Federation program. At this stage the RTA is managing two of those projects and VicRoads is managing one of them in terms of the route assessment process. There are a number of options. As the Committee is no doubt aware, all three of those bridges are old, historic bridges, and there are a variety of heritage issues and a variety of environmental assessment matters that need to be adequately taken into account. We have had full co-operation from the Victorian Government. At this point in time it is not clear as to the total cost of those projects, and therefore there is a view that the level of funding from the Commonwealth will be quite inadequate to fund the full reconstruction of those three bridges. However, until a detailed assessment is made of the routes and the environmental impact statements, it is too early to say what is the full cost of those bridges.

CHAIR: When do you anticipate those studies on the routes and the environmental impact statements to be completed?

Mr FORWARD: I think we will make considerable progress this year on all three projects.

CHAIR: When do you imagine that work might get under way?

Mr FORWARD: I cannot give the Committee an estimate on that. It really depends upon the outcome of the community consultation and the outcome of the route assessment and environmental assessment project. As I said, these are old, historic bridges, and the RTA believes that proper process needs to be followed, and VicRoads totally supports that approach.

CHAIR: I turn to the Mundadoo bridge in the Warren shire, which has caused quite a bit of concern. When will that bridge be upgraded? Is it part of the Country Timber Bridges program, or is it part of any bridge upgrade program?

Mr FORWARD: I am not familiar with the detail of that particular bridge. In the Rebuilding Country Timber Bridges program we have 129 country timber bridges. I do not have with me the exact detail of every one of the 129 bridges in that program, so I would be more than happy to take that question on notice.

CHAIR: The Mundadoo bridge has been referred to in the Parliament, and the reason that it is of concern to members of this House is that children crossing the bridge on the way to school have to get off their school bus and walk across the bridge on foot, because as far as the bus driver is concerned the bridge is in such a state of disrepair that it is not a safe proposition to take the children and the bus over the bridge at the same time. Therefore the Committee would appreciate an urgent answer with regard to that matter.

Mr FORWARD: I would be happy to take the question on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Mr Forward, if it is necessary to unload children from a school bus because of lack of safety, would that not be considered to be a matter of major importance that should be brought to your attention as a matter of urgency?

Mr FORWARD: It is certainly a matter of importance. However, that particular item would have been looked after at our local level, and clearly if interim arrangements could have been put in place they would have been put in place.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: But would you not, as a matter of course, be advised of such—?

Mr FORWARD: I have not been advised of that particular incident.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Do you regard that as a matter of concern?

Mr FORWARD: I will make some inquiries when I return to the RTA.

CHAIR: Does the RTA monitor *Hansard*?

Mr FORWARD: Generally it does, yes.

CHAIR: With respect to the overall Country Timber Bridges program, has that program been extended to a 10-year program?

Mr FORWARD: I notice that the Opposition spokesperson on roads did make a statement to that effect. Can I say that that is not correct. In fact, the program was announced in 1998, and to date, if you take what we expect to be allocated this year and completed this year, approximately 60 per cent of the budget would have been spent and approximately 60 per cent of the bridges would have been completed by the end of this financial year. That is three years into the program. So at this point in time it has not been extended to 10 years, it is still a five-year program, and I am quite happy that that particular program is on target and on track.

CHAIR: But do not the budget papers say that it is a 10-year program?

Mr FORWARD: I do not believe that that is the case. I believe the confusion is that it has been incorporated into the Rebuilding Country Roads program, which is in fact a 10-year program. The Rebuilding Country Bridges program is part of that larger program, but it is a specific subprogram within that, which is a five-year program. The 129 country timber bridges are scheduled to be rebuilt over a period of five years.

CHAIR: And you are confident that, after five years, all those timber bridges will have been rebuilt?

Mr FORWARD: Can I say that, at this point in time, I have no reason to believe that they will not be built. However, can I just add that projects such as this one and projects like the particular one about which we are speaking come up in particularly sensitive environmental areas. There are heritage issues that need to be resolved and I believe that the vast majority of those bridges will in fact be finished in five years. However, it would not surprise me if some of those bridges go beyond five years—I am not talking about a long time; I am talking about maybe one year—but we need to make sure that the process is done correctly and that the bridges are restored in the most appropriate way.

The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] is not adamant that the bridge must be restored because it must be restored. It must be restored in a cost-effective and efficient way. If that takes a little longer—and I am not talking about long periods; I am talking about a few months—then so be it. The community will end up with a better product if that is the case. At this point in time the vast majority of those bridges have been completed in terms of this year's program and last year's program, and they are on track.

CHAIR: You can provide the Committee with a list of the ones that have been completed?

Mr FORWARD: Yes.

CHAIR: Could you do that?

Mr FORWARD: Yes.

