

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 - TRANSPORT AND THE  
ARTS**

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT  
NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY**

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**At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Monday 4 December 2023**

**The Committee met at 9:00.**

**PRESENT**

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Banasiak

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam (via videoconference)

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine

The Hon. Rachel Merton

The Hon. Bob Nanva

The Hon. Natalie Ward (via videoconference)

\* Please note:

[inaudible] is used when audio words cannot be deciphered.

[audio malfunction] is used when words are lost due to a technical malfunction.

[disorder] is used when members or witnesses speak over one another.



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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the first hearing of the Committee's inquiry into current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders, past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Cate Faehrmann and I am Chair of the Committee. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent.

Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures.

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**Mr DAVID HARDING**, Executive Director, Policy and Advocacy, Business NSW, sworn and examined

**Mr DAVID BORGER**, Executive Director, Metropolitan NSW, Business Western Sydney, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome, and thanks for making the time to give evidence. Before we begin, a number of our members are online today participating via Webex. They'll be able to ask you questions from Webex. There are three members in the room and three, I believe, are online. Would either or both of you care to make a short opening statement to begin with? Mr Harding?

**DAVID HARDING:** Yes, I'd like to make a short statement on behalf of both of us. Business NSW and Business Western Sydney welcome the opportunity to be here today and witnesses to the inquiry into current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney. Western Sydney is an area that houses one in 10 Australians and forms an economy powerhouse only third in significance nationally to Melbourne. It is also home to many new Australians whose productivity and wellbeing must be valued and fully supported. For many decades Western Sydney has trailed behind the rest of Sydney in infrastructure and amenity. Despite considerable recent and ongoing investment, it still has plenty of catching up to do. It is, therefore, appropriate that we continue to focus on smart investments at the right time and in the right place to continue to raise productivity and wellbeing factors across this large and vital region.

Much of the focus on public transport needs for the last two decades has been on east-west links connecting the gateway to the west, Parramatta, with the eastern harbour city. This is highly welcome and we continue to call for the vital west metro and the second stage of the Parramatta Light Rail to move ahead with all speed. Specifically, we support west metro connecting more people with opportunity with additional stations at the western end. However, we must also embrace the reality that Western Sydney provides many jobs as well as a significant domicile across a very large land area and be aware that the public transport linkages connecting Western Sydney's major commercial hubs to each other are sadly lacking. Parramatta to Liverpool links, connecting the two major centres of population and economic growth, remain badly under-serviced and the new airport will not be best serviced by one metro link alone to St Marys. It also needs to be connected by fast transport on Fifteenth Avenue to Liverpool.

Active transport is something that remains largely the preserve of the eastern city and can be utilised and prioritised further in upcoming planning and investment, especially for last-mile journeys around commercial hubbing. Logistics is the lifeblood of Western Sydney as it grows to be the logistics hub of New South Wales and far beyond. We must fully integrate smart, 24-hour logistics and public transport thinking as we plan for new rapid bus services in the meantime before further mass connections hit the ground. Specifically, we must embrace the opportunity of cleaner and quieter trucking throughout the night hours, serving last-mile hubs as we seek to utilise our major existing arterial roads that link assets properly to get people out of cars and onto those public bus services. We stand by the recommendations of our September submission and will both be glad to discuss further. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. And there's not a statement from you, Mr Borger?

**DAVID BORGER:** That's from both of us.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I'll kick off with questions before we go to other members. Can you just expand a little bit in terms of what, over, say, the last couple of years New South Wales Business Western Sydney has been involved with, with the Government, in terms of planning for public transport in Western Sydney?

**DAVID HARDING:** I might leave that to Mr Borger because he's been much closer to this than I.

**DAVID BORGER:** Business Western Sydney is an advocacy organisation, so we have members, we do thought leadership. We started 11 years ago. We've got 135-odd members. I guess the mission really is how we shift the needle on jobs in Western Sydney. We thought that infrastructure is a key way to do that—infrastructure delivered at the right time. We have been really significant supporters of Metro West, for example, to reduce travel times between Sydney and Parramatta and Westmead, but also to try to open up new areas that aren't currently served well by public transport and to also take advantage of those above-station developments—the station catchments—around them.

We've also been supporters of other projects like Parramatta Light Rail stage one and stage two, and we continue to urge or argue that there are other parts of Western Sydney, like Campbelltown, Liverpool and so on that are still really poorly served by public transport. There are a whole bunch of links that would improve access to jobs and access to the good things in life. One of them would be by extending the airport metro to Leppington and that would then allow the south-west to access the airport in a way that they won't be able to when it opens.

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**The CHAIR:** You mentioned Metro West. In your view, is Metro West, as currently planned—and in fact we're waiting to hear exactly when and whether it's still going ahead, of course. Is the current scope, as far as we understand it, sufficient in your view? What have you been lobbying for, if not?

**DAVID BORGER:** I think that the key deficiency in the Metro West as it's currently planned is that there is a very large gap between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. I think the rationale for the short travel time between Sydney and Parramatta is a way of inducing job growth. It probably wasn't well understood or accepted by everyone. We think that having a station at Rosehill or Camelia and possibly other stations would allow Western Sydney to capture more of the benefits of Metro West. I think that's probably the chief issue. I think the timing and the delivery—of course there are delays. I think some of those are probably inevitable with the sort of heated infrastructure market, but we certainly think that for Western Sydney to benefit from Metro West, it probably needs to have more stations in Western Sydney.

**DAVID HARDING:** If I might add to that, Chair? I think we need to be careful not to get too confused between rapid point-to-point transit systems and metro which, by its very nature, is a mass transit connector of people with relatively short intervening distances between stops to maximise the benefit.

**The CHAIR:** In your conversations with the Government in relation to Metro West, what have you been telling them in terms of urging them around Metro West—just generally to begin with?

**DAVID BORGER:** I think of two things: Firstly, certainly we've been encouraging consideration of additional stations between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park, as I just sort of explained. We saw Mike Mrdak and had an interview with him during his taking of submissions into the current inquiry. We made those points clear. Probably the other thing I think that's important is the way we design the station catchments for Metro West. A really good example is the Parramatta Metro West station box site, which essentially takes up an entire city block. It's a very large site. In the reference design by Transport for NSW that was done a few years ago, that envisaged about 200,000 square metres of gross floor area mainly devoted to office space in very large footprint towers.

We think that post-COVID, the demand profile for that sort of really significant large office footprint has shrunk and that there should be a different approach to the design of the station box site. We really should intentionally design that precinct to allow a night-time economy, potentially media industries and maybe a mixture of uses rather than just commercial offices. We think that the way we go about designing these station precincts—you get one chance to make it right—is really going to have such a significant impact on those centres that they're located in, and we think that that needs to be revisited.

**DAVID HARDING:** Again, if I might add, in the conversations we've had with the Kanofski review of infrastructure more generally, we think that where there is fiscal constraint, we need to look very carefully at over-engineering systems, which effectively are very expensive, particularly around some of the station designs that we've seen on City and Southwest. I put it on the record that I've been involved in some of those designs myself in a previous life. But there is an opportunity to push ahead with vital infrastructure while not gilding the lily, and looking at getting that productivity and wellbeing bang for buck from the dollar as much as through seeking to have the best in the world.

**The CHAIR:** I believe I asked a question along those lines in budget estimates recently in terms of the stations. Is that what you're referring to? Could you expand upon what you mean by "not necessarily gilding the lily"?

**DAVID HARDING:** I think we need to be cognisant of the way that cities move today and in the decades ahead. This is always a little bit of a dark art, looking forward and understanding how cities will move. But we are seeing, globally, trends for people to make shorter journeys and not all in a diurnal movement of first thing in the morning and last thing in the afternoon. The large pipes that we've designed for mass transit systems around the world and here in Sydney are sized for significant growth in Sydney for a very long time, which might be seen as appropriate, but it also might be seen that we have been building our stations to a standard which is probably oversped for what we need to move people around comfortably and safely.

I, for one, would say that now is an opportunity to look at how people move and where they're moving from and to. Are they all moving from the west to the east in the morning and back again in the afternoon? I think we know that's not happening. Also, at what time they travel—are we looking at more trickle transit in people's movements or are we still looking at mass transit movements and, therefore, systems sized to meet the peak of the peak? There are lessons to be learnt from around the world as to how we can take costs out of the station, which, as we know, are very expensive.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINED:** I have one question directly relevant to the type of stations. I completely understand the rationale of wanting to get infrastructure up and happening, and not necessarily taking years in

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design. I do worry, though, that Western Sydney often gets functional over beautiful. I don't think we should save all of our beautiful buildings for eastern Sydney. How do we reconcile that tension?

**DAVID HARDING:** That certainly wasn't what I was intending to say. What I was saying is that they can still be beautiful and they can still be very functional, but they don't necessarily need to be oversped from an engineering perspective. What I'm talking about here is perhaps coming closer to the surface to enable easier design of station boxes and the like, and also not intending to build very heavy structures directly on top of stations, as has been the inclination. I think we can do beautiful. As a general rule, you shouldn't seek to make every single railway station the most beautiful one in the world. It's entirely appropriate that we might want to put a flagship one in Parramatta and perhaps slightly more functional ones elsewhere as, indeed, we have in the CBD of the east.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you, Mr Harding and Mr Borger, for coming and for your joint submission, which was very helpful. There are a number of things there, but I wanted to go to the additional stations question. I agree with you completely that we've got a lot of catching up to do. Talking about productivity in the area, it's important to support that, which is the push behind these projects in the first place. But you did mention having met with Mr Mrdak. I was interested in your meeting and discussions around cost and expense. Yes, we should have beautiful stations and, yes, we should have more, but have you had discussions about the cost of any additional stations? I might then lead into part 11 of your submission.

**DAVID BORGER:** I think one of the challenges with the debate around public transport projects is that they're often done on the basis of a lack of information in the public sphere. We certainly believe that there should be much more information—reports, studies, cost-benefits and so on—made available to the public so that we can have more informed discussions. We're not experts on the cost of stations. We understand that stations are really significant and, obviously, there is a trade-off between cost and benefit. Unfortunately, the public doesn't really have access to all of that information. We can only argue this on the basis of what's in the public domain.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** In your discussions with Mr Mrdak, have you—I'm just interested in the outcomes. We all want more, but there's obviously a trade-off with cost and time. For example, you mentioned Camellia. I think it is well known by the public that there is significant contamination in that site. Have you had any discussions about how you might address that in the cost of remediation to that or what the trade-off might be for that station vis-a-vis others at that cost?

**DAVID BORGER:** In our discussions, we talked about Camellia, Rosehill and Silverwater as possible additional stations that could be included in Metro West. Obviously, there's a significant cost in building all of those metro stations. The discussions were based on the fact that there would need to be significant uplift around those stations in order to capture some of the value and pay for some of the cost.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** And then in doing so, in your submission—I think it is number 11 of your recommendations, "Public and Private Sector Involvement"—you've said:

Both the public and private sectors, play crucial roles in providing effective public transport services. Innovative funding models, such as transit-oriented development and value capture mechanisms, should be considered.

Can you speak to the Committee a bit more about how you might value capture and support all options if value capture is essential, especially in land values in Western Sydney? How do you see that happening? We need to have a big picture, we need to have infrastructure, but, clearly, there has got to be a program about tin tacks. How do we pay for it? Can you speak to the Committee a bit more and help us understand what you mean by that?

**DAVID BORGER:** We're just arguing the principle that if there is a significant gifting of value by the public through building a train line that's going to be very accessible throughout all of Sydney, then there should be some sort of a value-capture model incorporated. We're not specifying which one, what rate or whether it's done through a State infrastructure contribution or some other way. We're saying, as a general principle, if you're building a \$10 billion or \$20 billion train line and there will be significant private beneficiaries, then there should be some capturing of that to help pay for the cost of it.

**DAVID HARDING:** I think it's worth noting—and maybe this is where you're going to—that value capture, even when run efficiently in global cities around the world, doesn't tend to pay for the whole station. But it is, nonetheless, a significant contribution. We're just saying it's well worth looking at now before we put space in the ground.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Can I come back to your discussions with Mr Mrdak? That wasn't really expanded on in your answer—the discussions around cost and how this can be achieved.

**DAVID BORGER:** We had a fairly brief meeting with Mr Mrdak and outlined our concern that there was a large gap between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta and that it could benefit the local community and economy if there were additional stations. Obviously, there was a discussion of cost as well, and there's a trade-off

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the Government needs to consider between cost versus benefit. It was a fairly general discussion. We didn't talk specifically about precise figures. I understand there's a range of costs around metro stations depending on the conditions—the depth of it and so on. It wasn't highly specific to a single set of costs or anything.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Given the tunnel boring machines, Daphne and Beatrice, are under the ground already, working hard while we're inquiring, do you have any comment about the potential for changing routes given the extensive years it takes to plan these things, get them in the ground and understand that work to change route is a technical issue? Can you comment about how that might be achieved?

**DAVID HARDING:** I might be leaning a little bit on my expertise of previous years in this world. I completely get the question that you're asking. Changing the route of tunnel boring machines can be done, but it is typically quite difficult, particularly if you're changing the horizontal depth of it. Therefore, I think that any engineer who is working on this project will be giving that pertinent advice as to whether or not the economic request was feasible from an engineering perspective. I'd only make the point that once you've built an automated metro line and the tunnel is complete, then it becomes exponentially more difficult—to an extent, almost impossible—to retrofit a station. If we are going to discuss it deeply, now is the time to do it.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Can I turn quickly to PLR—Parramatta Light Rail—stage two? Can you talk to that in a bit more detail and expand on your submission for the Committee's benefit about the need—as you say, the critical imperative—for that PLR 2?

**DAVID BORGER:** Sure. Light rail systems work better when they're part of a network. They increase patronage if there's more than just one route. So two is always better than one generally, I think. That's my understanding. The area that Parramatta Light Rail stage two covers includes a number of really high-density residential precincts, so places like Melrose Park, Wentworth Point, Carter Street, Sydney Olympic Park. I think there'll be something like 120,000 to 140,000 people living in those high-density precincts in the future. They don't have a lot of redundancy. There aren't that many alternatives in terms of getting around. They kind of are ideal precincts for light rail because they are very high density, quite walkable. Parramatta Light Rail stage two, in addition to giving those people access to some form of public transport, would also allow them to arrive at the metro station at Sydney Olympic Park and then have access to the Sydney CBD or the Parramatta CBD or all the other stations along the line.

I think PLR 2 is unusual in that there are no historic main streets to be ripped up. I think it only has supporters in the community. It's supported by local residents. It's supported by the council, by universities and, of course, by business and, yes, of course, by developers. I think it could also see renewal of the Ermington public housing estate. There's a small, old legacy public housing estate on the banks of the Parramatta River, with housing that's no longer suitable for—it's beyond its economic life. There's a chance there to sort of salt and pepper and create new public and private and social housing. We think it's a great project. I think it has to happen. There's about \$600 million allocated now to build a bridge, but we have got to make sure that we don't build a bridge and get over it. We need to build a bridge and then go to the next level and build it.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The bridge is fantastic. It's great that the bridge is open. Thank you for your advocacy and, given your experience you bring to this, I think we're all in agreement that these things need to happen, but it's always the difficult challenge of how to implement them and what to prioritise first. We welcome your more detailed submission on that.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, Mr Harding and Mr Borger, for your attendance today and your expertise and passion in this area. If I could just open by referencing the current environment we're in, where we've got the Federal Government presiding over one of the largest growths in migration numbers to Australia and the impact on—we're looking at Australia on track to receive a record 520,000 in net migration in 2023. Some 37 per cent of new migrants reside in New South Wales. We know firsthand in terms of—greater Western Sydney seems to be a very popular home for new migrants. Then, on the other hand, I also signal that we've got some massive housing targets that have been set by the Albanese Government and we've got agreement here by the Minns Government on these new housing targets. Then the third piece is that we've had some unprecedented infrastructure cuts for New South Wales from the Albanese Government. Given the three issues in the mix now and what we're dealing with here today, I would just value your views about what you consider will be the impact in this current environment on meeting the future public transport needs of Western Sydney.

**DAVID BORGER:** Obviously we think that some of the cuts that were made recently by the Commonwealth Government in terms of reducing their commitment are wrong. I note the interchange between the M12 and the M7. That has to be built because there's a \$2 billion road that will connect to the M7. It can only do so via an interchange. We think that sort of doesn't really make sense. I'm not sure about the commuter car park program—whether that was money well spent or wisely spent. I think there's been some criticism of the efficiencies around that program, but we certainly think the Commonwealth should be more involved in cities,

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more involved in the provision of public transport. Actually the State spend kind of dwarfs the Federal involvement. I wouldn't say they're big players. They're doing a lot around the new Western Sydney airport. But we would certainly encourage further investment in public transport in New South Wales by the Commonwealth Government.

**DAVID HARDING:** If I may add to that, Chair, I think in our opening statement we talked about the need to connect Western Sydney to Western Sydney. Much of this conversation so far has been around west metro, which is of course incredibly important. But I do think that, if we're going to bring people closer to home, to where they work, and to be able to provide that economic uptick productivity and, of course, the wellbeing for new Australians, we do need to look at that interplay between—where we look at perhaps the smaller links as well as where we're providing housing. If we provide housing that, of course, is not serviced with amenity, including transport, then it's probably not such great housing. I get your question. They're deeply intertwined as issues, but I think the days of looking at public transport separately from housing or as two separate things are over. If I may add, I think we need to look at logistics very, very carefully in this as well, because we're moving far more goods now than we used to and less people than we used to, so we need to look at that balance again.

**The CHAIR:** You were just talking about housing. South-west Sydney—Camden just has no public transport infrastructure and, unfortunately, none planned for that area, which is just gobsmacking, really. What are you advocating for public transport solutions for south-west Sydney and that incredible growth area that's just not having the public transport built to match the expected huge increase in population?

**DAVID BORGER:** We certainly support the extension of metro to south-west Sydney, because it's not there yet. Whether that be connecting Bankstown to Liverpool or connecting the aerotropolis directly to the Macarthur region or even via Leppington—so we support all those things, but that's not going to be enough. We recently were involved in a symposium around the bus network. We do think there's a lot that can be done. Buses are unfortunately the unsexy side of public transport that no-one particularly cares about in public transport. I think that includes advocates as well, but it is almost half of all passenger journeys are via bus. There are jurisdictions globally that have reformed their bus network, New York in particular, by creating more of a trunk-and-feeder system, which can increase patronage by using electric buses and by using buses that improve road quality and comfort by allowing more express bus lanes. I mean, there's a lot that can be done to actually develop more effective bus networks that might be the precursor then of heavy rail—fixed rail systems. We think we need to look at all of that. The focus really has to be south-west Sydney. As you correctly say, it is public transport deprived. People in south-west Sydney pay taxes; they don't get much back in terms of public transport.

**DAVID HARDING:** Chair, if I might add as well, I think it just goes to the point that I made that we can't look at housing separately from public transport. When we're approving very significant numbers of people to live in expanded parts of Sydney up to 80 or 90 kilometres away from the eastern harbour city, it needs to be a fundamental part of the discussion earlier rather than later, because it's not only very expensive to retrofit but it's also quite difficult and disturbing. I think we just need to think about those things together. Again, back to the rapid bus transit networks, we all know that our roads are very constrained at particular times of day and particular times of the week. I think that's been particularly noted in the press with some of our new roads recently but, to be able to get rapid bus transit networks, we do need to look at our logistics on the roads and when, not where, we move our logistics around.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I want to jump in at that point. You mention Metro West and Metro Southwest. Given the current question marks over them and given you represent business, could you talk to the Committee about what feedback you've had from your business community and your members about the uncertainty of this delay and what they are thinking and what the feedback has been to you about the uncertainty, given the review?

**DAVID BORGER:** Not all members agree on these things but, in terms of Metro West, the majority of our members would certainly support additional stations. There is really strong support for that. On balance, if there was a relatively short delay to make way for the additional stations, that would be seen as an acceptable trade-off. Not everyone agrees with that. There are some people that would prefer the current route as it has been planned.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** For those who would prefer the current route as it has been planned, given it's underway, what has been the feedback from them specifically in relation to certainty and to having a bird in the hand, say, as opposed to something kicked down the road for a lot more cost? Can you speak to their concerns?

**DAVID BORGER:** Yes, to be fair, the dominant view amongst our membership has been that additional stations would provide additional value for Western Sydney—they would provide opportunities for housing, for



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investment, for uplift—and that that would benefit the broader area more than no stations between Olympic Park and Parramatta. There is probably a minority of people that would disagree with that.

**DAVID HARDING:** Can I add to that? Taking it to a State, international and national kind of level in the way that the international construction markets and players look at uncertainty, I think Ms Ward has a point that certainty is very important to the design and construction industry. I think there has been some degree of questioning by perhaps those who are less aware of what the review is all about. But then I kind of echo what Mr Borger said—that those who understand that it is better to measure twice before cutting once—I think do understand and, of course, there is the overriding point that there is a great deal of infrastructure work underway in New South Wales at the moment and a quite significant skills shortage. In reality, I think that most informed players understand what's going on and broadly understand some of the reasoning behind it too.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** What is the potential delay and cost of adding additional stations, particularly in contaminated areas? When there is a skills shortage, there is a hot market for infrastructure construction. What's the cost of that and potential further delay?

**DAVID BORGER:** Unfortunately, we don't have the costs before us. To my earlier point, there needs to be more transparency by governments and agencies in providing that information to the public, because we've got an inquiry now taking place in the absence of a lot of these data points. We're arguing about things that we haven't seen the reports for.

**DAVID HARDING:** Yes, agreed.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Can I go back? You talked about better inter-regional connectivity. I note your first recommendation talks about the sub-regional aspects of Western Sydney. When we were convening this Committee, we were having discussions about what is Western Sydney. Am I to presume that there wasn't, for the past however many years, a comprehensive transport strategy that did try to tie this? Is that something that has been lacking?

**DAVID BORGER:** What's been lacking has been the place-based transport strategies for centres. A good example would be Liverpool. I currently chair the Liverpool Innovation Precinct. We meet every month with the hospital, the medical research institute, council et cetera. We have been wanting to get a place-based transport plan for Liverpool. One was developed three years ago. Transport are now advising us that it is out of date—they need to redo it. But it's never been public, so it has not driven any behaviour or any spending decisions. There is a sense of frustration that a place like Liverpool—it needs that sort of detailed level of planning about movement journeys, how do we actually change the modal split more towards public transport. There's a whole lot of potential recommendations, but it is three years behind and then we're going back to the drawing board to start it again. I don't think they've started on Campbelltown and other places. We think that sort of detail-level planning around centres—about connecting those communities, suburbs, neighbourhoods into the centre so they can use the heavy rail system, if there is one—should be prioritised.

**The CHAIR:** Can I jump in about that? Who is part of that place-making plan? Who feeds into it? Who drives it? You said it wasn't made public. Is that correct?

**DAVID BORGER:** No, it has no status. It's taken three years and—

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** What was its genesis? Talk us through.

**DAVID BORGER:** Transport understands that if we're going to improve transport outcomes for local areas, there needs to be a lot of detailed local, on-the-ground planning: working with councils and their transport planners, working with local communities to improve buses, trains, to look at the parking situation, through traffic through the middle of city centres. All of that detailed work has to take place through lots of workshops, discussions and so on. That started to take place in Liverpool and took three years—

**The CHAIR:** Just to be clear, initiated or driven by Transport?

**DAVID BORGER:** By Transport, correct, yes. We think we need to lift their vision on doing that because that's one way we can get more people using public transport. It is a way of reviewing the local system and trying to improve its efficiency. But, unfortunately, it takes too long to do these studies—incredibly frustrating after three years of hearing that this place-based transport plan is going to be implemented and actually we're back to the drawing board.

**The CHAIR:** Was that complete in your view? Did you see the end result for that plan for Liverpool?

**DAVID BORGER:** At least it contained some actions that would have improved transport outcomes. I don't think it was completely complete. We're not transport experts, but we thought it was a reasonable attempt to try and start to address these problems in Liverpool.

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**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Were there any other examples, or was Liverpool the prototype?

**DAVID BORGER:** I have seen one for Westmead, which is quite good. That was fast-tracked, I think, and it's quite a good plan.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** That was published?

**DAVID BORGER:** I think that was published, yes. I think so, Sarah.

**DAVID HARDING:** Chair, as a general point, we would really encourage that transport and productivity and social and housing needs are indeed brought together when we make these decisions. As a general observation, there has been an awful lot of planning in Western Sydney for many years, some of which, of course, has been very successful but some of which has been less so because it hasn't necessarily been following the social and economic drivers, which is why we have transport. We don't have transport for the sake of transport. I think the bus network in Western Sydney has fallen victim to existing routes not being questioned and existing services not being questioned.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** I guess that goes to your recommendations about workforce planning, demographic planning?

**DAVID HARDING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** I was going to jump in with a question in relation to buses. You just spoke about existing bus routes. What problems particularly are you hearing about—some of the key ones—in terms of bus services in Western Sydney? Could you expand upon those for the Committee's sake?

**DAVID BORGER:** I think one of the real opportunities in Western Sydney is to move away from point-to-point bus services and try to move to a trunk system where there are main corridors, regular bus movements, short headways, and then other bus services feed into that trunk. It might mean people have to catch two buses but ultimately that might mean a far better system with far more patronage. That's a key one. Also, the other thing to mention is that Western Sydney does have a bus manufacturing industry. It's quite strong. There is a number of big players there. They would like to do more. They're very keen on doing electric. We need to be bolder on our vision for electric buses for our fleet because not only will it improve the quality of air and so on in city centres, it will improve the road quality, we hope, but it will also create jobs in Western Sydney. So we're really keen on seeing a really ambitious electric vehicle strategy.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can you give us some examples about that trunk bus system, where you think that would operate most effectively?

**DAVID BORGER:** I think where we've got main roads—it's hard to explain without visually drawing a diagram of this, but in our symposium recently we learnt that in places like New York and upstate New York they'd revolutionised the bus system by taking out bus routes that go from point A to point B all over the city and trying to move to a system where there is—a good example would be places like Woodville Road, Victoria Road, Parramatta Road. They would effectively form the trunks and then more localised services would feed into those trunks, rather than those local services also using Woodville Road, Victoria Road and Parramatta Road. Transport planners say this is one way you can really increase patronage and get more regular services with more frequent services.

**DAVID HARDING:** Also, if I may add, I think there is a learning there about the quality of the bus stop, if I may say so, particularly in a hot Western Sydney summer. We need to look at the amenity of the service there and a little spent will go a long way. I think we have seen that on the northern beaches bus link—how successful that's been because of the amenity's quality. It's a quality service.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I come back to the Metro West? I wanted to ask about the proposition of a Silverwater station. Obviously, Silverwater has substantial employment lands, but in order to fund a station you'd have to have residential uplift that would erode those employment lands. Do you want to make some comments about the relative arguments and trade-offs that are associated with that decision?

**DAVID BORGER:** Silverwater is a large contiguous employment area, correct. It contains a range of industries and some logistics as well. My understanding with Silverwater is that the depth of the metro rail at that point is quite deep and there is sort of an angle to the train which might make it difficult to include a station. I'm sure these things can be re-reviewed and redesigned. It probably does need to be a discussion, though, about the nature of employment lands going forward. There is a view that employment lands can be mixed-use precincts and that very little of what exists in those employment lands like Silverwater have negative externalities that would cause concern, and they may well be able to have a number of those employment uses mixed with housing.

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We think there's an open question around how you could generate a mixed-use precinct in a place like Silverwater but still keep the jobs and still keep the employment. Maybe they're in different building forms.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I'm just checking whether your organisation engaged in advocacy to the Albanese Government concerning the unprecedented cuts to infrastructure, with Western Sydney being a prime target here?

**DAVID BORGER:** I sat on the Western Sydney Infrastructure Panel. We had 10 meetings. Lots of people were providing input to generate recommendations about what could be done next. We were obviously concerned about some of the cuts, particularly the interchange between the M7 and the M12. We made public comment on that basis. I don't think I've written a letter at this stage.

**DAVID HARDING:** We're a statewide organisation. We have directors all over the State who made local comment, for example, around Moree or around the Newcastle faster rail projects and so on. There were local comments across the State.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** In terms of New South Wales housing and the recent reports relating to density being a critical piece of the housing solution—and I think I read something about Parramatta or Greater Western Sydney where there were some details and plans around what density may be able to deliver there—I'm just wondering about the link between increased density inevitably leading to a greater demand on public transport and whether there has been any discussion or engagement or consultation with the Government as to how this is best addressed.

**DAVID BORGER:** I think it's a great point, and the best example of that is Wentworth Point and Melrose Park in the future as it is developing out. These are places that were designed for public transport; they don't really have effective public transport yet. But I think it's a great point.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** In your advocacy for additional buses, it's great to have buses and great to have infrastructure but we need drivers. How do you see us addressing that challenge?

**DAVID BORGER:** Great question. I don't have any particular insight into the bus driver recruitment campaign. Agreed, we need more bus drivers.

**DAVID HARDING:** I just make the point that it is a difficult time as we move an awful lot more goods around by truck in Australia. Goods movements are going up very fast so the demands and pressures on that sector are high and will probably remain high.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** I have a very quick follow-up. You were talking about logistics and truck movements. We have a parallel, nearly finished inquiry on heavy vehicles and rest stops and the lack thereof in Western Sydney. You talk about logistics but I don't think I saw anything explicitly there. Any thoughts on how we make that part of our considerations, what we do with trucks, the need for them to stop and rest et cetera?

**DAVID HARDING:** I just encourage us to think about the movement of our city in a 24-hour way rather than widening roads. So as we use them more effectively, using time as opposed to space. But anything which can facilitate the proper resting of vital key workers in the trucking industry would be highly welcome, particularly if it ties into a broader strategy of making it possible for them to use the roads when the roads are quietest.

**The CHAIR:** That's the end of our time for you. Thank you. We really appreciate your evidence today. Thanks again for your submission, and we will be in touch if we have any further questions for you.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

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**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI, RFD**, Chief Executive Officer, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd, sworn and examined

**Dr GEORGE GREISS**, Chair, Mayoral Forum, The Parks, Sydney Parklands Councils, sworn and examined

**Mr BEN TAYLOR**, Chair, General Managers Committee, The Parks, Sydney Parklands Councils, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to start with opening statements? We will start with you, Dr Greiss.

**GEORGE GREISS:** Thank you for the invitation to address this. Firstly, I'm glad to hear that there is discussion being had as to what is Western Sydney. To me, what is Western Sydney at the moment is very ill-defined. I'm here this morning to represent the Western Parkland City as defined in the regional plan by the Greater Sydney Commission and city deal. The eight councils of The Parks strongly believe that our region has suffered great inequity in terms of lack of infrastructure, particularly transport. The Western Parkland City is enormous. It spans over 8,000 square kilometres with a population of almost 1.2 million people. We are growing fast and we are set to absorb 34 per cent of Sydney growth in the coming years to 2041 as we are projected to grow to 1.5 million people. Our population is diverse, with pockets suffering the highest social and economic disadvantages in Australia.

Our people have not enjoyed the same level of investment in public transport. We do not have equitable access to public transport at all. As a result, few people are now located within 30 minutes of a metropolitan centre by public transport and even fewer have access to a bus stop within 400 metres of their home. We are lacking high concentration of jobs in our region. This, coupled with the transport system that does not enable adequate connectivity within the Western Parkland City and Greater Sydney, means our residents must travel everywhere by private cars. This car dependency has social, economic and environmental impacts that I'm sure everyone is aware of. We deserve investment.

Public transport is vital for the health, wellbeing and liveability of our city. I'm sure everybody knows and understands this. There has been a significant investment made into researching and developing plans to address this disparity. This is as well as the current business cases that are underway: Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport, various road business case upgrades, and others that have been announced and cancelled. We can continue to plan and modify our strategic direction in search of an ultimate solution, but we have good enough solutions now. We have the plans that could significantly benefit the 1.5 million people from diverse backgrounds that will call our region home in the future. It's time to start building something. I commend our submission to the Committee, and I welcome the members' questions.

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** What is Western Sydney? That is a really, really great question. Let me tell you, since I've been at the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils since 2015, I've seen the definition of "Western Sydney" change on no less than 18 occasions. Every one of those has been driven because of political expediency by politicians—not by the professional officers of the New South Wales bureaucracy but by politicians to serve political ends. We have a lot of—what would I call it?—differing views of what is Western Sydney. I look at Western Sydney back to the post-war period—we're talking about the late 1940s—when Western Sydney came into significance because of its social issues but also in terms of its economic contribution to the State. It became what is termed today to be Australia's third largest economy, but that is under threat.

If I have a look at 50 years WSROC has been in existence, there has been no confusion in our minds and in the minds of the board members about what Western Sydney actually is. In 2015 the New South Wales Parliament published a paper on Western Sydney and made it pretty well clear what they saw as Western Sydney. What they saw as Western Sydney was what currently today comprises 13 LGAs, from Cumberland in the east to the Blue Mountains in the west, from the Hawkesbury in the north down to Wollondilly in the south. That has pretty much been our driving force in terms of our advocacy and how we deliver programs and projects for the communities of Western Sydney. Our advocacy has always been on Western Sydney. Marcus Aurelius, one of the great emperors of Rome, once said what's good for the beehives is good for the bees. Our mantra has been that we should, as a region, look at what the region offers, not only to the New South Wales economy but the Australian economy in terms of strength.

If you have a look at Western Sydney and what it offers to overseas investors and overseas businesses who may want to relocate to the eastern seaboard of Australia, we have a compelling proposition, but that proposition is being challenged by the likes of south-east Queensland, for example. In south-east Queensland, there is a council of mayors comprising 11 LGAs that have just come together and negotiated their own city deal. Actually, I don't think it's a city deal; I think it's a regional deal that looks at the whole region. That region, whether we like it or not, its regional economy is \$100 billion a year better than Western Sydney. In terms of offering an

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attractive proposition to overseas investors and businesses to relocate to the eastern seaboard of Australia, Western Sydney has a challenge. How do we meet that challenge?

One of the things we did—and when I say "we", I'm talking about the State and Federal governments—is we came up with a Western Sydney City Deal, which divided Western Sydney into two halves that were so intrinsically linked to one another that without the other half, neither could put forward a compelling proposition for anyone to come to Western Sydney, relative to, say, Melbourne's west or south-east Queensland. I call it the Western Sydney half city deal, because it only really delivered benefits for half a city, not the other half. It actually divided the city in such a way that it provided a distraction and division to a region that should be promoting itself as the best opportunity for people to come to Australia in terms of investment and businesses.