CHAIR: Perhaps you can take that on notice and also provide information on the following: the location of the bridges that have been completed; details on how much each of the repair jobs cost; which ones are to be completed under the Country Timber Bridges Program in 2000-01 and the location; the estimated total cost of those projects; and whether or not the replacement of the timber bridge on Bonang Highway near the Victorian border is one of those projects. I will place those questions on notice.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, page 20-16. There is little detail on the M5 East project apart from a reference to the \$23.6 million that has been allocated to continue construction. Condition 79 of the consent to the M5 East requires a cost-effective analysis of alternative technologies on a yearly basis from mid-1997, which was when the project was approved. To date, as I understand it, that has not happened. Is there a budget allocation for such an analysis to take place in the 2000-01 year?

Mr FORWARD: By way of clarification, are you referring to a particular aspect? You are talking about alternative technologies. Are you talking about the ventilation system?

CHAIR: Yes, various ventilation systems would certainly be the main factor.

Mr FORWARD: The RTA is investigating a variety of alternative technologies. In fact, the week before last the committee had an international workshop on a variety of emission designs and technologies. A large number of community people were invited to that workshop and quite a number of overseas experts were also present, including those who are currently researching the area and also those people who are currently providing alternative technologies. It was a very constructive and worthwhile workshop. The RTA is following up all aspects of that workshop and we are keeping a very, very close eye on alternative technologies in the development of those alternative technologies. The answer your question—has money been set aside in this year's budget to do that—is: absolutely yes.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Can you tell the Committee how much?

Mr FORWARD: Can I say that in this case the amount set aside is whatever is required to enable us to monitor the developments overseas and to assess what is required to evaluate these alternative technologies.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I am advised that there may well have been a significant cost blow-out relating to work at Turrella where the cost is three times what was expected to dig a hole. It will also be necessary to line the exhaust stacks. Was the lining of the exhaust stacks budgeted for?

Mr FORWARD: I will answer the first question first. I am not aware of any cost blow-outs. They ought to be, under the terms of the contract, the risk of the contractor.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Can you give the current cost estimates? Are you saying it was not budgeted or that the contractor has budgeted for that?

Mr FORWARD: I am saying that at this point in time my advice on the M5 East is that it is on budget and there have been no cost blow-outs on that particular project.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Condition 81 of the consent was that \$500,000 per year was to be set aside over five years—commencing from the start of the proposed operation—to be used as necessary and as applicable towards funding air quality improvement measures arising out of, or at this stage required by, consent condition 80. Has this money been allocated in the 2000-01 budget?

Mr FORWARD: The condition relates to when the motorway project commences operation and that will be in the year 2002-03. Yes, the money will be set aside in the year for that particular condition.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So there is no money being used to date?

Mr FORWARD: Correct.

The Hon. I. COHEN: The ongoing energy cost for the ventilation system is estimated to have been \$2.8 million per annum since 1997 based on 25.6 megawatt hours of additional electricity producing 25.6 tonnes of greenhouse gases. Is that estimate still accurate?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware of any variation on that particular estimate. I can provide a more detailed answer.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I would appreciate that, and would you perhaps predict whether the estimate is still steady so that there would be no ongoing or no additional ongoing costs for the maintenance of this road?

Mr FORWARD: Under the contract of Balderstone Hornbrook, Bellfinger Berger there is a 10-year operation and maintenance contract with the RTA. Those electricity costs are incorporated into that 10-year maintenance and operation contract.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Can you rationalise the costs in the light of the Kyoto Accord which globally acknowledged the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr FORWARD: The RTA is aware of the responsibilities under the Kyoto agreement.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Have you calculated costs in terms of that agreement?

Mr FORWARD: I have not specifically calculated those costs, no.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I refer to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, page 20-30, which refers to RTA staffing levels and states that the RTA employs 6,234 staff. At the foot of that page the following statement appears: "(Details of average staffing for the Authority are not available across programs)". Given that other departments and agencies are able to provide staffing breakdowns per program to the level of 10 staff numbers or less, are you prepared to accept that the RTA, which has one of the largest expenditures in the State budget, is unable to provide a better breakdown of where RTA staff are employed out of a grand total of 6,234 staff? Would you not agree that is an inadequate assessment?

Mr FORWARD: No, I cannot agree with that. One would wonder why one would need that particular level of detail. Can I say that RTA staff work on a variety of programs and projects. If I split their time up as half a project or three-quarters of a project, et cetera, I would question the use of that particular data. However, we clearly monitor the costs of delivery.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You are aware that other agencies give a much finer definition of budget allocations?

Mr FORWARD: Can I say that the breadth and complexity of the RTA and the number of projects we are working on at any particular point in time would suggest that we are a more complex organisation than are other organisations that might have one or two activities. The RTA is broken up into three core functions and I can certainly provide details of the allocation of staff in those three core functional areas. We certainly monitor the cost of delivering those core functional activities. From a management point of view I do not believe that providing that particular detail and breakdown will improve our overall management of the organisation.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are you satisfied that such an arrangement that you have described assures public accountability that the Roads and Traffic Authority is effectively managing the millions of dollars on behalf of New South Wales taxpayers?

Mr FORWARD: Our organisation takes public accountability very seriously. I can provide the Committee with details of staffing levels and where staff are in the organisation. We have a changed management program where we are looking at our costs of service delivery and we are reducing those costs and improving them all the time. As far as public accountability is concerned, there is a different way to approach that issue than recording staff members working on any individual project or program. What does it tell you if there are 10 or 300 people working on a program? Given that projects and programs are all different I am not quite sure what that tells you about public accountability.