The Western Sydney airport makes that abundantly clear. The aerotropolis, Bradfield City—all of those in combination have much to offer, but without the recreational opportunities of the eastern half of Western Sydney and without the labour force, which is domiciled around Parramatta and the like, the compelling proposition is no longer there. We have always looked past and beyond the Western Sydney half city deal and thought the region has strengths and we must promote the region on the strengths. The issue is, for some unknown reason, in the late 1940s, someone came up with the idea that we don't need public transport in Western Sydney because the future of Western Sydney is all about cars. There are going to be high levels of car ownership, so why do we really need to invest in Western Sydney in terms of public transport when the eastern half of the city is calling out for more and more investment in this? As late as the 1970s—in 1971—20 per cent of Western Sydney still didn't have a car and still we had these ludicrous policies that allowed most transport investment to happen in the eastern half of the city and not in Western Sydney.

If you have a look at the latest outcomes from the Western Sydney half city deal, the joint rail needs study in 2015 identified the five major rail links that were needed not in priority order—not in sequence—but to be delivered at the same time to provide the transport network that is required for that fast-growing region that we know as Western Sydney. Of those five links that were identified in a joint rail needs study—and, by the way, it was the mayors of Western Sydney that came together in 2015, three years before the Western Sydney half city deal came along, and identified transport and intra-regional connectivity as the number one economic, social and environmental issue for Western Sydney. So this isn't new. This has been identified by local government and its mayors for quite some time. But what is new is, regardless of the attempts by the Federal and State governments to try and do something about it, the reality is the Western Sydney half city deal is going to be delivering, by 2026, one-third of one link, and that one-third of one link has two railway stations outside of St Marys and the airport. How valuable is that to the people of Western Sydney? That rail link, at the end of the day, is there simply as a utility of the airport. It does nothing for the people of Western Sydney in terms of intra-regional connectivity.

It is impossible to move Greater Western Sydney by public transport—it can't be done—but someone forgot to tell Prime Minister Turnbull and Premier Mike Baird on the day when they announced that areas of Wollondilly and Camden were going to be where people live to get to jobs to the aerotropolis and the airport. My staff fell out of their chairs and said, "When was the last time the Prime Minister or the Premier actually tried to get from the south to the north and part of—" You're joking, aren't you? The reality is, folks, here we are at a parliamentary inquiry, where there is no plan for a transport network for Western Sydney. What I keep telling politicians every day is stand on the tallest building at Parramatta and look east and imagine the transport infrastructure which is there today, then turn around and look west and by the early 2040s, you need the same level of infrastructure in Western Sydney simply because you need to cater for population growth. I will leave it at that.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Casuscelli, I will start with you. You sound extremely frustrated at what has clearly been a lack of attention, lack of will, from governments to strategically plan for Western Sydney. Is it frustration that you're experiencing?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I'm Italian, so you can't tell the difference between frustration and passion. So I apologise for that.

**The CHAIR:** Don't apologise.

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I think it's more passion, but there's a little bit of frustration as well. Keep in mind that some of the contemporary things we're talking about now in terms of—they call it, I think, today station area development: building around major transport nodes. I hate to tell the politicians this but in 1996 I attended a board meeting in the RTA talking about transit-oriented development and, blow me down—what are we? Twenty-three, 27 years later—we are still talking about it. So that's where the frustration comes in.

**The CHAIR:** We had previous witnesses from Business Western Sydney who talked about blueprints and what have you. I'd be interested to know from you, what have we got so far, as far as you're aware, which

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might even be sitting on the Government's desk and hasn't been actioned, that's the best that has happened so far in terms of planning? Let's start there. Is there something we should be looking at?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I think there was a wasted opportunity when the joint rail needs scoping study came out because it was the first time in my history that I actually saw mayors and senior members of the bureaucracy there across a number of ministerial jurisdictions that came together and we had a really good discussion about what does a transport network for Western Sydney look like to serve the aspirations, not only for population growth but we actually have aspiration to create 200,000 jobs in Western Sydney? The one thing that worries me is even though we had the outcomes of that scoping study that made it absolutely clear that across at least two levels of government—and I think there were some reps from the Federal Government there as well, because I think it was in response to the airport.

**The CHAIR:** That came out in 2018.

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** So that was the end result of it, but their process actually began—it was a three-year process—in 2015, some of the first workshops that were held. There was an opportunity where we could have said, "Here it is. There is consensus on what this transport network, certainly from a rail perspective, is going to be."

Then for some reason it made its way into the city deal documents as saying look this is the way that we can shape the future of Western Sydney. From that point on nothing more was heard. Every time I tried to get a business case made available to me so I could have a look at how the business case was progressing for the rail links—to this day I still haven't been able to get a business case for the entire north-south rail link from Schofields to Camden to Macarthur as one of the major, preferred things that actually had to happen.

One of the things that shocked me was, I asked questions about how can you actually announce a link between St Marys and the airport when you haven't completed a business case for the entire link, which is one of the preferred outcomes of the rail needs study that said this is a game changer for Western Sydney if we build from Schofields down to Macarthur. I said, "But what if the business case came back and said that there was a greater need for urban renewal and for dealing with a whole bunch of disadvantage between St Marys and Schofields, for example, how are you going to deal with that?" The answer that I got back was, "Oh, no. We believe it won't." Subsequent to that, I've been asking questions about, "Can I have a look at the business case so I can get a good feel as to where the other links"—the missing north link, the missing south link—"sit in this?" Today, I still haven't been able to get that. That is the other frustrating thing. There seems to be a lack of transparency in what gets prioritised, and what are the assumptions that are being used in setting those priorities.

**The CHAIR:** I will get your opinion, Dr Greiss, on what you think is there in terms of strategic plans, blueprints and what have you. But, Mr Casuscelli, is it your opinion or view or knowledge that the business case does exist? Because it potentially could not. That's very common as well with governments as you, I'm sure, are aware. Does a business case exist, to your knowledge?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** To the best knowledge that I have, the Government has made multiple announcements to deliver business cases in 2020. I think 2022 is the latest one. So there's a history of announcements, but we never actually see them. I don't believe that the business case for the north-south rail link doesn't exist. But then, as members of the Committee would know, there are business cases and there are business cases. They have different names, so they try to do different things that require different levels of consideration and the like. I was half delighted when the previous Government made an announcement about funding the business cases for the remaining rail links in Western Sydney. I think they committed \$265 million to that, which I'm sure delighted the consultancy industry. But what became apparent to me was do you really need to spend that amount of money to do business cases for links that there is consensus across the stakeholder communities that these things are required? This isn't about a business case as to whether we build it or not. It's more a business case that we need to build it, can we all come to a consensus about when these things need to be delivered by and then work backwards?

So the answer to your question is, there are plenty of documents out there. There's future transport 2056, there's been a strategic paper on transport. I don't know why, for my sins, I love transport. It is something to do with my Roman heritage, I think. An empire was built on roads. There are significant strategic documents that are in place right now. But what is missing for Western Sydney is there is no grand vision articulated in sufficient detail that says in 10 years' time this is the level of investment that is required in this particular type of transport capacity, or transport type, and we will work backwards. What do we need to do to deliver this 10 years from now? What has to happen? How do we get the funding? What are the funding models? How does this play out relative to the other parts of Western Sydney's transport network, which, as you know, is roads. There's this issue about there's no public transport. The roads have been at capacity for the last 30 years and you have 300,000 people driving east to get to jobs.

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Can I just finish the question on this: I'm actually very disappointed that Metro West seems to be an admission by the State Government that they've given up creating 200,000 jobs in the west. There can't be any other explanation as to why you would invest that amount of money to build yet another transport link in a well-serviced transport corridor between the CBDs of Sydney and Parramatta that does very little for inter-regional connectivity but does a lot to get people in jobs that are going to be created along that corridor. So the question in my mind as a former transport planner is: Why would you put in place that level of investment, relative to all the other dire needs of Western Sydney? The only conclusion you come up with is they really believe, regardless of all the announcements made by everybody, that the jobs target aspirations in Western Sydney aren't going to be met, so do you really need the transport connectivity to actually service those? Or are we going to still think that most of the jobs are going to come between Parramatta and the CBD, so we need even more capacity along that rail link?

**The CHAIR:** Dr Greiss, in terms of the blueprints, strategic plans, what do you think is the best that is out there at the moment?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I think that our most important connection is the north-south connection, and that certainly would be quite a significant change for Western Sydney and for all the eight councils, as well as connecting from the airport to Leppington, to Glenfield and possibility connecting that all the way to Bankstown, as has been announced before the election. These are probably the best, most impactful plans that we have seen. I disagree that there hasn't been a vision for Western Sydney; I think there has been many contradictory visions for Western Sydney. What there hasn't been is the commitment to carry through with any of these visions and actually deliver the infrastructure that is needed to ensure that we get a successful outcome from a planning perspective. So we do get a lot of announcements about housing targets and density, which we then go and implement, based on the assumption that there's going to be all of this infrastructure that will come to follow. What happens is, unfortunately, then the vision changes six months later and there's a shift. However, areas like Wilton have already been built and we can't take them back.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you to each of you for coming along today and for your submissions. I appreciate your input. Can I just go to your last comment, Dr Greiss, about the housing targets and where councils or your members are expected to pivot between plans. What is your and your members' current thinking on the uncertainty created by the reviews going on? How are you adapting to that, and how are you prioritising in the midst of that uncertainty at the moment?

**GEORGE GREISS:** There's certainly a lot that's going on at the moment. It's very hard to keep up with what the current target or strategy is. Our perspective in Campbelltown, which is only where I can speak about with certainty, is we do welcome densification. There are better ways of doing it. We have put forward proposals and written to the Government asking them to try to work with us to densify our city centres in a way that can utilise public transport, in a way that can utilise current infrastructure as they are already built but at the same time not to decrease the quality of life of people that live in the area. I think we all understand that growth is coming and, as I said from my opening remark, 84 per cent of the growth happening in Sydney for the next 20-odd years is happening in our park city. We do expect and welcome growth—or I certainly do. The problem is, when it comes unplanned and it's a bit haphazard, we end up with the worst outcome that we could get.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** What would be your priority in response to that, in moving that forward, to give you that certainty? How would you prioritise, and what would be your recommendation?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I would prioritise dealing with actual city centre developments rather than pushing towards this transit-orientated development. As Charles said earlier, this is not a new idea. This was how Sydney was built, based on the 300-odd railway stations that we have, that was our planning strategy for a very long time. You put a station there, you put 5,000-odd dwellings, you put a school and, voila, you've got a new suburb. We need to look more at having concentration in cities where we can have not just density of housing but we need density of employment. We need density of services. We need network densities so everything is within the same walking distance so we can have a city that is more liveable, that is walkable, rather than a city that everybody has to jump on a train, regardless, or on a metro line.

I can't speak for certain to what's been planned, but what seems to me at the moment is we are continuing with the same traditional model where everyone is going to wake up in the morning, hop on a train and head into Parramatta CBD or Sydney CBD—or, possibly, somewhere in the future, into the airport with the 200,000 jobs that we've heard about earlier on. But what we really should be looking at is making sure that we create jobs locally so people don't have to do that. People can then live in density, have density of jobs and have the same lifestyle as you see in the eastern suburbs.

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** Chair, can I add—

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**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I will come to you in a moment, Mr Casuscelli. Have you had discussions and input into how you might achieve that—housing, infrastructure, education, amenity—with the budgetary implications? Have you had interactions with the Government about those, and how you might prioritise and achieve those?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I have tried, and I'm hoping that there will be an open dialogue as we go through. But, at the moment, we have written to the Government saying that we do welcome density and we want to work with them to make sure that we start with our CBD.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Have you had a response?

**GEORGE GREISS:** We haven't had a response to that yet. But that has been relatively recent. I'll be happy to elaborate on this a lot more later on this afternoon, when I'm speaking as the Mayor of Campbelltown rather than as the chair of the Parks. But, at the end, we are trying to do the best we can to house as many people as possible, but we just want to make sure that we have the connectivity to deal with it.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Taylor, you had something to add earlier.

**BEN TAYLOR:** Just in terms of adding to Dr Greiss' comments, in the south-west particularly, we have the fastest growing areas in New South Wales and Sydney and Australia. And we have land that is zoned. It is ready for housing, and actually the thing that is stopping the housing going into those places is State infrastructure, which are water and transport. For example, in the south-west, the Greater Macarthur, you've got around 20 years worth of housing supply that is zoned, ready for housing, but what it is lacking actually is water, sewer and transport. I just wanted to add that as well to the mayor's comments because I think that actually what we're looking at here in terms of the housing crisis is not necessarily a housing and zoning crisis but an infrastructure delivery crisis on the ground. When you look at, particularly, the Western Parkland City, we're looking for a change in focus away from the radial focus into Parramatta, into the city, to have the west connecting to the west.

On behalf of the Parks, our priority, even for those right down in the south, is a connection directly between the Macarthur and Schofields through the airport. So that north-south rail link is our number one priority as eight councils, 100 per cent, plus the connections from the other councils into the aerotropolis, which we see, obviously, as a hub for us in terms of future jobs. But one of the things that I think is missing from all of these strategies, the strategies that the Chair talked about—the Western Sydney transport infrastructure panel, the blueprint, urban development program, the growth infrastructure compacts—is thinking actually about how we create jobs locally and create a land that is focused on the west connecting to the west rather than all looking eastwards, towards where we used to focus.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Could I ask a follow-up? We're looking at going forward and, hopefully, the appropriate consultation that needs to happen to make sure we get a plan that works. What happened in the past? Why was there such a mismatch between, for example, having those housing lots ready to go? What was the nature of consultation? What was lacking that meant we ended up with this mismatch between projects delivered and need?

**BEN TAYLOR:** These are just observations. I can't tell you the exact fact. But, having worked at the officer level, what it appears is that the zoning precedes the infrastructure plan. Rather than those documents happening at exactly the same time, a rezoning in a place like Greater Macarthur happens without the detailed infrastructure plan signed off at the same time, and that's through a general desire, from the officers within the departments, to get the housing moving, but what they're not able to deliver is the commitments directly from Treasury for the transport and for the water infrastructure that's needed at the same time. It tends to follow. When it follows, sometimes it's a year later. Sometimes it's five years later. In Wilton, for example, it's 10, 15 years later that the actual infrastructure plans come, when the houses are already there on the ground.

**The CHAIR:** Can I just check with your comments earlier, just in relation to the north-south link being your greatest priority. Is it your evidence today that that's a greater priority than the Government building the Metro West?

**BEN TAYLOR:** To me?

**The CHAIR:** All of you—Dr Greiss to begin with.

**GEORGE GREISS:** Yes. For us it is, because that connects Macarthur to the airport and Macarthur to the northern Western Sydney. So for us, from a selfish perspective, it is more important.

**The CHAIR:** Selfish? You represent—what was it?—1.2 million people. It's not.

**BEN TAYLOR:** I would support the Chair's comments. Chair, particularly for the south-west, you have the fastest growing area in Australia. Look at Camden, for example. I think it's 120 new households every week,



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and those people do not have a public transport network at this stage, so they're going from a zero base. It's not about enhancing and providing a better service. It's going from a zero base, car only.

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** From a transport-planning perspective, I'll tell you why the Sydney Metro West doesn't make sense in my mind. One of the biggest capacity constraints on getting people to and from jobs in Western Sydney is the Western rail line. It's at capacity in the mornings, capacity in the evenings. So there's a different need: to increase the capacity between Parramatta, all the way up to Penrith. That's well known with transport professionals. So what happens is a government commits to building the Metro West, increases capacity between the CBD and Parramatta, but what does that do for people of Western Sydney that live at Blacktown and Glenmore Park and St Marys? It does nothing. You just can't get to the added capacity at Parramatta. In my mind, I'm thinking the transport professionals wouldn't do this without a reason. I think the reason is that the joint rail "needs scoping study" identified that other link, between Parramatta and the airport, as a connection that would drive a certain amount of capacity to make up for the capacity it's lacking there right now.

And also I think the other thing is that there's got to be plans within government to increase the capacity of the Western rail line. I'll tell you the reason why I think it's got to happen. One of the major advocacy positions for my board has been for over 20 years, is that, even when we identified the north-south rail link as something which is really important—and there's no-one who says it ain't important. The problem we have with it is that, if you put railway stations at the same spacing you have at the link between St Marys and the airport, the utility of that line is greatly diminished from the Western Sydney residents' and business' perspective. People don't build homes along a railway line, believe it or not. This may come as a shock to a lot of people. They build homes around railway stations, places that give them access to the transport capability.

That 65 kilometres from Schofields to Macarthur, at two-kilometre spacings, has space for over 30 railway stations, 30 new communities. Imagine what that means in terms of local economies, local education and local health facilities, different densities of living. You could actually accommodate the growth of Western Sydney along that corridor. I call it the corridor of liveability. You could accommodate the population growth. I think up to 700,000 people could be accommodated in that space, within walking distance of a railway station. That is a solution to Western Sydney's intra-regional issues that it has right now.

**The CHAIR:** Why isn't that the priority of State Government?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I've got to be careful what I say. I'm wearing different hats. I think, if you have a look at the commitment given for the St Marys to Western Sydney airport link from a transport professional's perspective—that outcome is mostly driven by the need to actually achieve a certain budgetary figure at the end of the day. The number of railway stations along that link was pretty much determined by how much money the Government thought it could spend at the time to deliver that piece of infrastructure.

If they take the same approach when they deliver the entire link—and I think it's only a matter of time. People of Western Sydney are cottoning on to the idea that we're missing out. But, if they take the same approach, that north-south rail link will be a disaster. It just doesn't have enough railway stations. I don't hear, within professional circles, discussions around things like, if we're going to build 65-kilometre link which is going to be a metro style, if you want to extend the metro from the west down to the south, and you're going to have 30 railway stations along the way, it's going to make for a pretty long journey, stopping at every railway station. Where are the discussions about if we added a little bit of investment? Couldn't we actually build a metro line that allows for express services to service the west, the north to the south, at the same time as servicing the local needs of people just wanting to get to the next township, the hospital down the road or the health facilities down the road?

What I'm hearing is there isn't a conversation, within professional circles, that would appropriately inform Ministers of the day in terms of making real decisions that last a long time. Sydney Harbour Bridge did something for the city. I think the north-south rail link in terms of the potential will be Western Sydney's defining moment in terms of shaping what it will become over the next 50 years. I'll bet my house on it—but I won't, for the purposes of this Committee, of course.

**The CHAIR:** What about bus services?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** It's a great question. I'm still amazed that there are documents, out in the public domain, that talk about rapid bus service between the airport, Bradfield City, the aerotropolis, if you like, and the adjoining regional centres, if you like. It talks about higher connectivity with Penrith, higher connectivity with Liverpool, higher connectivity with Campbelltown, and all these things are a given. They must occur. But why, in heaven's name, would you leave Blacktown out? Can someone explain to me why Blacktown isn't on those documents saying, "We need connectivity between the airport and Blacktown," just as we need it for Penrith and the others, for example?

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The other thing is, I think, in Sydney the bus network doesn't have the same sort of feel about it as rail does. Rail is permanent, it's there, you can depend on it and stuff like that. The bus network doesn't enjoy as high a reputation in the minds of its customers as rail does. But in Western Sydney there is an opportunity to take some real sexy, innovative stuff—I call it "sexy" because I get attention when I use that word. There are things around the world being deployed, like trackless trams, for example. One is being trialled in Western Australia in one of the cities even as we speak. The people that use these things talk about a tram-like experience more than a bus experience because it has all the features, all the wonderful attractions of trams but they are not fixed on rails. They can be deployed with minimal capital infrastructure around the public domain. That should be considered as an alternative to just taking a number of buses and making them run fast between the airport and these regional centres.

I think David Borger was absolutely spot on: What Western Sydney doesn't need are point-to-point fast bus services. It needs a bus network that is tied to the rail services of Western Sydney. As deficient as they may be, we need a network of connectivity. Point to point—the argument now between the State, in terms of funding what they determine to be the rapid bus capability in the city deal, is that it's got to be a little bit broader than just linking the airport to the regional centres. It's got to be more than that.

**The CHAIR:** What about the Sydney Parklands Councils?

**BEN TAYLOR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I suppose, from our point of view, first of all we're extremely disappointed that the so-called rapid bus doesn't appear that it is going to be a rapid bus connecting Campbelltown, Penrith, Liverpool and Bradfield. That is significantly disappointing for all of us. What I would say, though, is we see buses as transitional and complementary to rail. The priority still remains the south-north rail connection between Macarthur and Tallawong. The buses are complementary to that service, but also a way to transition away from completely car-based through to rail.

You have places in the south—for example, like Wilton and Appin—that at the moment have no public transport plans at all. An opportunity there is to put in a rapid bus service as a transitional arrangement until the population is at a scale that actually warrants a train line. We could actually see rapid buses be used in that sort of format across the Western Parkland City as the train line is then enhanced over time to follow and the bus network become, as Mr Casuscelli said, complementary to it. You have a network that feeds into the train line rather than it being the be-all and end-all.

I will finish before handing over to Dr Greiss and highlight the B-Line on the northern beaches. The B-Line was seen as something that was nice to have; it wasn't going to do much. Recently the study's come out that I understand said it delivered a 15 per cent modal shift away from cars and a 25 per cent time saving for the people who live in that area, which is significant from a relatively small investment for the people of that area. That's the sort of thing we're looking for in the short term, and then in the longer term for that to transition to metro or rail. Dr Greiss?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I agree we do definitely need a bus network that is fit for purpose. The rapid bus is disappointing that it is not going to be rapid. To get from Campbelltown to the new airport at the moment using public transport, when it's open it takes just a bit under two hours. It's actually quicker to get from Macquarie Park or Sydney CBD to the airport than it is from Campbelltown if you're using public transport—it's about a half-an-hour drive max, but to do it on public transport.

Now we are talking about a rapid bus but, unfortunately, because we're not doing the investment that was required to make the bus rapid, it is going to take over an hour again on public transport, if or once—I'm not sure, actually—we get that connection. We are talking about what people are claiming to be a game changer in Western Sydney and over 200,000 jobs being created, but the majority of Western Sydney cannot get access to it by public transport. When we talk about a rapid bus network that's going to take over an hour—72 minutes; I've heard that number running around somewhere—to get there, that's not a realistic target and that's not something that people will be using every day to try to get where they are. It's actually quicker to get to Sydney CBD.

**The CHAIR:** Can you talk the Committee through the reasons why—you're saying it's not rapid. I think you said 72 minutes?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I haven't received any formal commitments at the moment, but that's some of the words I've heard somewhere. I can't really remember where it came from. Ben, you might know.

**BEN TAYLOR:** Thank you, Dr Greiss. For the Committee's information, the original commitment in the city deal between the councils and the State and Federal governments was for a rapid bus network connecting Liverpool, Penrith, Campbelltown and Bradfield, or the new airport. Our understanding now is that that service will not be rapid in its first instance when it opens. The commitment, as I understand it, is that a service will be in place to connect those centres and the new airport. However, it will simply be a normal bus service because of the

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lack of infrastructure and foresight, I suppose, in investing in what's needed to provide a rapid transport service. I understand it will, over time, evolve into a rapid network, but not from day one of the new airport.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** On that, the characteristics that make it a rapid network as opposed to not are things like dedicated lanes. Could you just expand on that so I understand a bit more the difference between the two?

**BEN TAYLOR:** I suppose the word "rapid" makes a lot of sense. The bus rapid transit is a continuum. You go from the basic bus service through to the highly rapid bus service, but the far continuum effectively is almost like a train line, where you have the stations that exist in the middle of the road, you have a wholly dedicated lanes and you have priority through intersections or you have overpasses and underpasses. Because of that, it effectively operates like a train line, and so you can cover the distance really quickly. You can move through a lot of the buses at the same time, which means you get a huge volume as well. You can almost get the volume of a train line with a bus service.

What can happen is that if you don't have the priority through the intersections, you don't have the dedicated bus lanes, you don't have enough buses, it's not fast enough and people won't use it. Because people won't use it, then the investment doesn't come and it becomes a bit of a chicken and egg here. Our understanding is that what we're getting in the first instance is a normal bus service, and over time that will then evolve into a rapid bus service. But we haven't seen the detail behind how it will evolve.

**The CHAIR:** Was it a commitment for it to be rapid, and commencing from when? Was it a commitment for it to originally be rapid?

**BEN TAYLOR:** My understanding, Chair, was that in the city deal, which was signed between the Federal, State and local governments, it was committed to be a rapid bus service connecting those three centres and the new airport from the opening of the airport—from day one of the opening.

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** That's right.

**The CHAIR:** Was it notified that it would no longer be rapid? When were you notified of that?

**BEN TAYLOR:** Approximately six to 12 months ago, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any other questions? We will go to Ms Ward and then to Ms Merton.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Certainly. Thank you, Chair. I'm happy for Ms Merton to go first. I've had a go. If she'd like to jump in, I'm more than happy.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you very much, Ms Ward. Gentlemen, the Federal Government is presiding over one of the largest growths in migration numbers to Western Sydney in Australia's history. We've had acknowledgement of that in earlier comments today. We're also seeing, in the same breath, announcing the unprecedented cuts in infrastructure in New South Wales—cuts of \$3.5 billion to key infrastructure projects here. If I could just add, then we've also seen housing targets set by the Albanese Government—and agreed here by the Minns Government—with much of the increase to be absorbed by Western Sydney. In this environment, what is the view as to these massive cuts to infrastructure spending and what we think the impact will be on future public transport needs and availability in Western Sydney?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** There's an interesting dynamic at play in Western Sydney. The dynamic is this: Local government doesn't have a say in setting immigration policy, end of story. However, the services that are increasingly being contested by new immigrants are either delivered by or have an impact by the amount of money that local government has to spend on delivering those services. We've been trying for quite some time, as an advocacy position, that local government must have a greater say at least to inform the Federal Government of what the likely impacts will be of increased immigration levels in Western Sydney. We know what they're going to be. You have a range of services—look, relative to when my parents came out from Italy, we have a wonderful suite of services to support immigrants to our great nation.

The problem is that there's a disproportionate impact on local government and its services to actually deal with that issue. The fact that we don't have a say and we just get told numbers—mostly by media announcements—by the Federal Government doesn't help us in planning these services that are required. The interesting proposition is that as these immigrants—actually, let me say this. Regardless of the Federal Government's view—and, to a lesser extent, the State Government's—that we can make certain areas attractive for new immigrants so that we can inform their decision-making as to where they will eventually settle, the reality is, given the Fairfield, Liverpool, Cumberland and Parramatta experience, they will settle where they most feel comfortable. That's existing communities and existing cultures, and the like.

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In terms of transport, the immigrants ain't going to come out here and buy a car—the majority of them. They're going to come out here and they're going to be dependent on the social fabric. One of those things that we need to provide is reasonable public transport throughout the region where they're going to be residing. There's no question that Western Sydney is going to be doing this. The impact to them will be that they're going to find it increasingly difficult. The social tensions within their communities will rise. The lack of transport and the new influx of immigrants makes existing transport capabilities less effective, if you like. The customer experience lessens for everybody. I think one of the major things that's got to happen is we've got to become a little bit better at forecasting and helping to shape the immigration agenda, and do some proper planning about service delivery, not only about transport, but a range of other services as well.

The interesting thing in Western Sydney is that local government has a schools deficiency, and the impact of the skills and talent deficiency within local government impacts the productivity of the State and the State's economy. That's how bad it actually is. On one hand, we want increased immigration of those people that actually can help us solve that problem, but as we know there's a time lag. We want increased immigration, but the problem is that because it's not necessarily targeted to those things that we actually need—there's a process of getting people through the visa system. Getting the local accreditation is so time-consuming and costly that local government, just as one sector, will suffer from skills deficiencies for quite some time. We welcome immigration to try to sort out that particular problem we have in local government, because it impacts everybody.

**GEORGE GREISS:** Let me take it in reverse order, if I may.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Yes, I appreciate that I put the three issues to you, but just answer in terms of the mix and how we manage this.

**GEORGE GREISS:** Western Sydney in general, and certainly the parklands, are very heavily car-dependent. There is no way around that. It's not our choice. It's not something that we choose to do. We are not doing it for fun; we have to. We have no other way of getting around. Any cut to infrastructure around our road network will have a huge impact on our city going forward. Realistically, as we go forward—hopefully this Committee will resolve to get us a north-south connection. That's still going to take a very significant time to build. The reality is that we need this investment, and it is very disappointing that the Federal Government chose to cut those.

As far as immigration, the reality is that most immigrants that land in Australia will live in Sydney or end up in some parts of Western Sydney—whether it's around Parramatta, Liverpool, Fairfield or Penrith or Blacktown. This is where they tend to go. Any increase in the intake will have an impact on Western Sydney—not just from a service perspective, but also from an infrastructure and housing deficit. Now it's a double hit. We are increasing the number of people coming in, but we are decreasing the ability for them to travel around, and we are not giving them any other alternative because we have not built the infrastructure from a public perspective so they can catch these buses or metros or trains.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** To each of you, has your organisation engaged in any advocacy or communication to the Albanese Government concerning these unprecedented cuts to infrastructure spending?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** From WSROC's perspective, we haven't done anything yet, except we're lining up meetings with some Ministers and we've got some media announcements ready to go.

**BEN TAYLOR:** Similar; we are looking at the same sort of thing. I would suggest as well that what was a little bit surprising about the timing of that release was that at the same time the Western Sydney Transport Infrastructure Panel report was released. That document actually highlights the need for investment in roads and public transport across Western Sydney. We would like to see those initiatives supported and funded into the future.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Further, did the Albanese Government engage or consult with your organisation in the phase leading up to the announcement of the huge housing targets, which New South Wales has agreed to?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** No.

**GEORGE GREISS:** No, we had very minimum engagement with the Albanese Government.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Did the Minns Government engage or consult with your organisation in the phase leading up to the agreement to these new housing targets? The targets are something like 75,000 homes each year that New South Wales needs to deliver on for the next five years under the National Housing Accord.

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**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** There were no regional forums that were held or proposed that we knew about where we had input as a region as to the setting of those targets and what it meant.

**GEORGE GREISS:** We had zero engagement.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any questions from Ms Ward?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Going back to Mr Taylor and your comments on infrastructure, I wanted to follow up on that. You mentioned the obvious need for services and water. How do you see that playing out? Can you expand on your comments about that? Obviously you can't just pop more houses in without having the infrastructure and water and services that go to them. There are challenges around that. How would you have input to achieving that and how do you see that being dealt with?

**BEN TAYLOR:** Thank you. The comments were particularly related to land that is already zoned for housing. One of our challenges is probably some under-resourcing, perhaps, or some being stretched thin within the infrastructure agencies. It appears to us that Sydney Water, for example, and Transport are stretched quite thin in terms of their allocation of resources to the on-the-ground detail to plan the water, waste water, road and public transport networks in those growth areas particularly. As a result, it does take some time for the infrastructure plans in detail to come to fruition. At the same time, the houses are being built on the ground and so we have extended periods of time where the houses are having to truck out effluent from the towns because of the fact that the trunk infrastructure—the Sydney Water infrastructure—is not in place.

We are getting the same sort of thing now on Transport as well, where some of the roads or some of the intersections aren't able to be upgraded at the right time. As a result, that is actually slowing down housing supply because the councils can't sign off the subdivision certificates and can't sign off the DAs until certain intersections are upgraded. That is the on-the-ground challenge we are having with housing delivery. What that all rolls back to is the fact that the infrastructure plans aren't signed off at the very start when the rezonings are happening. The Government is trying to address this. There is an urban development program now, which is analysing the whole infrastructure need across the Western Parkland City. It is looking in detail as to what's needed, but we've still got a lot of catch-up to play for things that were done in the past, where land was rezoned without the appropriate infrastructure plans in place.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** In relation to that, what input have you had with the Government on those infrastructure plans?

**BEN TAYLOR:** My officers at a council level—and talking about Wollondilly specifically—worked directly with the planning department as part of the urban development program and are analysing the infrastructure needs for the areas that are needed. I understand also that officers from the other councils across our area are also engaged at a senior level. That engagement is happening well up-front. Again, where we do struggle is where land is rezoned without the infrastructure plans being put in place in the first place.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Obviously the challenge of retrofitting that is much more costly and difficult for you to then deliver on those targets, I would have thought.

**BEN TAYLOR:** Well, that's right. It's also—

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It's just a [inaudible] on that challenge.

**BEN TAYLOR:** It's also, I suppose, a challenge for the communities of that area because you have big greenfield areas that are being redeveloped and there are existing communities already in there. If they can't see in detail the future infrastructure plans, then, unsurprisingly, they react negatively to the change. Instead of embracing the new facilities and the new roads, the new public transport, the new schools and the new hospitals that they will be receiving with the population growth, some of them, naturally, tend to oppose the growth because of the fact that it doesn't come with those services and facilities on the ground.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Understandably. I'd want those with housing. You'd hope that you've got water and sewerage and eventually, in time, roads with schools and hospitals and education. That's helpful. Thank you. What ongoing input do you have in relation to those areas, and not only the infrastructure but reaching the targets as sort of ongoing engagement opportunities for you? I might put that to each of the witnesses.

**BEN TAYLOR:** I will jump in first, if that's okay. Again, from a council level, I can't talk on behalf of all the parks, but my officers are involved with the planning department and also Transport and Sydney Water. For each of the growth areas there is a project control group that looks through the detail and seeks to finalise the detail for the infrastructure plans in that area. I would comment that, going forward, it is positive, but where we do have trouble is in the longer term planning. When you're talking about greenfield planning for areas, you're talking about providing schools, hospitals and public transport systems that are beyond the short-term budget

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cycles. What we need, more than anything, is actually to have a clear understanding of when schools will be delivered on the ground in five, 10, 15 or 20 years' time. The Government isn't in a position or the officers aren't in a position to commit to those timings because of the fact that they can't provide funding beyond the short-term budget cycles. It sort of creates a bit of a catch-22 where we can't plan adequately because we can't get firm, long-term commitments as to when the infrastructure will be provided.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just to clarify, that project control group sits within Planning. Is that right?

**BEN TAYLOR:** Yes, that's correct.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** How often does that meet?

**BEN TAYLOR:** That's on a monthly basis.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** What you're saying in terms of timing makes complete sense. Being relatively new in government, there's been quite a period of time that hasn't been in the control of the current Government. I'm still not clear on what processes were happening previously. Let's go positive and negative. What should we be continuing that worked well, and what wasn't happening that we might want to consider?

**BEN TAYLOR:** I think the relationship between the department of planning and council, speaking from a Wollondilly point of view, is good. There is good engagement from the officers. They're positive; they're seeking to resolve the issues that need to be resolved. I would say that the ability of the department of planning to secure the long-term infrastructure priorities out of the infrastructure agencies, such as transport or education or health, is limited. I do think they need to be given—let's call it a bit more teeth in the game to seek to secure those big-ticket infrastructure pieces into the future, because that will then provide communities certainty. I also would say that, as part of any rezoning process, my advice to this Committee and Government wholly is to sign off on the infrastructure plans at the same time, so when a large area is rezoned the structure plan detailing the big-ticket infrastructure items and the timing for when they will be delivered is signed off at the same time, not six—

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** So that wasn't happening previously? That hasn't happened to date?