The Hon. I. COHEN: In a media article in the Blacktown *Guardian* on Wednesday 31 May entitled "Focus on Roads" it is recorded that Mr Aquilina said that the State Government will also spend \$1 million on noise treatment measures along Abbott Road. Is that correct?

Mr FORWARD: We are not spending on measures such as noise walls but we are working with the community on Abbott Road to assess their particular needs and to see whether there are some options that more suit the community needs. We are certainly spending money on Abbott Road on noise prevention and noise reduction measures for individual households.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is there an allocation for that in the budget papers?

Mr FORWARD: There is an allocation. I do not have that figure with me at the moment. We can provide that.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are environmental impact assessments for noise treatment works along Abbott Road correct? Can you verify that?

Mr FORWARD: We did extensive assessment, based on information at the time. However, we advised the community when we did those assessments that we would continue to measure noise levels on Abbott Road. We have since carried out that work and the noise levels are slightly higher than we had predicted. Therefore, we are talking to the community about measures to reduce that impact on the community.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are you also addressing past failures of the RTA whereby road projects were assessed as to impacts only within the project area, with no consideration given to impacts down the line?

Mr FORWARD: We are looking at route corridor strategies which look at projects in terms of the entire corridor and the impact they might have within that broad corridor.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you also include in that route corridor Prospect Highway, Wall Park Avenue, Johnson Avenue and Vardys Road, Seven Hills that are experiencing similar problems?

Mr FORWARD: No, I am talking about the RTA approach which has now adopted two major motorway projects and major improvements to various roads. We are adopting a corridor approach. In that particular case we are looking at Abbott Road and its specific impacts on that local community.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are there plans for other noise amelioration measures on the roads I have just mentioned?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware that there are at this point in time.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are you prepared to take that question on notice?

Mr FORWARD: I would be prepared to monitor those.

The Hon. I. COHEN: The budget papers mention Action for Transport 2010 plans for a number of major road projects and the development of bus-only transitways, including 90 kilometres of bus-only transitways across western Sydney linking areas including Blacktown, Castle Hill and Wetherill Park. Are you aware of plans by Boral to create a two-lane road through its quarry at Wetherill Park to provide a north-south access initially for trucks but potentially for other road users?

Mr FORWARD: At the moment we are having discussions with Boral with regard to possible access for a future transitway through its development. Whether it is the same road to which you refer, I am not quite sure. As I understand it, Boral is quite amenable to providing some land through its development for a future transitway.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Would the Government support such a plan given the competition it could pose to the bus-only transitway?

Mr FORWARD: No. This will be incorporated as part of the bus-only transitway.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So there will be no competition? Are you aware of community concerns surrounding the establishment of the north-south link road with the M2 because of the already unacceptably high noise levels experienced by residents living on the feeder roads to the M2?

Mr FORWARD: When you say a north-south link road could you be more specific?

The Hon. I. COHEN: No, that is all I know about it. Are you not aware of a north-south link road with the M2?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware that the RTA is investigating a north-south road linking into the M2 at this point in time.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Could you investigate that matter and get back to the Committee?

Mr FORWARD: As I say, I am not aware that the RTA is investigating it.

CHAIR: Could you undertake to find out the answer?

Mr FORWARD: Could I ask for a few more details? The north-south link road is a bit vague. I do not know what the Hon. I. Cohen is getting at.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I will get more information on that.

Mr FORWARD: We have talked about Abbott Road and Prospect Highway and all sorts of roads potentially linking into Abbott Road. The north-south link road of the M2 could be a road from one end of Sydney to the other. I do not want to be difficult. I am more than happy to supply details if I could have more detail.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I will provide you with that. In relation to the cross-city tunnel State asset acquisition program 2000-01, the budget papers state that \$4.5 million will be spent on planning for the proposed cross-city tunnel as at 30 June and that \$3.3 million will be spent in 2000-01. The budget papers indicate there is no available estimated completion date for that tunnel. Given that the Minister has already indicated he will oppose the downtown extension of Sydney light rail through the central business district until the tunnel is completed, does that mean that the Minister has indefinitely postponed the central business district light-rail extension?

Mr FORWARD: The issue of the future extension of light rail is clearly a matter for government policy and certainly not an issue for the RTA to answer. I suggest you refer that question to the Minister.

The Hon. I. COHEN: It is a pity the Minister is not here. I will put that question on notice. According to Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, page 20-42, bus and transit lanes will grow in 2000-01 from 50 to 55 kilometres in length. What percentage does that figure represent of total route length of bus operations in the Sydney metropolitan area?

Mr FORWARD: I am advised that that represents about 0.8 per cent. The critical issue is that they are on important strategic routes into and out of the city.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are you talking about the additional five kilometres?

Mr FORWARD: Yes.

The Hon. I. COHEN: In what areas are those extensions?