**BEN TAYLOR:** Not in my observation.

**The CHAIR:** You were talking about Wilton and Appin. Even now, not even a basic bus service is being planned there. Is that correct?

**BEN TAYLOR:** For Wilton, Chair, there is a transport interchange as part of the town centre, but there is no clear plan for when the bus service will turn up. For Appin, there is a transport corridor as part of the overall structure plan. But, again, we don't have the detail as yet on what that transport mode will even look like and when the buses or the trams or the trains will turn up.

**The CHAIR:** Is it your expectation that Wilton town centre will be completed by the time houses are completed and people are in their houses? I thought there was a delay to that, or is that on track?

**BEN TAYLOR:** There are people living in Wilton now. There are 2,000 houses in Wilton now; there are another few thousand being developed in North Wilton. In the town centre itself, rezoning has come into effect. They're seeking to finalise, at the moment, the planning agreement with the State Government over the delivery of some of the State infrastructure within the town centre. I would anticipate that we will see some of the houses within that town centre before the commercial core and the school and the transport interchange come. But from a whole-of-community point of view, we'd actually rather to see it flipped on its head, so that the school and the public transport infrastructure and the jobs are delivered first. The challenge is actually making that work economically, particularly for the developer.

**The CHAIR:** We just have a couple of minutes left. Are there any final comments before we break for morning tea?

**CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** If I could just add, what Ben has said I totally agree with. He's spot on. If I have a criticism, we do the typical thing that councils do: We write letters to Ministers, we meet with them, we talk about it and we do all that stuff. Councils have been very intimately involved in helping to draft the district plans, for example, when we had the three cities metropolis—now the five cities or six cities metropolis. But the one thing I've always had concerns about, and I've articulated this on a number of occasions, is that while we get councils together and we talk about the infrastructure that's required for liveable communities in terms of today's contemporary standards of what liveability actually is—and that translates pretty well in terms of definitive outcomes when we put the plans together. One of the things I've always had a problem with, and I keep asking the Greater Cities Commission, was how do you determine regional priorities when infrastructure serves the needs outside of the particular city or outside a particular grouping of LGAs, for example?

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There are facilities that have regional benefits. Where is the form or where is the process that you get the interested stakeholders together to try to give some priority to—what are the things that we need to be building that have regional benefits? It's big-picture stuff. Normally, that's been done by the New South Wales public service through its different agencies. Normally, it's done pretty much by them, and then there are announcements made. Through the Greater Cities Commission process, I actually said, "Where do we have the forum to talk about sporting facilities that serve the greater regional good, for example? Where do we have conversations about where are the likely places for the next generation of waste infrastructure?" Everyone knows that waste is best handled outside of LGAs, so it's best to handle it at the regional level.

The comment I got back was, "Look, we'll consider it. We'll get the inputs from individual councils, and we'll bring it together, and then we'll form a thing." But individual councils may not have the same perspective in terms of what the greater good for the region may actually be. The conversation was, "Can we have a forum where we can discuss the regional priorities of regional infrastructure?" Up until now, that hasn't actually manifested itself in any forum that I'm familiar with. There is still a gap where local government can't influence the regional priority settings outside of the things that it determines are of greatest need to their community of interest. That's the one thing.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Dr Greiss, you're appearing later today, so is it okay if we leave it there? We are out of time.

**GEORGE GREISS:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. If Committee members have any other questions, they can provide them via supplementary questions. I appreciate your evidence today.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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**Mr STEVE MANN**, Chief Executive Officer, Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witness. Do you have a short opening statement to make?

**STEVE MANN:** Thanks for the opportunity to appear before this inquiry and focus on the future transport needs in Western Sydney. UDIA began its operations in Western Sydney 60 years ago in 1963; many of our 500 member companies very much operate in those markets today. Our strategy focuses on "We are city-shapers". We believe that developers, together with government and the community, are shaping the future of our cities, and we advocate for them being liveable, affordable and connected smart cities. In our submission, we shared with you UDIA's policy platform, the NextGen West Manifesto, which is two years of work with government and industry looking at how to open up the west and the big issues for the west.

There are three things in NextGen West which are crucial for this inquiry. The first one is the need to start planning for new rail lines to better connect the west with the west; the second, that the New South Wales Government charges its appropriate rail business cases to focus on accessibility in order to achieve greater integration with land use planning and transport over the current approach, which focuses on time and time travel savings; and that the New South Wales Government plan to increase the number of stations at key transit hubs across Greater Western Sydney to provide higher density, creating transit-oriented development—i.e., cities within cities.

Western Sydney falls behind the Eastern Harbour City for most liveability indicators. As our submission shows in table 1—if anyone is looking, it is on page 9—whether it is the average salary, housing affordability or unemployment, the Western Parkland City and the Central River City are last or second last; yet they will accommodate more population growth in the decades ahead. Clearly, in terms of access to public transport, there is a mismatch in relation to the more established Eastern Harbour City, which has almost four times the number of stations and more than double the number of heavy and light rail lines. As a result, car dependency is significantly higher in the Western Parkland City compared to the Eastern Harbour City and time spent on public transport is typically two or three times the eastern city.

The obvious gap in the current network is the south-west growth precinct: the Leppington connection to the aerotropolis, and the north-south metro line currently terminating at Bradfield. There are plans to join Leppington and Bradfield by rail and to extend the metro line from Bradfield to Macarthur via Oran Park and Narellan, but there has been no commitment to timing nor budget since the announcement in 2018. We have to get this right if Sydney is going to maintain its global competitiveness and attract the talent we need to grow our businesses in Western Sydney. There has never been a time when the phrase "density done well" is more important. From our members' perspective, the delivery of new rail line infrastructure offers a once-in-a-generation chance to deliver high-quality, high-density living close to public transport.

Historically, New South Wales has not taken full advantage of city-shaping opportunities for key transport infrastructure. Instead, it has focused on a siloed business case for transport, with that focus being travel time savings. Often, this approach centres on the now outdated concept of delivering shorter travel times between existing CBD centres, rather than the power of rail infrastructure to support the creation of new employment and housing centres in between existing CBDs— i.e., this concept of cities within cities. The current transport approach typically results in fewer stations, and this has occurred with the west Sydney metro, which has large distances between stations. The best example is Parramatta to Olympic Park, which is six or seven kilometres. We welcome the review of this Government into Metro West currently being undertaken.

The scale of public transport infrastructure needed to service Western Sydney is very significant and will take time to deliver. However, integrated land use planning along already protected rail corridors should commence immediately so that landowners and developers have the certainty required to plan for the long-lead time projects but, more importantly, so that community benefits from the eventual delivery of that infrastructure can be maximised. Strategic planning for both the major rail projects in south-west Sydney should commence immediately, with a strong focus on driving housing supply to address the existing and future housing shortages and to ensure that a network of rail-based centres can be delivered over time to meet the growing needs of the west.

A focus on transit-oriented development—building homes near major public transport—is critical. A prime example of this is the current planning proposal for homes and commercial precincts around the established Leppington railway station, the delivery of the Western Sydney airport metro by 2026, and city-making infrastructure solutions such as the aerotropolis roads package, which will connect the west with the west. UDIA believes that the current process demonstrates the need for government to act and take control of the delivery of these types of precincts by establishing a delivery authority to lead all aspects of planning through to



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implementation. The authority would have responsibility from consolidating land holdings, setting aside existing restrictive controls, and developing new aspirational goals for design, energy efficiency, carbon emissions, public services and open space which aim to deliver improved value for government, communities and business.

UDIA also believes that the New South Wales Government must take bold action to ensure residents have reliable and affordable transport options. UDIA has long advocated for innovative private funding models, which can capitalise on enabling infrastructure like roads being delivered alongside developments. A progressive Works-in-Kind policy could allow industry to deliver the necessary infrastructure for rapid bus services, transport hubs around new greenfield and infill development, and drive housing options for workers around existing heavy rail and metro stations in the Western Parkland City. Works-in-Kind and land dedication provides opportunities for a developer to forward-fund and accelerate the delivery of a particular item of infrastructure in advance of government's business case planning activities.

In summary, this inquiry will see great alignment from the community in Western Sydney, its councils, business and residents that now is the time to deliver city-shaping transport for the residents of Western Sydney. It's urgent, and there is much at stake for the economy and for our communities alike. UDIA stands ready to assist government in this. Infrastructure is holding back growth and liveability in Western Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** In your opening statement, you mentioned that you welcome a review into Metro West. What do you hope to be the outcome of the review?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes, we did a lot of work on advocating for more railway stations on that piece of railway line, and we feel like the objective of a 20-minute travel was the overriding the decision-making piece. That will be bad for housing affordability. It will be bad for Sydney's global competitiveness. It takes 90 seconds for a train to stop, and integrating that with development can have fantastic outcomes in the long term. What we've got to do is match up transport planning, which begins at 50 years, with city planning that ends at 20 years. It is a massive gap between the two. We need much greater alignment, and we do a lot of that work using geospatial thinking that allows you to think about what the future city might look like and plan for it alongside transport.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of stations, what priorities have you put to government? What are the main priorities, in terms of Metro West, to begin with?

**STEVE MANN:** For Metro West, the obvious missing piece is the six or seven kilometres between Parramatta and Homebush. We've done a huge amount of work on Camellia being that alternative. It is about 1.6 kilometres from Parramatta. We think Parramatta's growth is pretty much done after 20 years. So there is a huge opportunity—like there was way back in the Olympics in 2000—to regenerate a site that does have challenges from contamination, and a station would be the ideal way to do that. Developers will do a lot of the heavy lifting on that work. We've studied how the rail orientation could easily change. In fact, the rail currently requires an evacuation tunnel because the distance is so long and wouldn't require it if there was a railway station. So there is wasted money in that business case. It has come out of this mismatch of long-term planning for transport and shorter term planning for cities, and we've got to get better at doing the two together. Possibly two stations could fit in that six kilometres.

**The CHAIR:** I was about to ask that.

**STEVE MANN:** Yes, quite easily. I won't debate where the other ones could be, but there are a few possibilities flying around. As soon as someone takes those glasses off and looks longer term, there will be a realisation that cities could be offered in those locations, and we can share in the cost of those as a development industry if we get it right.

**The CHAIR:** We've had witnesses this morning talk about the importance of that north-south connection. I think you did as well.

**STEVE MANN:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** What about the priority in terms of Government spending on infrastructure? We heard from previous witnesses about the north-south link being almost more important than Metro West, but is that the next priority? Should it be prioritised and committed to now, in your opinion?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes. We've done an enormous amount of work over about five years studying that north-south connection. We've always been hugely impressed with the councils at both ends—Campbelltown and Penrith, particularly. They have been advocating together for that work for over a decade, probably heading towards 15 years now. We're excited that we're tackling the first part of that in the north, but what is the city that goes with those stations? The city has not been planned. If you want affordable housing and if you want jobs closer to homes, you've got to plan the city when you're delivering the rail. There is an obvious connection around

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the hook to join Leppington to Bradfield, and at the same time to be getting to Narellan and Oran Park where there is already strong growth.

With some of the resilience issues in the north-west, the south-west will become the powerhouse growth centre. It has been the north-west for most of the last decade, but the south is taking over and will be the long-term story as we stretch all the way up into Wollondilly. Those connections are hugely important. We've done an 18-station, 24,000-building connected TOD city using technology. I know the value of an apartment in every one of those 24,000 buildings so that we can study this long-term city and how it needs to emerge. The city only emerges when you've done enough planning and enough work on enabling infrastructure so that transport comes with water, sewerage, power and roads to successfully deliver that density. In that table I talked about on page 9, there's only one indicator where Western Sydney is not the worst. That is on having a detached home. So there's clearly opportunity for density in Western Sydney to catch up on that front.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you, Mr Mann, for your work in this area and the comprehensive detail in your submission. It is very helpful. You talk in your submission about evidence-based research and the work you've done in that. Could you speak to that? In terms of the cost, in particular, in relation to a site such as Camellia, which you've mentioned, have you done any of that evidence-based research on costing and what would be involved in remediating the Camellia contamination? You said developers would be prepared to share in the cost of that. Have your members indicated they'd be prepared to share in the cost of that remediation? How do you see that challenge being overcome?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes, very much so. I believe there have been unsolicited proposals to do exactly that. The developers will face that anyway as they build the city part of somewhere like Camellia, so they've already built that into their feasibilities. With the tunnel itself—I'm not an expert, but tunnels encapsulate quite well. I don't think there are huge issues there. I know the developers have studied that with the metro, and there is a deal of agreement around how that could be achieved.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** When you say they don't have a problem with that, it's obviously a significant cost, though. Are you indicating in your evidence that your developers are prepared to share that cost and that you have some numbers around that?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes, I do and Government does as well, but they're in unsolicited proposals. I believe they would share—that word is a good word. They would share in those costs. It needs to come with integrated city approvals. That's how you achieve certainty. It needs to come with enabling infrastructure so that development can proceed. All of that is very achievable in Camellia. If you study it carefully—it's called the River City. There is twice the amount of frontage to the river in Camellia than there is in Parramatta. There is a huge opportunity to make about three kilometres of connection with the river and get that to be useful and opened up for community as you go through and develop. If you think about the neighbours, you've got a racecourse, you've got industrial and you've got the old petrochemical piece. The neighbours are fine. You've got a little bit of Rosehill but across some very significant intersections. So it's ideal. It couldn't be better. I have a boardroom wall which has every road in Sydney on it, and you can see the grey bits where there is no development. That is a grey piece right in the middle of our city.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** In terms of addressing that remediation cost and the changes to planning, and given that the work is already underway, so there would be some roll-on effect, could you comment to the Committee about your evidence and share some information about potential delay? You've talked about needing certainty from Government. I agree with you that having certainty around that allows for planning, given it does take quite some time to plan and implement such enormous projects. Could you speak to what evidence you have about those costs and the potential delay, if that were to be changed, and how you see that being met?

**STEVE MANN:** Our focus hasn't been so much on cost; it has been more on value. There are some broad numbers around on cost that give you a decent idea. But, as I said, the bulk of the remediation problem is the developers, as I understand it, not so much the transport piece of work. There would be some there, but I think the value that's created could easily outweigh that. In terms of the bigger picture, let's get above Camellia. Let's focus on that north-south rail. We're building from St Marys to our new city, next to the aerotropolis at Bradfield. There are something like six stations. We would advocate that there should be eight. We don't know the city at any of those stations. We haven't thought about the road connections to them. We haven't thought about water. We're not taking advantage of that railway line.

What will happen is we'll retrofit it over time, which means you lose value, you lose impact and you lose accessibility. UDIA has done a huge amount of work with University of Sydney professor David Levinson. He makes a simple proposition in his work. It is that cities should be made for access. Sounds great, doesn't it? Cities should be made for people, not just a railway line going through a city. We need to do better at this planning challenge and so does the Federal Government. They call it a city-shaping project. It will be city shaping in another

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decade if we're not careful, not now when we're building it. Integrating all of those pieces and working with the development industry to integrate and consolidate as best we can is crucial.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** To continue on that, you won't get disagreement from me about having to plan for it but, again, the challenge is in the implementation. What ongoing dialogue have you had with the Government about that?

**STEVE MANN:** Lots, on and off. The piece to own is the word "integration" and the disconnection of 50-year planning and 20-year planning. That's the piece we've got to get on top of. The Government is constantly worried about losing value. That's exactly what happens because they keep it disconnected. They're worried about bringing it together—that value will move out too quickly. I think that that can be resolved with that integration story.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** In terms of that ongoing engagement, do you have a program of ongoing engagement? Has the Government invited you to be part of those discussions? How is that going forward?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes and no. I think that's why you're having your inquiry—because there just isn't enough integration. There's a focus of rail people delivering rail and city people delivering cities. It's challenging but far from impossible. A good place to look is in Auckland right now, where a new metro is being planned and the city is being planned at the same time. The development of that city has been planned. It is very impressive.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just to clarify, am I to understand your evidence to be that you don't have any program of ongoing engagement with the Government that's planned now?

**STEVE MANN:** No. Correct.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Is that of concern to you?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes. Really, tell me the body that that would be. There are a whole lot of different bodies. That's the challenge.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just one is a start.

**STEVE MANN:** It probably was the Greater Cities Commission, but their brief is much broader and certainly their reach into transport was not strong enough to drive that integrated outcome.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Your submission speaks to funding for design delivery. How do you see that being addressed?

**STEVE MANN:** Funding is clearly a challenge. I think the first part of it is to get over the idea that you're protecting value by waiting and delivering a railway station first and then trying to deliver the city. Just take a look at the Sydney Metro Northwest. They made that decision very hard to go back to a community who's got their railway station and now say, "We want to deliver the city that goes with it." If you think deeply about the wall of change our cities are facing—climate change, liveability, resilience and this TOD idea of cities within cities where people can walk to a railway station and get quick access to jobs, remembering that you only live in a city to access things so it's actually all about access. We're blowing that by not getting that done up-front. To retrofit it is extremely difficult. You battle with community rather than actually helping community recognise that there could be less cars and more open space and this balance of density that delivers services, which could be different types of railway stations. You could have employment-focused railway stations in the balance.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** I've been trying to understand the balance between what we should be doing in future. It would be fair to say that for some time we haven't been grappling with the issues of planning and delivery as effectively as we could.

**STEVE MANN:** Yes.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** You talk about convenience a lot in your submission and highlighting the importance of convenience to encourage people in Western Sydney to utilise public transport. I just wondered if you could explain a bit more what convenience looks like for users. It's more than just being very close to a station, isn't it?