Mr FORWARD: There are a number of projects associated with the Eastern Distributor. There are bus lanes in Albion Street and Foveaux Street, Surry Hills which provide important bus access to the University of New South Wales. There are also various lengths of bus-only lanes at locations in Penhurst, Crows Nest, Castle Cove and also Mona Vale.

The Hon. I. COHEN: It is the projected operational cost savings achieved by bus upgrades as a result of the 10 per cent increase in bus lanes between 1999-2000 and 2000-01?

Mr FORWARD: I am sorry I have not got that figure. I am not sure that figure even exists in terms of bus operators.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Perhaps you could take that question on notice and if that is the case respond accordingly to the Committee. What is the estimated time saving per bus passenger trip resulting from the introduction of these lanes?

Mr FORWARD: Once again I have to take that question on notice. It is more a question about State Transit operations.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I asked this question during the Transport section of the proceedings and the Minister referred me to this section of the inquiry. Will these additional bus lanes be dependent on enforcement by police or other authorities to be effective?

Mr FORWARD: They always depended on enforcement by the police. The bus-taxi way on the Harbour Bridge is periodically enforced by police, and it has a fairly high level of compliance. Members will be aware that that is a very effective form of transport into Sydney. In fact, the bus-only lane on the bridge carries more passengers in the morning peak than all the other inbound lanes on the bridge combined.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Are you confident that adequate enforcement will be provided and that it will be effective?

Mr FORWARD: I believe so.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You mentioned the international workshops. There is little detail on the M5 East project, apart from a statement that \$236 million has been allocated to continue construction. Was the cost of the international workshop on tunnel ventilation that has just been completed included in the 1999-2000 budget or the 2000-01 budget?

Mr FORWARD: That was included in the RTA's research and development budget.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I have documents that state that the total cost of the workshop was estimated at \$210,000 and that the fee paid for the facilitator was \$53,000 professional fees plus \$10,000 air fares. I recognise the preparation that goes into such an event, but \$53,000 might still be regarded as excessive. Would you comment on that?

Mr FORWARD: At the end of the workshop every participant that I am aware of was more than happy with the performance of the facilitator.

The Hon. I. COHEN: The facilitator was worth \$53,000?

Mr FORWARD: I am saying that everybody at the workshop was very happy with his performance. It was a very complex subject, and it involved managing a variety of interests among the groups attending. I understand from all the groups, including the community groups, that were represented there that they were very happy with his performance.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So you are saying that the fee was not excessive?

Mr FORWARD: I do not believe the fee was excessive, particularly given the requirements he had to meet and what he had to do.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Were any other potential participants considered who do not charge such fees?

Mr FORWARD: We could easily have got a much lower paid facilitator. However, this was a very important workshop. The community clearly recognised it as important, and so did the RTA. I believe the international community responsible for research in this area also regarded it as a very important workshop. In fact, it was one of the first of its kind in the world. So, clearly, it was important to get the right person, a person who understood the issues and could work for both sides of the community, to conduct a workshop like this.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Were some speakers paid a fee and others not?

Mr FORWARD: All of the international experts were paid a fee. They are consultants, and they were required to give up valuable time. The ones paid a fee were the private consultants. Government agencies were not paid fees, nor were members of the community paid fees.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you consider that there was full public access to this unique event?

Mr FORWARD: More than 50 people were invited to the workshop. We wanted to have a workshop in which the people present could participate. People had ample opportunity to ask questions and engage in debate with our international experts. We believed—I believe rightly so—that if we had asked more than that number it would have been very difficult for people to actively participate in the workshop. Community groups that were interested in the workshop were asked to nominate representatives, and they did nominate representatives. On the day of the workshop a number of people turned up who had not been invited, and they were asked to join the workshop.

The Hon. I. COHEN: The budget papers state that \$160 million is to be spent on roads in western Sydney. Has the Government assessed the impact of such roads in terms of hospital admissions due to consequential increases in the number of road accidents, in air pollution, in asthma rates, in greenhouse gas emissions, and global responsibilities that interconnect departments, such as the Roads and Traffic Authority and Health? Has this been considered at all?

Mr FORWARD: That is a matter of government policy, and you should refer that question to the Minister.

The Hon. I. COHEN: The Minister is not here.

Mr FORWARD: It is a government policy issue, and I am not going to get involved in a debate on government policy. Consideration that the Government gives to trade-offs, such as whether it should allocate roads money to hospitals, education or schools, is not a matter for the Chief Executive Officer of the Roads and Traffic Authority to answer.

The Hon. I. COHEN: So you are not aware of any cross-department discussions on this matter? Your department does not take part in any of those types of discussions, so far as you are aware?

Mr FORWARD: Are you talking about budget allocations and funding priorities?

The Hon. I. COHEN: Yes.

Mr FORWARD: I understood that you were talking about that issue. We certainly do not sit down with Health and trade off issues, but we certainly do talk to the EPA and Health about impacts. The tunnel ventilation conference is a good case in point. We had Health represented there, and they gave a presentation. We had the EPA represented there, and they gave a presentation. We had the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning [DUAP] there as well, and they were active participants in the workshop. So we had extensive discussion with the EPA, Health and DUAP. At the end of the day, it is the Government's decision as to whether it builds a road, motorway or whatever.

The Hon. I. COHEN: From the \$160 million to be spent on roads in western Sydney, is there any allocation to look at health and other aspects of such road development and ways in which such aspects could benefit the people of western Sydney?

Mr FORWARD: When we do an environmental assessment of each of the projects we carry out an economic analysis of the impact that that road might have. We also look at the costs and benefits of the road to the individual and various communities involved. So the way it is addressed is through the environmental assessment process.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Was there any comprehensive, new information added by the debate in the recent workshop, given the uniqueness and quality of the workshop as you have described it? Has there been any significant development or breakthrough, which has the support of the community, that has resulted from that workshop?

Mr FORWARD: At this point in time it might be too early to draw any conclusions on that question. Certainly, there is need for some follow-up work, particularly the overall performance of electrostatic precipitators and whether they are able to make a significant difference. I think at this point in time there is a lack of scientific evidence to that effect. I am aware that the Norwegian Government is currently carrying out a number of studies in that regard.

I think it is also fair to say that, if it was required, it was generally agreed by most participants that the M5 East could be retrofitted. There is enough space around the ventilation stack to retrofit the process. I think there was also agreement that some of the other chemical treatments were not necessarily suited to the Australian environment; that when NO was released into the atmosphere it would combine with sunlight and convert to NO₂. So it was felt that was not appropriate technology for Australian circumstances. It is appropriate for treatments within tunnels. A lot of the problems overseas relate to treatments and air quality within tunnels. The community, and certainly participants, learned a lot more about the reasons for treatment—whether it was treatment inside tunnels or improvement to air quality outside tunnels.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: When do you expect the report on the findings of this workshop to be released?

Mr FORWARD: I am not sure of the exact date, but I imagine they should be released within a month.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: As a result of the findings of that workshop, what action will you, as the Roads and Traffic Authority, be taking to review and comment on those findings?

Mr FORWARD: The workshop findings will be a public document.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I realise that.

Mr FORWARD: That document will outline what overseas experts had to say. It is fair to say that there was broad agreement on a number of issues, but there was some disagreement on other issues. Until I look at the transcripts and at the report I am not in a position to tell you what the RTA's response will be. We will wait, have a look at the report and then consider what should be done.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: In view of the public interest and the fact that overseas experts were in Australia, is it a good idea for the RTA to assess and report on various items and then to indicate whether it agrees or disagrees with those findings?

Mr FORWARD: It is not necessarily up to the RTA to say whether it agrees or disagrees with the findings. However, it should say what additional work, if any, should be carried out as a result of some of the things that came out of the workshop.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Is the Roads and Traffic Authority not the principal authority responsible for the construction and establishment of this tunnel?

Mr FORWARD: Yes.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Why will you not examine and report on this public document? If the document is in the right form it should confirm your answers.

Mr FORWARD: The RTA will look at the document and at the findings. The community and the experts differed in relation to a number of aspects that came out of that conference. Clearly, there is a lack of information in some areas. I believe that this debate must continue. We must work with the community to explore some of the issues that were not fully explored at the workshop. That is the key position from the RTA's point of view at this point in time.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: So you will be making a public statement?

Mr FORWARD: Whether or not it is a public statement, we will certainly be advising the Minister about any additional follow-up work that should be undertaken. We might decide that there should be no follow-up work. We need to see the report and the transcript and determine what was established by the workshop. It is only a week after the workshop finished.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I accept that. However, I am interested in the RTA's philosophy. Many reports never see the light of day. Will you be commenting on the report publicly?

Mr FORWARD: The philosophy of the RTA on this issue is that it is an important issue. We must closely monitor and be part of the world debate and investigation relating to tunnel emissions.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Do you not want to be able to make a public statement to say whether you agree or disagree with the findings of the report? Why are you not prepared to say that we will have the benefit of the RTA's view about a public document? We have a workshop document that is public. The RTA is examining and looking at that document, yet you cannot tell us whether your conclusions will be made public.

Mr FORWARD: I am not saying that. I am saying that the RTA will look at the outcomes of that workshop. Our view has always been that we must be a key player in this debate. I just said that.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: And you intend to keep the advice to yourself?

Mr FORWARD: I am not saying that at all. I am saying that, in this case, we need to determine what additional work might have to be undertaken.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Who will know about it?

Mr FORWARD: Clearly, we will not keep something like this secret. If we do any additional work, the community will know about it.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Why will you not say that?

Mr FORWARD: I just said that the community will know about it. If additional work is being done we will advise the community. We are working with the community on this issue. If additional work needs to be done we will work with the community on that issue.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Will you tell the community, the public and the Parliament that, in view of the information in this workshop report, something that you had proceeded to do was wrong? Will you come out and say that?

Mr FORWARD: The RTA is always prepared to say whether it is right or wrong.

CHAIR: Is the Government planning to introduce a universal tolling system so there is compatibility on the M4, the M5, the M2, the Harbour Bridge and the Eastern Distributor?