**STEVE MANN:** I think being close is one of the keys. This opportunity of TOD—which I think this Government is really grappling with now, which is great—goes right back to some of our very first railways. We don't have TOD throughout them and often with lower density. For Western Sydney, it is more spread out and it will continue to be, so it's that balance of having some intense living that delivers that service that certain types of families will want and some living that requires some transport in. If that can be on buses, that would be best. Maybe, in time, that would be a last-minute type of travel, as opposed to families needing two or three cars. That's where we've got to see the change for Sydney to remain globally competitive.

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**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** I'm also interested in the other types of technology and tracking and those kinds of things. Could you explain a bit more about that?

**STEVE MANN:** A lot of our work, when we think about cities, has gone geospatial. The power of geospatial is that you can actually come up with a concept or some scenarios of a concept very quickly. When it came to Camellia, I drew three cities in Camellia in 3D. With computational design, you can understand the cost and the make-up of that city incredibly quickly. I can move roads and change the make-up of that city. Will it be the one you finally plan? No, but it will be 75 per cent close to it and you can understand the cost and the value impact. I think that's going to be incredibly important but I think government gets nervous about showing industry that work. But we're not confident it's doing it itself and understanding the optimal city. We've got to get it absolutely right for Sydney if we're to attract global talent. If your home is more expensive and if your travel time is longer, you're going to live somewhere else. That's proving a bigger and bigger challenge for Sydney. It is the second least affordable city in the world. It has been second or third now for about eight years.

**The CHAIR:** You were talking about coordination and basically the lack of coordination. On 1 January we will have a new department—the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. Is that going to fix the problems, do you think, in terms of coordination? How are you feeling in terms of being positive about that change by the Government?

**STEVE MANN:** I think we've got such an enormously deep housing crisis—and I suspect we will for decades ahead of us—that aligning delivery and cleaning out any roadblocks to that delivery is absolutely crucial at the moment. Some of that strategic thinking is now pushed in and probably focused on that delivery piece. What we've got to do—and I think this Government is embracing that challenge—is recognise the opportunity of TOD. But it's more than TOD. It's thinking about the future and the big challenges for our cities. That's climate change, jobs closer to home and liveability.

One of the things we recommend is a delivery authority. If you think about it, if you're going to create a TOD outcome, then your site might have no development because you want a park on it or your site might have 30 storeys. You just need a delivery authority to work that out because that won't happen quickly if it's as difficult as that. If you can work through that in a delivery authority and either acquire the land or work out the FSRs to make sure everyone is part of delivering that upside, then it will happen more quickly and you will get a better place outcome.

**The CHAIR:** So TOD means transit-oriented development, for the purposes of Hansard? You are throwing a few acronyms in here. You just said FSR as well.

**STEVE MANN:** Floor space ratio.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you, Mr Mann, for your participation and expertise here. The Federal Government is presiding over one of the largest growth in migration numbers to Western Sydney in Australia's history. We've already seen in the same breath unprecedented cuts of \$3.5 billion to infrastructure in New South Wales. The third point is that we've seen massive housing targets agreed to by both the Albanese and the Minns Government. In this environment, what is the view of your organisation on the Albanese massive cuts to infrastructure spending when we're confronting these issues today?

**STEVE MANN:** Disappointing. I was in Canberra last week telling them exactly that. I met with Minister King and we communicated our concern that you can't go halfway as a developer. They are developing the Western Sydney airport and we think that's absolutely fabulous for Western Sydney, but that airport is all about accessibility and it's actually about the centre of a new city—the lateral north-south Western Parkland City. It is the most important city to Sydney's future, in terms of its competitiveness. In terms of its growth, it is expected to take the bulk of that growth. Our message is don't go halfway; finish it off.

We give the same message to the State Government: Work together to plan the cities before we deliver the infrastructure—with the infrastructure. Another one of our strong recommendations is works in kind. Allow the developer to deliver a bunch of that infrastructure. As long as it can offset its costs without taking on additional risk, you'll get it much more quickly than government being able to do it. In fact, this Government's policy of the Housing and Productivity Contribution is actually a no-nexus fund. Ironically, that's very powerful for Treasury to do things like works in kind. Get on with that and that and that, and we can fund it from a no-nexus pool of funds in H&PC. There is a real opportunity to grow it. In fact, the aerotropolis will fail if you don't put in place a progressive works-in-kind policy, in our view.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Further, did the Albanese Government engage or consult with your organisation in the phase leading up to the announcement of the new housing targets?

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**STEVE MANN:** Of the new housing targets? A little. We're very engaged with them on the challenge of housing right across Australia. UDIA is delivering, again, a geospatial project where we will map the 15-year geospatial growth in every capital city in Australia. We're very engaged with the Feds around the importance of that leadership and that word "productivity". Productivity should be the focus of everything we're trying to do in cities. How do we do it more affordably and with greater integration?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you. Just to follow up, in your submission under point 2, you're talking about the NextGen West and you make reference to housing affordability and ensuring "the right balance of density and diversity to address the affordability and supply crisis". Could you elaborate a little bit more on the density and diversity?

**STEVE MANN:** Yes. We've spoken a fair bit about density, so the transit-oriented development approach. I think the other key is diversity because affordability looks different for me than it looks for you than it looks different for the next family. So that diversity of products, the different types of housing—and, again, we're excited about the strong step forward last week from this Government in medium density—I've got to be careful to not use acronyms—all the way from different types of housing, multi-generation housing, smaller lot housing, affordable housing, social housing, all the way through to retirement living and aged care. That's where we've got to see growth, in all these different types. And, as I said, the missing piece in Western Sydney is apartments and higher density living than that medium-density piece.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. That's the end of this session, unfortunately. We could have kept talking. We will get in touch with you if we have any supplementary questions.

**STEVE MANN:** Thank you.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

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**Mr MICK OWENS**, General Manager, Greenfields Development Company No. 2 Pty Ltd, sworn and examined

**Mr MARK PERICH**, Director, Greenfields Development Company No. 2 Pty Ltd, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome. Does either of you have a short opening statement to make?

**MICK OWENS:** Yes. I will start off, please. Greenfields Development Company is a privately owned company by the Perich family with significant landholdings in the south-west. The one that I'm predominantly responsible for is called Oran Park and the extensions to the north of that. Over time, over the next 20 years, we will create a whole community and a series of towns that will cater for a population of about 50,000 people. The family also, and the Greenfields Development Company, has a significant portion of the aerotropolis, the future Bradfield site, and probably about 30 per cent of that to be done and that's over a much longer time period. We also have landholdings to the west of the new airport for a new agribusiness and logistics centre. So they're quite a significant player in the south-west and something that we can help the Government in delivering.

We're very supportive of the rail system that's been put in place. There's some good work that's been done over a number of years in a strategic sense to set up the planning framework for, particularly, the north south rail line and also the connections back into Leppington and the further connection that will connect the metro system all the way back up to Rouse Hill. That's very good long-term planning and we would like to see how those things are prioritised. The area that's been committed so far from St Marys down to the airport is a great start. That's called stage one of the north-south line, but I guess from my point of view I think it's a bit of a spur line. It only really services people who live in Penrith and those immediate vicinities to get access to the new airport, so until the network is expanded, that's when you need it to be connected into the wider Sydney environment.

In our submission we made two important recommendations. There are some subsidiary ones but the two important ones are the connection, the extension, from Bradfield to Leppington—that's really important for the network and for greater access for the wider Sydney; then also from Bradfield to continue on with the north-south line and commit to stage two, and that's to get it to Oran Park and also down to Macarthur. That's when you really see the benefits of the whole system coming together and to capitalise on the infrastructure that's already been done for Western Sydney. We have worked hard with Transport and believe that you can break out stage two into two sub-stages, one from Bradfield to Oran Park, and that would be extremely cost-effective from the Government's point of view.

We've worked with the Department of Transport for our alignment and we've also designed, with the agreement of Transport, for the vertical alignment of the future metro line. That's important to understand where crossings are going to be, so when the State has to come in and do it, you don't have to relocate any services. That's all been pushed out of the way. We've also designed the landform and we'll continue to do the landform to make sure that when the metro line can be done as an open cut rather than as a tunnel—again, saving money—that future cutting can also then be used for sound attenuation. It also allows us, by doing this design, for—Steve spoke about access—access across the rail lines. That is equally as important as delivering the metro system, to get that in place. We are committed to—Steve spoke about a transit-orientated development; we are doing that. We are already creating Oran Park town, creating significant mixed-use housing; we've got our first lots of apartments already in place; we are trying to do the high rise, that complete diversity of product, to get there.

We are also supplying and building a strong pedestrian and cycle system. We've been designing that for the last 15 years and will continue to do that over the next 20 years. We believe there should be another train station to the north of Oran Park. We call it Greenway; there's no name that's actually officially been named. That's about three kilometres apart. That gives the right dimension for people to get access to these stations, but then also without compromising the operational frequency of the metro line. So they're the two main points that we'd like to make and we will open up to any questions from the Committee. Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you so much. What discussions have you had with the Government in terms of trying to get the transport solutions that you've identified, particularly in terms of the priority one, the station, I think, to Oran Park? What discussions have you had?

**MICK OWENS:** We've had a series of discussions over time with different committees. We've even contemplated an unsolicited proposal to the State Government to build some of these works, or at least to do what's call the bulk earthworks and the bridges across the future corridor that's been established. We tried for a few years but I think, over time, the nature of unsolicited proposals was a bit out of favour with the Government, and also I think there was a concern about maybe pre-empting some works that had not yet been committed to by the State. I think that was why we didn't proceed with the unsolicited proposal, but out of that came a really good

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working relationship with parts of Transport for this design coordination. I think that's equally extremely as valuable.

So we've already designed bridges in, knowing where the future metro line's going to go. So it means when you come back, or when the State comes back and builds this, there's minimal retrofit that has to be done. You might have to dig up a road and replace it with a bridge, but you'll not have to do expensive abutments and acquire new homes to be able to do those works. We've already catered for that. We're already shifting sewer lines so that doesn't become a problem in the future. So it's the nature of that type of design coordination that's worked well for probably the last five years or so. We would have, depending on the frequency, either monthly or quarterly meetings on that design coordination.

**The CHAIR:** That design coordination, have you been requested to do that—the bridges, what have you?

**MICK OWENS:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Has that been your initiative?

**MICK OWENS:** Yes. It's been our initiative. There has been an earlier comment about what happened in the north-west area. I happened to be, early in my career, involved in the north-west area and extremely disappointed from a career point of view that when a corridor was established, it would then get moved, also trying to design around areas that were kept on shifting around. So what happened was there were no proper nodes that were done. I was involved, and my colleague Steve behind me was involved, in the Rouse Hill Regional Centre. We were able to design where that station could be. It was supposed to be underground, by the way, but it ended up being a skytrain, but still it got in its correct location.

So I saw those things that happened from 20 years ago. I was adamant, with the family's commitment here, to make sure that we could do whatever we could to make public transport the best it could be. I'd have to say it has been our organisation's initiative to drive this coordination, but we have been listened to a lot. We went to the extent of, at the time when the corridor was being established in the south-west, suggesting an alternative alignment, which then got adopted by the State Government. In order to do that, we did our own railway design. We did geotech testing design and looked at alternate rock strata to see what could happen. By doing that, at least in our section of the south-west, we're confident it'll work easily from when the metro line does come down to Oran Park.

**The CHAIR:** How many employees does Greenfields have?

**MICK OWENS:** About 20. We're a very small team. I'm talking about direct employees, but we engage a lot of consultants and have a huge flow-on effect in the south-west.

**The CHAIR:** Was it Bradfield to Oran Park that you said in terms of a station that is extremely cost-effective from your point of view?

**MICK OWENS:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Could you expand upon that? Have you done the work to cost it?

**MICK OWENS:** Not directly from the State point of view, but knowing that it will be much cheaper to do. Going from Bradfield through to Leppington is a really important connection. I'm sure many people have spoken about that before. From that spur line there, we're only about five kilometres down to Oran Park—to extend that down. But the nature of the construction work won't have to be tunnels; it will all be quite easily open cut and then laying of lines. There will be no need for retrofitting or relocating services. All of those things are the very expensive things that happen with infrastructure layouts. We did an assessment on our unsolicited proposal, and we thought that we'd save \$200 million to \$300 million for the State if we were able to do that. Steve spoke earlier about works-in-kind arrangements. These things are possible by doing these types of works-in-kind arrangements.

We already do major works-in-kind arrangements. We already work on the roads authority side. All of the sub-arterial roads and things, we do under works-in-kind arrangements with the State. Also, all of the local facilities, we do under similar works in kind through what is called a voluntary planning agreement, and we built all of the community facilities out at Oran Park. Those things help enable things to happen by having an open dialogue of what can be done. There's a simple mechanism that there are obligations to pay infrastructure contributions, whether you called it a SIC infrastructure contribution, or housing productivity is the new framework coming in. You can always offset those things by doing that. By engaging with people like us early, you can do those works quite effectively, particularly whilst we're there doing the surrounding development. For example, to move what we call earthworks material, if we're there, we can do it for \$7 per cubic metre. If the State

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has to come back later, it is \$200 per cubic metre to move. That's the sort of significant savings. It's quite a simple thing that can be done on site. That's probably a small component in the overall infrastructure delivery of something of this size, but it is looking for all of those things that can help make that work.

One thing I did mean to say earlier, if you don't mind, is the reason why we think it's important to come down to Oran Park is also that there's a great amount of population going. I just mentioned that stage one of the north-south line service helps Penrith, but there's a huge growing area around the Camden and Campbelltown areas that won't be able to get access to it. That's where the huge growth is. You're also working with people like us and some other quite significant land developers around that area who can coordinate and have a similar approach to what we do. It's where the bulk of the population is going to come from before you can do these other fragmented areas. The road to development will happen much faster in the south-west than other parts, so trying to cater for future public transport is important for that area. I also mentioned what we are doing to help the State. We've also set aside land near our town centre as a future construction site. We won't develop that until a metro line comes, so it makes it easier again, logistically, for people to do these works.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINED:** I'm not asking you to speak on behalf of other developers, but you did mention that other developers have the same sort of holistic approach. That's your understanding?

**MICK OWENS:** Yes. I'd like to say that we're very large scale, so we can have this quite large view. There are other ones on the western side of the northern road. The metro line is not going directly there but, certainly, creating communities and being able to respond to density knowing when the public transport is going to come are those important—it'd be those connections that come across into the future stations that they would also be supportive of.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you very much for your submission and for coming along today. We appreciate the comprehensive work that you've done and the constructive relationship you have in this area. You said that you would be able and prepared to engage with government. Can I understand what engagement you've been invited to have so far with the Government on these projects and whether that's ongoing?

**MICK OWENS:** I think it would be fair to say it's probably only what's called the corridor preservation section within transport—that's our main contact—and quite little outside that.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** To what extent has that been? How often, when and who with?

**MICK OWENS:** It would vary. We had a lot of interaction with the corridor section, particularly when we were doing some high-rise apartments near the future railway station. We were having monthly meetings. That has probably scaled back to quarterly meetings just to see how we're going. That's because we had quite a lot of intense activity around where the future station would be. Now it's more about the corridor in between the stations and that coordination, so there's not as much that needs to be spoken about there. But there's still stuff that has happened through there. The people who we talk to—did you want individuals' names?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just the project control group or the executive directors.

**MICK OWENS:** They're called the transport coordination group. There's Geoff Cahill. He's the leader of the group. Dave Hartmann is another senior person within that group. I've just forgotten the fella's name. I'm feeling very embarrassed.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** That's okay. It's no problem. I'm not trying to interrogate you in any sense; I'm just trying to get a feel for the Committee in terms of the ongoing working together. We hear you're a particularly key stakeholder in this. It would be pleasing to see if that commitment is to be meeting with you regularly. You talked in your submission about the constructive working relationship with that team. I just wanted to understand what ongoing future interaction there might be with that group, or others that have been invited, from you.

**MICK OWENS:** Certainly, with that particular group, we will continue until the service is delivered, so at least another 10 years, I think. We've got areas to the north that are still going through planning exercises and rezoning exercises, so that'll continue on for the next 15 to 20 years. Our interaction would be at least another five to 10 years. We would certainly welcome if we had the opportunity to be able to work with future designs of the metro stations themselves. These are becoming important. We've been able to work quite conceptually, but knowing exactly where the front door is going to be of a station or some of those things, if we knew where they were, we would finesse our final designs to make it more compatible. It's probably a little bit late for Oran Park, but there is another town centre about three kilometres to the north of that. It would be a great opportunity to be able to design that with a future metro station.

**The CHAIR:** Which town centre is that?



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**MICK OWENS:** We call it Greenway. It was on a plan for a while, but it's one of these ones—if you look at the strategic plans, there's no nominated station between Oran Park up to Bradfield. There's a need for them, but I think that there was a nervousness on nominating exactly where they are. But we've done enough planning to say that, yes, there's a need for one. I think there has been an endorsement—certainly from the local council, Camden Council—for that to be. We are going through our planning studies at the moment. That'll have to be addressed with the different agencies over the next three to six months as we make our submission. That's a formal planning submission, but the opportunity to be able to design a future station with what we were doing around it would be absolutely fantastic.

**MARK PERICH:** Natalie, if I could just add, Greenfields Development Company and our family work to the benefit of the community, so everything we do in that corridor is to try to get a result for the people that live in south-west Sydney. This rail connection or metro is actually very important for people to be able to get to places of work. We think it's really important—even to connect all the way to Campbelltown to Macarthur to bring the existing population that's there back up to the new city of Bradfield and the new airport. It changes people's lives. It changes people's way that they plan what they can buy and where they can buy and how much they can buy. With good public transport, which south-west Sydney doesn't have compared to other places in Sydney, people are able to then make a choice of owning one car, for example, instead of two cars. They then can say, "I can live in an apartment because this apartment only has one car parking space, not two."