Mr FORWARD: Originally, transport Ministers throughout Australia agreed on a common tolling system—the European CEN standard. We are aware that a number of different protocols can satisfy the CEN standard, but some adjustment must be made to make them interoperable. We are currently having discussions, in particular with the operators of the Eastern Distributor. A committee of all motorway companies is looking at progressing interoperability in New South Wales. On that committee are representatives of Queensland Motorways, which operates the toll roads in Brisbane, and representatives of the northern citylink project. We are progressing towards achieving interoperability for electronic tolling.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I understand that the expansion of the F3 from four to six lanes will cost at least \$180 million. Could that work be expedited by the use of a toll?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware whether that option has been considered.

The Hon. I. COHEN: The toll or the expansion?

Mr FORWARD: The toll.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Could that work not be expedited?

Mr FORWARD: The F3 is part of the national highway, therefore, funding of the national highway is a Commonwealth Government responsibility. That is a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Would the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] support a toll?

Mr FORWARD: Clearly, that is a government policy issue.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Have you given advice to anybody that we should support such a proposition? Has the RTA given advice in that regard?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware whether we have given advice in relation to that matter.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Was it not a State Government decision some years ago that that toll should be removed when the road had paid for itself?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware whether it was a State Government decision or a Commonwealth Government decision. As it is a national highway, it would have been a Commonwealth Government decision.

The Hon. I. COHEN: I thought the State Government declared it a toll-free road?

Mr FORWARD: The F3? The State Government managed the F6, which was part of the State highway network; therefore, the Government had responsibility for and the power to take the toll off the F6. That is what it did. I am aware that the F3 previously was a toll road. I was not in the RTA at that time but it is my understanding that that would have been a Commonwealth Government decision.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Is the heavy vehicle checking station at Marulan in continuous operation?

Mr FORWARD: Not necessarily 24 hours a day, no.

The Hon. I. COHEN: How many trucks have been checked and, of those, how many were overloaded in 1999?

Mr FORWARD: I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. I. COHEN: You said that it may not be in continuous operation. I also place on notice the following questions: How many hours was it not in operation? What was the most common close-down period?

CHAIR: Can I ask about the single invitation contract system for the repair of State roads. Can you tell the Committee which councils are prequalified for the single invitation contract system? How many of them are there?

Mr FORWARD: I do not have the exact figure with me. My understanding is that about 12 have been prequalified and some 40 have applied for prequalification and are being assessed at the moment. All other councils, I am aware—apart from three who have withdrawn from the single invitation contract—have agreed that the process of prequalification is valuable to them and will be of considerable assistance to their work on State roads and on their own roads. They have advised us that they will proceed along the lines of being prequalified.

CHAIR: Which ones have withdrawn?

Mr FORWARD: Glen Innes, Coffs Harbour and one other. The reason they have withdrawn is that they maintain a very small percentage of State roads on behalf of the Roads And Traffic Authority, in some cases less than half a kilometre.

CHAIR: You might need to take these questions on notice. Can you give us an indication of the ones that are going ahead, the nature of that work, which projects come under that heading and the value of the work? How many single invitation contracts have been let to the private sector? Do you know the answer off-hand?

Mr FORWARD: There are no single invitation contracts let to the private sector. The concept of a single invitation contract is that it will go to the existing service providers, whether they be local councils or RTA operations. The idea of having a single invitation contract is to enable the performance of those service providers to be benchmarked, to be compared with each other, and to place the relationships between the purchaser, the RTA and the service provider on a commercial contractual basis. In that regard, there are no contracts under that scheme with the private sector. However, in Sydney a number of maintenance contracts continue to be in operation with the private sector. Two that readily come to mind are the Transfield contract and the Boral contract.

CHAIR: How many councils expressed the view that public liability issues may be so considerable that it would be unwise to apply for a single invitation contract?

Mr FORWARD: We have a working party with local government on these issues. A variety of issues like that have been discussed. At this point in time, apart from three councils that have withdrawn from the system for quite different reasons, no council that I am aware of has said it is not prepared to proceed with the system because of that issue.

CHAIR: With respect to the Pacific Highway, when the highway upgrade is completed, how much of the highway from Hexham to the Queensland border will be dual carriageway? When will that be achieved?

Mr FORWARD: Sorry, are you asking when the project will be completed?

CHAIR: Yes. When all the plans that are currently under way or projected are finished, how much of the highway will be dual carriageway?

Mr FORWARD: Perhaps I can explain. The arrangement under the Pacific Highway reconstruction program is a 10-year agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the New South Wales Government, which was entered into in 1996. Under the arrangement the Commonwealth Government is putting in \$60 million per annum, or 27 per cent of the overall funds, and the State Government is putting in \$160 million per annum, or almost 80 per cent. So there is a 10-year program of works under way and, under the 10-year program, around 60 per cent will be dual carriageway. It may be slightly less than that, but approximately 60 per cent of the road will be dual carriageway.

Under the Action for Transport program, the New South Wales Government has committed to extend the funding of that project. So when you ask when it will be completed, the objective of the Government is to have the whole highway a four-lane dual carriageway from Hexham to the Queensland border. At this point in time the Commonwealth Government has not indicated whether it is prepared to extend the funding beyond the current 10-year arrangement. The level of funding from the Commonwealth will be a major factor in determining the end date when the whole project will be four-lane, dual carriageway.

CHAIR: What is the estimate at the moment of how much will be four-lane, dual carriageway?

Mr FORWARD: I am sorry, I will have to take that question on notice. I am not quite sure what the current total of dual carriageway is.

CHAIR: Can you give us some information about the RTA's computer system? In particular, have there been any major changes in the past year to the RTA's computer enterprise reporting program?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware that there have been. I am not quite sure whether I fully understand the question or what the enterprise reporting arrangements are. It is not a phrase I am familiar with.

CHAIR: Okay. Can you check it out? Could you look at the enterprise reporting program [ERP]?

Mr FORWARD: I am happy to take it on notice.

CHAIR: Has the RTA's valuation unit at Lismore been disbanded?

Mr FORWARD: Sorry, once again, I do not know what that is. A valuation unit at Lismore: I do not know what that means.

CHAIR: The officers operating there are undertaking valuations.

Mr FORWARD: Property valuations?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr FORWARD: I do not think we would have a property valuation unit operating from Lismore on a permanent basis. Our main office in that part of the State is in Grafton. We may have some valuers operating from that office, but I am not aware whether we have people doing property valuations from Lismore.

CHAIR: Would you undertake to check that out and get back to us?

Mr FORWARD: Yes, certainly.

CHAIR: In relation to the heavy vehicle registration charges issue, can you advise whether New South Wales is complying with the recommendation of the National Road Transport Commission that indexation should not apply to registration charges until July 2001?

Mr FORWARD: That is a government policy matter, and there are certainly no plans in place to introduce indexation between now and 2001.

CHAIR: Is it not a fact that the Government has introduced the Road Transport (Heavy Vehicles Registration Charges) Amendment Bill, which features indexation of registration charges?

Mr FORWARD: That is not an issue of indexation. The legislation has always allowed for indexation. The amendment bill makes some changes to heavy vehicle charges on certain classes of vehicles but they have not, as such, been indexed. This is the first time since uniformity of charges has been in place that charges have been adjusted, and they are being adjusted for reasons other than indexation.

CHAIR: So you would agree that Ministers from the States and Territories agreed at their last meeting in May that further consideration of the indexation question would be deferred until about 2001?

Mr FORWARD: That is correct. But they all agreed that a new set of charges would also be introduced, which is a different issue from indexation.

CHAIR: I have quite a few other questions about Roads, but I will place them on notice and we might move to some questions about Ports.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: If I may ask one more question on Roads. As I understand it, Mr Forward, the RTA has a considerable program for the installation of fixed speed cameras in New South Wales. How many fixed speed cameras, digital and non-digital, are there in New South Wales and where they are?

Mr FORWARD: Can I talk about the number to date? It is planned that there will be approximately 22 fixed-speed cameras in operation as at the end of this month, with a further three to be introduced in July. With regard to the location of each of these cameras, I am pleased to take that question on notice and I will give the Committee a detailed answer of where all 25 are located.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Are the 25 cameras the total proposed for 2000-01, or are you planning further installations?

Mr FORWARD: Any new rolling out of that program is a matter for the Government.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Let me rephrase the question. Has the RTA offered advice either for or against the installation of further fixed-speed cameras?

Mr FORWARD: The RTA believes that, in order to reduce the road toll, this is a fairly important initiative. Our advice to the Government is that it should install more fixed-speed cameras. However, that is a matter for the Government.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: I accept that. I am more interested in the philosophy and the policy behind it. What is the cost of the administration of one fixed-speed camera on a per annum basis?

Mr FORWARD: I will have to take that question on notice.

The Hon. I. COHEN: During 1998-99, how many heavy vehicle operators received reports from safetycam officers about potential excess speed, driving hour violations and operational defect notices?

Mr FORWARD: I will be happy to provide you with a detailed report on safetycam and violations.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Do you know whether any prosecutions have followed from the use of safetycam?

Mr FORWARD: Once again I will provide you with a detailed answer on that.

The Hon. I. COHEN: Can safetycam be used in any scheme for distance differentiation for annual charges for heavy vehicles?

Mr FORWARD: I am sorry, but can you explain "distance differentiation"?

The Hon. I. COHEN: I am not sure exactly what that means. I was hoping you would know. Will you take the question on notice, and I will get more information on that?

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Can you advise the Committee what speeding fines were issued from each of the fixed-speed cameras over the period 1998-99 and 1999-2000? I am interested to know how much revenue was recouped from those fines.

Mr FORWARD: The only camera in place for the whole of that period would have been in the harbour tunnel.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Correct.

Mr FORWARD: That is a matter for the police processing bureau, which collects that revenue. The RTA does not have those statistics. The police processing bureau would have the statistics.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: You service the cameras, do you not?

Mr FORWARD: We will be taking on that responsibility. I do not think we did during that period.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: When do you anticipate taking on that responsibility?