That ability to create density and affordability around these metro centres or metro stations shapes people's attitude and where they will live and where they can afford to live. We are working really hard to try to, I guess, help government achieve density in the correct places. Planning is really important. People still want a backyard. People still want to have the Australian dream of owning a block of land and having a dog run around the back, but there's also those that can't afford that. They actually want to live where they can afford and they're happy to walk around the corner to their favourite cafe and to grab their groceries and not actually rely on cars. Density around these centres is important so that you can actually have enough places for people to live but also create homes that people can still have a backyard. Because if you were to build, for example, terraces to get density over the whole space in south-west Sydney, you won't be achieving people's dreams of having that family home and other people that want to live in an apartment.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I appreciate that. You're getting, from me, someone who was right at the table when it came to advocating for and delivering infrastructure and reaching a long-term transport plan. A lot of that is well underway. You and I both know that. I'm a fan of these things happening, but I just want to understand, particularly given your importance as a stakeholder, your ability to have that ongoing interaction and have that input and feedback to government. That was really the crux of it. We're all agreed on transport needs and how much has been done so far, so no issue with that.

As a developer and stakeholder—we've heard some evidence about contaminated land in areas that might need remediation. Is it your view that, if there was contamination in an area, you would be prepared to wear the cost of that, and to remediate and to participate in that to be able to get that development going? The impact of that is not insignificant, but can I understand that your consideration for those additional costs—you never quite know what is under the land until you get there or whatever has been there before, particularly when we know there has been petroleum. Can you fill the Committee in on your perspective on that?

**MARK PERICH:** I'll explain, I guess. Oran Park, the development we do—if the land is contaminated, obviously you can't build anything on it. You don't want someone living on contaminated land. So it's in the developer's interest to clean up a site and make it available for a safe place to live or to have a business. To answer your question, the developer does normally pay for the costs of decontaminating a site. We are pretty lucky. The sites that we own are farmland and it's farmland that we've owned for many, many years.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Your land is pristine. There are no petroleum stations there, I understand that. I was interested in the perspective of the contribution to cost.

**MICK OWENS:** Can I just make a comment on that if you don't mind. From our point of view, yes, it would be a cost. It depends what your line of questioning is. If you're talking about if the State was buying, say, a specific corridor or, say, a station box and it was fully contaminated, who bears that risk? It's normally with the landowner. But if the contamination is so expensive, I think it would have to become part of the cost of the delivery of the station. You need to make cost estimates for doing that. Then it comes back to your funding mechanism that you do for it. Do you spread that over—you know, for around Bradfield, a higher levy for people who had advantage of it. But there are different ways of how you recoup some of that cost. But I think that if you're talking about a single use in a location, it's something that would ultimately be part of the delivery costs of delivering the infrastructure.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes, and somewhat difficult to estimate.

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**MICK OWENS:** Yes, extremely.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** All of these things need to be addressed. I'm not trying to be negative, but they are a component part of some projects, so it's often difficult to place an exact cost on until you dig and see what's there.

**MICK OWENS:** That's right. That's one of the biggest unknowns. If you suspected that, you'd have to do a lot of research and a lot of investigation before you actually—and trying to work out your best method before you made the commitment. That's always a danger if you're under pressure. Sometimes these become political pressure to deliver these things. People debate these for ages. Then, once you make a decision to hurry up and do it, it's better to spend a bit more time to do the investigations properly to mitigate against that cost. I think the light rail down George Street is an example of that, so spent more time on service investigations. The things you don't know underground, it does need more work.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Indeed, but how beautiful is George Street now? I thank you for your work. As a stakeholder, your involvement is critical over the long term. Thank you for your assistance.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you very much, and definitely we value and recognise the expertise and experience you bring in this important space to the inquiry today. We're in an environment here where we've got the Federal Government residing over one of the largest growths in migration numbers in Western Sydney in Australia's history. We've also had the unprecedented announcement by the Federal Government of infrastructure cuts to New South Wales of \$3.5 billion. Some of these key infrastructure links are at the heart of the south-west. I just also signal that housing targets have been signed up to and the New South Wales Government has agreed to these, which are putting big expectations on New South Wales to deliver these. In this environment, what is the view of your organisation on these massive cuts to infrastructure and where should we go from here?

**MICK OWENS:** I understand there's always funding pressure but, from our point of view, I think the connections from Bradfield to Leppington and then from Leppington and the station down to at least Oran Park as an initial stage, I hope that that doesn't get jeopardised and be put back on the backburner for a long time, because there's such an opportunity that would be lost if that got delayed by another 10 years. Steve Mann earlier spoke about the north-west, where things weren't capitalised enough around the transport nodes. Thankfully in the south-west there's been good planning and strategic planning that's been done to establish that. But getting the delivery timing in areas that are about to go through rezoning, it would be an opportunity lost if that funding for the stage two of the north-south line got deferred for a long period or for decades, and the same with the connection to Leppington. I think it would be a tragic loss for the people of the south-west.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Further to that, the M7-M12 link on the aerotropolis—if I could just make reference to page four of your submission under paragraph (c), where you talk about the south-west experiencing phenomenal growth in the last decade and gearing up for one of the largest economic shifts in modern times with the Western Sydney International Airport commencing operations in 2026. What's the impact of not being able to deliver that connection of the M7 to the M12 off the new international airport in terms of developer confidence, investment, business and jobs?

**MICK OWENS:** Again, I'm not sure what the impacts really are from that announcement on that particular intersection. If it meant that it wasn't happening, yes, absolutely, it would be crazy because you are already committing and building a whole motorway there, so not building the intersection would be pretty silly. I believe the State has already committed to doing that, so that might be some argy-bargy between the State and the Federal Government about where you get the money from for that. I can't see the sense in not building that intersection. It would be a waste of money for the M12 that's already under construction.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I have one other question. We've had discussion here about diversity and density of housing. In terms of the south-west, the areas in which you are, could you comment a little bit more about diversity of housing?

**MARK PERICH:** I can do that if you like, Mick. Everybody has different levels of affordability; some people can afford an apartment and some people can afford a house. That choice we have to deliver because the way it is, it's becoming unaffordable for people to own their own home and their dream now, and home ownership is something that most Australians strive for. A range of products, if you're going to have the density and have terrace homes or apartments or a higher dense product, need to be in certain centres. They can't be just put and spread over the whole landscape, because that would just create a ghetto. That's the importance, I guess, of having good public transport in centres—centres like Leppington and Edmondson Park, where there's already existing rail. You can see Edmondson Park now growing through Frasers development there with high rises. Those things can happen wherever these metros go, to be able to create nodes of higher density.

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Being able to do that gets the population, I guess, the government needs living in these new areas and makes them well connected so the traffic of people having to jump in cars and travelling off to the city doesn't exist. If government's going to be loyal to their three-city framework that they've come up with, where people can live, and work within 30 minutes of where they live, these centres must work in Western Sydney. Bradfield and the Parkland City will help create the jobs that are needed for that 30-minute travel time. So will the nodes that connect between places like Campbelltown and Penrith. You've got councils in Western Sydney that are working together, that are trying to create these nodes. You've also got developers in the whole north-south corridor that will activate these spaces. But, what I'm getting at is density needs to be in centres and not spread out widespread over the whole land mass, I guess.

**MICK OWENS:** Another point to make to that is knowing that there is a node to make. Our particular project is quite unique in that we're such a big player that we can move in different areas depending on time frames. Time frames are really important for developers. If something is not quite ready yet, we can work in other areas of our project whilst that's happening and we can take a long-term view. But knowing exactly where these nodes are going to be—it's almost the opposite to what Mark was saying. If the Government doesn't identify where these nodes are going to be, people won't see it as financially viable to do medium and high density. The financial drivers will be more low density. Knowing exactly where these things are, the development industry can respond to that.

From our project, what we do, yes, the diversity is part of our—we do everything from large lots, executive homes, ordinary lots, small lots, terrace homes, townhouses, apartments. We are now doing co-living. Unless you get this complete diversity of product, you don't get a rich society and people can't match their living, what they need for what they do. It's not just about affordability. In our latest apartments that we've just done, we've had people who have downsized and love living in there. They came off large blocks of land and now love living close to a town centre. They can walk across the road to a park, walk to the town centre and they have a lot of social interaction on the common roof with the now new neighbours and friends. That's what that's about.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Thank you very much, both of you, for your evidence today and your submission. You spoke about Greenway being the next stage and the type of planning and integration that would be useful whilst developing that, and that Oran Park is largely a completed kind of area.

**MICK OWENS:** It's almost there, but from a planning point of view it's pretty well—most things are locked in, yes.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** I wondered, then, if there are lessons from what happened in Oran Park. I'm not suggesting that it was not successful, but in terms of that integration that we could take into how we integrate that kind of planning into the future. Were there things that could have been done differently with regards to integration with the Government that we could think about going forward?

**MICK OWENS:** The Government's always hesitant about—because these infrastructures are extremely expensive; I understand that. So that's why there's nervousness. But trying to spend more money on design work early would be useful. That's only quite a small proportion of doing these things. If you know exactly where something is going to go, and you can design things around it, like where our road network is going to go—we do work well with the other parts of transport. With our bus systems, we were able to get buses early in Oran Park. That's made a big difference to a lot of people. Every time you look at it, there's always a bus running through Oran Park. That caters for people who had to use public transport. But most people desire not to do it because of the long time frames that it takes to get around. Getting the right design work early allows for all these other connections to happen much better than what it has done in the past. I think we've done a pretty good job on the Oran Park Town Centre so far, but if we had this better coordination, design coordination—particularly knowing exactly where a station box will be and where the platforms will be—it would make a big difference. If we can do that concurrently, it would make a big difference to how these town centres work.

If I look across the nation, one of the best examples I've seen that is in Subiaco in Western Australia. That was a development corporation that had that agenda of doing that. You can see how seamlessly things work. People can get easy access. It's that last little bit. People can plan something but if there is a brick wall or something that stops somebody from walking, from getting there to it, and they have to walk 500 metres around, yes, theoretically it might have been close but it is a deterrent for people to use it. I was using Subiaco, but just walk down, platform, take an escalator down and straight onto a metro line. The work that has been done, say, with the North West line, I think has been done pretty good, but it's a retrofit that's been done. So, like, the Norwest Business Park I think has been done very well. You just happen to have people around there now looking to redevelop, but if that was there early on, it would have made a big difference to how—I think you'd get more patronage levels to happen if it was done earlier.

**The CHAIR:** Can I check about buses? You've just said that there are buses. Is that correct?

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**MICK OWENS:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** But they don't seem to be well used. Is it because of the services?

**MICK OWENS:** I think they are—we have about four routes that run out of Oran Park. Most of them connect either to Leppington, another railway station; or Minto, another railway station; or Campbelltown, another railway station; or back into Narellan—this is a strategic centre. People can use it and they use it quite frequently. People do use them, but because the buses then try to run around to maximise the routes means that it's got longer times to get to these places. But it's nowhere as efficient as what a metro line could be, and a direct metro line.

**MARK PERICH:** It's interesting to think what Mick just said: The four bus routes that are in Oran Park all link to different train stations, heavy rail stations. If you can think about how metro would work, where people can then go from their home and walk and hop on a metro line, it cuts out all those different routes of those buses going to the heavy rail station, and it is a much seamless transportation prospect for people that live in the area. It becomes so much easier. And I know, for myself, I'd rather get in the car and drive to Leppington. I did that today to come here on the train from Leppington. If there was a metro at Oran Park, I would have jumped straight on the metro.

**The CHAIR:** About active transport, you mentioned in your opening statement that you have made attempts to make your developments very pedestrian friendly and active transport friendly. Could you expand on that in terms of specifically what you've done?

**MICK OWENS:** We're pretty proud of that. One of our objectives for when we established the project was about making it walkable. It was one of our big drivers when we started 15 years ago—create an education town and create as many community facilities as we could up-front. They were the three big drivers we had as initiatives for the project. We've done numerous things to make this thing work, making it as active as possible. I think the guys counted. I think we've done 150 kilometres of cycleways so far.

This design coordination is the important thing. Where the high school and the primary school is, there is a public one. It will be within a three-minute walk to the future metro station. We had to fight to put traffic lights in and around the town centre because the policies at the time was only to put roundabouts in. Roundabouts aren't very good for pedestrians to get across major roads to get access into town centres. When the bell goes at three o'clock now, we see kids coming out on their bikes, scooters and walking where you see in other areas where parents have to pick them up. Not only are they walking on their own to get home, they're doing that to get to the library and they're doing that to get to the shops.

There has been an extensive system that we've done to be able to make this happen. Every street that we do has a footpath. It is not only just putting footpaths in; it is making sure they connect. The arguments that we have just to get a pram crossing in a perfect location because that's where people have to walk to get somewhere, there is nobody there to argue for pedestrians in a policy. Sorry, you've got me on my beef now. There are plenty of rules about vehicles and what radii that you have to do to get cars around, but making sure that a pedestrian can walk from A to B is up to somebody to make sure those things connect. It is no fault of anybody but you see gaps in all these places because that's where one particular stage stopped or one contractor stopped. Somebody has to make sure they all connect. I'm talking about fine-grain stuff, but if you get the macro right, you have to also get the micro right to make these things work.

**MARK PERICH:** One thing that the pedestrian-friendly system at Oran Park does is help keep people active, fitter and healthier. We've worked with the local health district at Oran Park before we even turned one piece of soil to make sure that we actually had an active community to try and keep people out of the hospital systems. By starting with design of a master plan to State and allowing people to live there in a more healthy manner, we are able to keep people healthier in the health system to reduce the load on the public hospital systems.

**The CHAIR:** Was this off your bat or was this a requirement by the Government, by Planning, by Health for you to do this?

**MARK PERICH:** This was off our bat; however, the local health district wanted this outcome as well. We've always worked very closely together. Oran Park actually is a designated integrated health hub. It is a place in south-west Sydney that government is trying to bring services, health services, to keep people from having to travel to the major hospitals and reduce the load on those hospitals.

**MICK OWENS:** We also had endorsement from the New South Wales Heart Foundation that endorsed Oran Park for the initiatives that we did do. At a conceptual level, yes, there is from a planning system to say yes to try and do things but most of these things we are talking about have come from our initiative to make these things happen. More recent policies have come through from the Western Sydney guidelines that start to pull in

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some of those things, but we have been working for a while and that comes in through as new development controls. But then we're taking that a step further for the next round.

**The CHAIR:** Just one final question from me, just to be clear, what's your offer to government, if you like, in terms of public transport infrastructure investment in your developments? Do you have a specific offer that you've gone to them with? Is it a fifty-fifty split? I know that you've said you're ready to invest. What would you like to say to them?

**MICK OWENS:** Are you talking about the metro infrastructure delivery? Is that what you mean?

**The CHAIR:** Sure.

**MICK OWENS:** What we've done so far is design coordination and also setting aside a site for them to use, but if we are able to work together, we could, whilst we're doing our surrounding land development works, do some works that would suit their future need, so move material. We could cut a hole cutting in readiness for them whilst we're there. We'd certainly want to make that offer. If there is an opportunity for doing some bridgeworks, we could offset it against our future development contributions. We might have a developer contribution that might be due in 20 years' time but we can bring that forward and cash flow a bridge or something if it's there and if it saves somebody having to rip up a road later. It's really about bringing forward cash flow from a future obligation but it's something that saves money for the government whilst we're there.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, both. That's the end of our questions for this session. We will be in touch if we have any supplementary questions for you. Thanks so much for your evidence.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

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**Mr DAVID NIVEN**, Director, City Delivery, Fairfield City Council, sworn and examined

**Mr ANDREW MOONEY**, Executive Strategic Planner, Fairfield City Council, affirmed and examined

**Dr GEORGE GREISS**, Mayor, Campbelltown City Council, on former oath

**Ms KATE STARES**, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Campbelltown City Council, sworn and examined

**Mr KERRY ROBINSON**, OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Blacktown City Council, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses. We will move to opening statements. The opening statement from Fairfield, who is giving that one?

**DAVID NIVEN:** Thank you. I thought it would be useful to position a little bit of the historical development. Fairfield sits on the radial line that comes out from Sydney city. Most of the public transport development within the city has been about feeding into the rail line to feed into Sydney city. That's the historic development that the land use patterns have tended to follow. As the western aerotropolis comes along, there's a shift in the focus of where journeys have been made by the residents of Fairfield, so the commute to work is no longer solely or predominantly into Sydney city but it is predominantly within Western Sydney itself.

The pattern, or the network, of public transport that is then servicing the residents within Fairfield becomes fragmented and disconnected as people try to move about within Western Sydney. The simple result of that is that there is a very high dependence on cars and motor vehicle transport within the residents within Fairfield. I think we have 11 per cent who commute to work by bus and rail, which is fairly low in the context of Sydney city. The challenge, I think, is how do you shift land use patterns that are existing, that are difficult to move, to a pattern that's more consistent with what you want the public transport network to be able to do?

The relatively low densities, both in terms of employment within the industrial areas and residential zones, make it difficult to put in a cost-effective public transport system. You are really then looking at the motor vehicle being the off-peak predominant method of transport, with high-volume routes for your commuter travel. One of the challenges with public transport—and I think the Transport for NSW submission said this as well—is, when you get to the off-peak or non-commute travel, the public transport system is not a system that services residents well. That's just a pattern of the land use densities and so forth.