Mr FORWARD: I think we will be taking that on almost immediately.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Will you have those figures once you undertake that?

Mr FORWARD: The police processing bureau will still administer the cameras in terms of the fines. It is not a RTA responsibility; it is all done through the police processing bureau.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Do you receive funding back from the police as a result of the revenue obtained?

Mr FORWARD: During 1999-2000 two fixed-speed cameras were introduced on the Burringbar range, and half of the revenue from those fixed-speed cameras during their first six months of operation went to spinesafe for road-related public safety campaigns and the other half came back to the RTA for black spot treatment programs.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Can you take on notice the question about the actual sums of money and report back to the Committee?

Mr FORWARD: I could certainly find out the money for Burringbar. As I said, the money came back to the RTA and half of it went to spinesafe.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: If that is so, are you saying that with all the other cameras—the 22 that are installed and the three that are to come—no revenue will come back to the RTA?

Mr FORWARD: I am not aware that revenue is coming back to the RTA from the harbour tunnel. It is going to consolidated revenue.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: Would you like to take that part on notice also?

Mr FORWARD: Which part is that?

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: You have referred to the harbour tunnel and Burringbar. We have 22 plus three—so you have referred to 25 cameras. I would like to know whether revenue from any of those cameras came back to the RTA and, if so, in what form?

Mr FORWARD: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: In answer to the number of fixed-speed cameras installed in 2000-01, you indicated 22 plus three in July, and I then asked where they would be located. Am I correct in saying that you will make that information available to the Committee?

Mr FORWARD: That is correct.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: It can then be incorporated in *Hansard*.

CHAIR: That completes the Committee's questions of the Roads and Traffic Authority officers.

The Committee will now turn to Ports. Mr Taylor, can you give the Committee a thumbnail sketch of the Waterways Authority's preparations for the Olympics? What particular projects are you undertaking? What plans do you have to deal with the heavier than usual use of Sydney Harbour during the Olympics period by larger vessels, for example, in terms of refuelling and any other dangers with respect to pollution?

Mr TAYLOR: The preparations for the Olympics and the Paralympics by the Waterways Authority have involved a lot of training over the past couple of years. In fact, we held special events last year and the year before: international Olympic sailing people came out here and we had races on the harbour which mirrored, to a certain extent, the activity that will occur during the Olympics. We have been preparing for the Olympics in September on the basis of that experience.

From that experience we have learned that we are able, for the first time in the world, as I understand it, to conduct Olympic racing sailing events on a confined commercial harbour. To do that we have received grant money through the Olympic Co-ordination Authority and the Government for a number of small rubber duck outboard fitted craft to augment our normal number of boats. That means that during the Olympics we will have on the harbour something like 35 or 40 of our own boats and about 20 volunteer coastal patrol and coast guard boats, giving us a very large number of vessels on the harbour to help police the area of activity.

The area of activity will involve, I think, four racing courses within the harbour—one near the bridge and three further up towards the Heads—and two outside the Heads, which are of less concern. The ones inside the harbour are the ones that we have to police and make sure that they are kept free for Games activities. In the event, in September we will lay buoys all around the harbour—as we have done in the previous two events—beyond which recreational vessels and charter vessels will not be allowed to go. We will police that during the day, which will be from about 10 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock every afternoon for the 14 days of the Games. In a nutshell, that is how we will control the activity on the water for sailing events, which is our main concern.

With regard to the refuelling aspect, Madam Chair, I think you were referring to the visiting cruise liners that will be used as hotel ships?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr TAYLOR: Refuelling of those ships will be conducted under the auspices of the Sydney Ports Corporation. I am unable to comment on exactly what the corporation has planned because I am unaware of the fine detail. But I do know that it put a lot of effort into making sure that it has taken the belt-and-braces precautions to make sure that there are no spills, if that is what you are concerned about. It is also making sure that there is a sufficient quantity of high-grade diesel available so that the ships that may have to run their generators when they are in harbour do not create any untoward smog-type pollution. The corporation has covered the whole gambit, as far as I am aware. I will try to give you more detail, if you like.

CHAIR: It would be greatly appreciated if you could provide the Committee with specific points on those sorts of measures.

The Hon. J. H. JOBLING: We would also appreciate details as to the effect, if any, on ferry timetables.

Mr TAYLOR: There will be some effect on ferry timetables outside commuter periods, from Circular Quay to Rose Bay, Circular Quay to Watsons Bay and Circular Quay to Double Bay. But the remaining ferry services per se will not be affected. They may be delayed here and there. For example, the Manly ferry service will have to go a little bit further and will take a few minutes longer to get there. However, we found with special events last year and the year before that that did not seem to inconvenience anyone. The same number of ferries run at the same sorts of peak periods. The ferries go around the outside of the racetrack, so that they need to go further but they can get through. Of course, ferries west of the bridge are not impeded at all.

CHAIR: We have reached the end of our allocated time. I have a few more questions on those sorts of issues. If you do not mind, I will place those questions on notice.

Mr TAYLOR: We are happy to take them on notice.

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