One of the challenges is how do we get our strategic cross-city planning for public transport right? How do you connect Fairfield with the aerotropolis, Fairfield with Parramatta and Fairfield with Liverpool? Fairfield, by its role, is going to be a residential city. It isn't going to be a big attractor in terms of jobs, other than what's there at present. It's going to be having its population move out to jobs elsewhere within Western Sydney or across the Sydney Basin. How do we make that work well? It is also going to need to move into Parramatta, Liverpool and other destinations for leisure and recreation activities. That would be all, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We will move to Dr Greiss from Campbelltown.

**GEORGE GREISS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me to appear before you again this afternoon. Campbelltown is a metropolis centre for the Macarthur region and serves as one of the most significant growth corridors in Australia. As a region, we are set to grow by over 100,000 new dwellings by 2040, representing half of all the growth in the Western Parkland City. To support this level of housing growth, we need correspondent investment in transport infrastructure. Campbelltown provides access to universities, TAFEs, hospital, retail and other regional services. Most importantly, Campbelltown serves as the transport gateway for the Macarthur region, providing access to the T8 Airport and South line, and the T2 Inner West and the T5 Cumberland line services.

However, the historical development pattern of urban sprawl in the south-west has led to the community becoming increasingly dependent on cars to get around. Despite our city being located on a train line, our bus services are slow, indirect and infrequent, making our train station difficult to access for public transport. Currently, only 1 per cent of Campbelltown residents use the bus as their primary method of transport. By contrast, two-thirds of our people travel to work by car. Two-thirds of the households in the Campbelltown LGA own two or more cars. This car dependency causes congestion that inhibits our centre's ability to densify, as the local street network struggles to cope with the extra traffic generated by the expanding urban sprawl on the outer fringes.

Campbelltown CBD provides the equivalent of 10 football fields' worth of grade car parking near the train station in order to cope with traffic demand. Our LGA provides over 56,000 square metres of land for car parking. As well as our concern with the environmental impact, urban heat impact, congestion risk and productivity losses generated by time spent in cars, we are also concerned about the community's ability to absorb the \$25,000-odd per year cost of owning a car in Sydney. This is of great concern in the context of cost of living,

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with parts of the LGA experiencing some of the highest rates of mortgage stress in New South Wales, and being among the most socio-economically disadvantaged populations in Australia.

Without a viable, convenient public transport alternative to driving in south-west Sydney, the community must continue to depend on cars to get around. It needs to change. We are committed to enabling the delivery of housing and jobs through the densification of lands in our city centres and along our railway spine. As we have publicly committed, we are willing and eager to work with the Government to deliver everything we can to support the sustainable delivery of housing in our LGA, but we also need the Government's commitment to work with us to decrease our car dependency by improving access to public transport and enabling cars to move around the city centre rather than through it.

We need to ensure that our current and future residents have access to job opportunities and social infrastructure to improve their quality of life. Connecting Campbelltown to the new Western Sydney International Airport via metro to Glenfield and Campbelltown centres is vital for our city's success. While we understand this will take time, ensuring we have a frequent and accessible rapid bus connection will help ensure that the car dependency habit is not further entrenched in our residents. We are ready to play our vital role in supporting the growth of Sydney. We are willing and ready to densify and develop sustainable city centres. All we need is for the sustainability of the coming growth to be supported by appropriate and much-needed investment in public transport. I commend the Campbelltown written submission to the Committee and welcome members' questions.

**The CHAIR:** Finally, Blacktown and Mr Robinson.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Darug people as the traditional custodians of the land on which Blacktown City is located and pay my respects to Elders, past and present, and extend those respects to any people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage with us today. I tender the apologies of the mayor of Blacktown City Council, Tony Bleasdale, OAM, who is unable to be with us as he has COVID-19. I commend the Committee for its work on a public policy matter of vital significance to the community of Blacktown City—the city with the largest population in New South Wales, in the heart of Western Sydney. Our city has over 415,000 residents across 52 suburbs. In 20 years, we expect to add nearly 50 per cent to that figure and grow to a population in excess of 600,000. Blacktown City centre is 36 kilometres from here, and Mount Druitt, at the western edge of our city, is about 45 kilometres away. There is a perception in the community that all councils in Sydney are the same size, but this is not the case. If you overlay the map of Blacktown on the "eastern city", we stretch from Bondi Beach to the Olympic Stadium at Homebush and from Watsons Bay to Kurnell. That map fully encompasses, or touches on, 14 different councils.

Our new residents are car dependent, and our new suburbs suffer from chronic congestion. Older suburbs, such as those in the 2770 postcode around Mount Druitt, continue to suffer from decades-long barriers to education and job opportunities. We're here to talk about the critical need for public transport in our city to efficiently link our community to the economic opportunity of the rest of Sydney. We cannot allow the car-is-king culture to be our future. Blacktown City Council has declared a climate emergency. We are carbon neutral and have a goal to reduce the whole city's carbon output by 40 per cent by 2040. We can only get there by improving public transport. We have an opportunity to correct past mistakes and unlock the potential of our vibrant multicultural city. I will now very quickly highlight the key points that council seeks to make to this valuable inquiry.

I'll start with the work of the Western Sydney Transport Infrastructure Panel, a panel to which I was appointed by the Prime Minister and the infrastructure Minister to advise the Commonwealth on recommendations for transport infrastructure in Western Sydney. That panel's report has recently been made public, and I've tabled a copy of the report with the secretariat. I won't repeat its recommendations here, but I direct Committee members to pages 53 and 54 of that report, which has an extensive list of recommendations for transport infrastructure across the whole of Western Sydney. The panel included community members, academics and representatives of 12 councils in Western Sydney, along with some State representatives. A stark feature of the panel's analysis is that the community and policymakers failed to grasp just how large Western Sydney is—some 70 kilometres north to south, similar to the distance between Sydney and Wollongong. The need for expenditure on all transport networks must equitably respond to this reality.

I'll touch on the policy position of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, WSROC. WSROC's position on public transport is one based on equity. Put simply, the people of Western Sydney deserve a public transport network which, adjusted for density, is the same as that in the east; it is not that now. They deserve the same density of heavy rail and metro railway lines and stations, the same density of bus routes and bus stops with the same regularity of services. Anything less discriminates against the residents of Western Sydney who, on average, have lesser educational, employment and recreational opportunities than the wealthier residents of the east.

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On top of Blacktown City Council's public transport priority list—similar to those that were outlined for Campbelltown—is fixing the missing links in the metro system. Joining Tallawong to St Marys is critical. We must confirm the corridor and get building. This link will provide access for residents of suburbs with some of the lowest socio-economic indicators in New South Wales to the high-value jobs and educational opportunities of Sydney Business Park, Norwest and Macquarie Park. This will be public transport for social public good. Of course, the link will also create a fast public transport link for businesses in that arc of economic prosperity directly to the Nancy-Bird Walton airport. With confirmation of this missing link, we can confidently plan for high-density villages around stations to help address the housing crisis. We know that this will reduce the focus on cars, secure in the knowledge that good public transport infrastructure supports good development. We must finalise the locations of stations to maximise community benefit in the suburbs around Mount Druitt, which are so heavy with social housing.

I want to focus next on complementary actions at rail stations, new and existing, to serve commuters. Council knows from successive community surveys that one of the community's highest needs is the provision of commuter parking—a responsibility of the State. There is great potential for transport hubs to stimulate economic development, and we are very supportive of this thinking. If we are strategic in developing new parking spaces, we can create urban renewal initiatives. Here, local government can contribute to ensuring maximum improvement and uplift opportunities for our communities. Due to physical distance, the reality for many Blacktown commuters is that they still need a car to access public transport. We have around 5,200 car parking spaces at existing stations, and we need at least another 2,000 to match our population growth. There are some cheap and simple opportunities which have been overlooked by past governments. Simple 90-degree parking on roads near Toongabbie and Doonside, for instance, could provide an immediate uplift in commuter parking relatively cheaply. Of course, this must be accompanied by good street trees to address urban heat—an issue that kills more of Western Sydney's people than all other natural disasters combined.

In relation to buses, we call for intelligent provision of bus transport policy and infrastructure which will support good outcomes for the community. Unfortunately, buses are funded by the State only where there is established housing. This entrenches an early pattern of car dependency in new suburbs as so many people need to move into a suburb before the bus actually turns up. A case in point is Elara at Marsden Park, where the developer, Stockland, itself had to fund a bus service over 7.5 kilometres to Schofields station for more than two years before the State-funded service arrived. That is not the way to entrench good public transport behaviours.

In summary, most of the growth in Blacktown City is driven by the development in Sydney's North West Growth Area. The projected population growth in our suburbs of Riverstone, Schofields and Marsden Park will in those three suburbs deliver 120,000 new residents—the same as the combined population of Waverley and Woollahra councils. This growth really simply must be supported by a network of equitable new public transport. In established areas, such as greater Mount Druitt, with relatively high levels of social housing, physical, social and economic disconnection is an entrenched reality. Not surprisingly, the social data tells a deflating story of ongoing high unemployment and poor health outcomes. The bus journey from Willmot, with a very high proportion of public housing, to Mount Druitt station takes 30 to 40 minutes—to start an hour-long train journey to the city.

In summary, Blacktown City and Western Sydney needs a public transport system which is based on equity—one which takes into account social indicators and reduces social inequity. The current public transport system, primarily established in the 1800s to serve farms and timber-getters, does not deliver social equity. Future rail corridors must be confirmed and established so that we can effectively plan for dense housing at stations. The opportunity to shape the future is clear. Good public transport can deliver great outcomes in Western Sydney. I thank you for the opportunity today and would welcome your questions.

**The CHAIR:** I have a couple of questions about the independent panel report, Mr Robinson. How were decisions made? Was it a consensus report where some suggestions were put forward that weren't accepted by everybody? What was that process?

**KERRY ROBINSON:** The process of the panel was a series of briefings by both State and Federal bureaucrats and a process of assembling the understanding of the 12 councils as to what the community was telling decision-makers were needed in terms of the infrastructure list. That was then prioritised across the whole of Western Sydney, absent of, if you like, our parochial local government views, to come up with a list of recommendations to government which serve the whole of Western Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** Where is it at now? I understand it was handed to both levels of government a number of months ago now. Is that correct?



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**KERRY ROBINSON:** No. The report was made to Minister King. More recently, the report has been published by the Commonwealth. The panel has a briefing of the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads in the next couple of weeks.

**The CHAIR:** When you say "briefing", you'll be briefing the Minister on this report?

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Both of those Ministers. That's correct.

**The CHAIR:** With these priorities, we've heard this morning quite a bit about one priority, which I think every witness has said is the north and north-south rail connection. Would you consider that to be one of the highest priorities? I think it is in here.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** It's about fourth on the list.

**The CHAIR:** What's the first one? Talk us through the first one, the highest in terms of public transport.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** I didn't have a copy in front of me. If I can be permitted to get a copy from my bag, or I'll be provided with a copy. Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** It's Western Parkland City and Blacktown (all modes) Strategic Business Case.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** One of the challenges working within government, of course, is the enormous expenditure which is required on strategic business cases and final business cases. There was considerable debate amongst the panel members as to putting forward a set of recommendations which funded a number of strategic business cases. But, given our brief from the Commonwealth, which I won't cite here, had a focus on two government budgets, we were of a view that the next step for a number of these things was the business cases. Therefore, they needed to be the highest priority. The Western Parkland City and Blacktown is effectively talking to all of the modes of public transport which are required—the high-frequency bus network, along with the elements of metro and augmentation of the heavy rail system. Those strategic business cases needed to be prioritised as the highest priority.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Mr Niven and Dr Greiss, you both talked about the socio-economic make-up of Western Sydney. Mr Niven, I understand that Fairfield is the most socio-economically challenged of the areas in Western Sydney. I know Western Sydney is not homogenous, as some people would like to think. I just wondered if there are particular challenges that that presents with regards to how we think of developing the infrastructure in transport in the future.

**DAVID NIVEN:** It's an interesting challenge because, as you said, the population distribution—we've got a fairly strong weighting towards the bottom end of the scale. But we still have pockets of the city that are at the other end of the scale—a polite way of saying it. I would characterise the eastern area of our city—that's east of the rail line—is where a fair bit of the low socio-economic housing has been. It's also relatively poorly served by public transport, comparatively, to some extent, because Woodville Road is a boundary between ourselves and Bankstown. You end up sometimes with a little bit of a disconnect on those boundaries. I think one of the challenges is, as gentrification comes through and as the older housing stock gets renewed, that's probably going to displace some of that social housing from those areas and push them further west and south and, potentially, down Campbelltown way, potentially up Penrith, just as part of the natural development cycle.

The question is: What time frame is that going to happen on and is that going to be an area where you're going to want to invest heavily in public transport in terms of facilities such as the metro? While Blacktown would like it to go north, Fairfield would very much like the Parramatta Airport connection made. It provides opportunity for significant uplift of housing around Prairiewood and through Cecil Hills. If you don't put that in place now, within 10 to 15 years infill development and other development will make that much harder to happen. It's also part of that development cycle that's going to change what Villawood looks like, what Lansvale looks like. It's a little bit about what's going to happen over what time frames and what's the short-term versus the long-term solution that you want to think about. I would suggest that, for Villawood and Carramar, it's perhaps a short-term solution while gentrification comes through and the housing stock gets renewed through those areas and changes the nature of those spaces to some degree.

**GEORGE GREISS:** We've been talking a lot about housing at the moment and asking us a very topical conversation, but the reality is public transport is not just about housing. Public transport is about having quality of life for residents, about having environmental sustainability. Most importantly, it's about social equity. If we look at public transport from that perspective, asking an equitable distribution of public transport network across our LGA will be able to benefit those people in the low socio-economic areas by giving them better access to employment and facilities and services they need and they have to drive to. At the same token, by servicing the other areas of the city that's more affluent, we'll be able to get much better environmental impact because there'll be less cars on the road, which would be competing for resources. To answer your question, I think we shouldn't

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so much be looking at let's just try to get one area resolved but look at a holistic network, as we heard this morning, that connects the city to each other and to the main hubs so we can get equitable distribution for everybody involved.

**The CHAIR:** Do you think that some investment can actually happen or should happen into these big public transport infrastructure projects as well as making cities more walkable, potentially at the expense of upgrading arterial roads, for example? Do you think there's too much investment in Western Sydney, into some of the major arterial road and highway upgrades? Can it be both? Does it have to be both? If we choose to invest in public transport, does that perhaps negate the need to add another lane and another lane? Dr Griess, I'll go to you first.

**GEORGE GREISS:** When we talk about walkability and access to public transport, we have to be realistic. Firstly is: Where are those people walking to? That's one of the questions I always like to talk about. We need to create significant amount of employment locally for people to be able to get to that level. To answer your question, we can't neglect road infrastructure in the short term, simply because that will bring the city to a halt. We are talking a very long vision here between planning Western Sydney and Campbelltown from where it is now, which is heavily car dependence, to a city that is equivalent to some of the eastern suburbs. To get from that point to where we want to be is a very long time frame, and we need to be wary of what impact it will have on our residents in the short term if we just decided to let the traffic go and bring the city to a halt.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Blacktown has about 30,500 businesses. Roads and public transport aren't all about housing. They're about making those businesses work and provide economic opportunity and the social equity which comes from that. About 12 per cent of our workforce works in the construction sector, the vast majority of those being small business people, tradespeople, and the vast majority of those aren't able to catch a bus to work or a train to work. You need to have a balance in terms of the investment. The short answer is that these are wicked problems and you need to judiciously invest in both public transport and the road network.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you all for your submissions. I wanted to address that "wicked problem" that you spoke about. I think it's the case here, with great intentions of great infrastructure and the demand for so much to be done so quickly. As a former roads Minister, I know the importance of both road and public transport. Can you perhaps give some steer from each of you about what you think might be prioritised, knowing there are budgetary and labour constraints in both, and how we might work towards what the priorities might be for each of you? Mr Robinson, I think you raised it.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Indeed. Thank you, Ms Ward. I think when you look at the panel report, there are very clear indications of the set of priorities and the time lines within which we've made recommendations for the implementation of those things. I said in my introduction that the highest priority for investment in public transport, in Blacktown's view, is the missing link between Tallawong and St Marys in the metro network. That's about social equity and providing those with the least opportunity in this city connection to the high-value jobs in the business parks of the east and also providing public transport connection to the jobs in the aerotropolis. I'll leave it at that, thank you.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you. I may hear that from each of you. Given that's such a long-term and big project to cost, plan and implement, how might you weigh that up?

**KATE STARES:** From Campbelltown's perspective, equally referring to the panel's recommendations in the schedule attached to the report, the mass transit connection from the Western Sydney airport to Campbelltown, whether that be the first connection to Glenfield via Leppington or the connection to Campbelltown-Macarthur, would be one of our greatest priorities. But in the interim, as we understand, that would be cost prohibitive. Of course, we would welcome a truly rapid bus solution to Western Sydney airport as well as some connections within our region, which we believe these mass transit options could afford our community.

**DAVID NIVEN:** I think that we'd probably be echoing that, to some degree. We would be saying that the connection from Fairfield out to the aerotropolis and the jobs going on out there is fairly important to Fairfield. Again, whether that comes through a metro service or through a very good rapid bus service is where the challenge lies. We know there's a fixed bucket of money and it need to go around in certain ways.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I think that's it. At some point you've got to factor into the wicked problem—and I'm interested in your views—the reality of implementation, which is obviously rapid bus is faster and more cost efficient but you need drivers. The longer term solution is more metro, more stops and more rail, but weighing those up, in terms of your priorities, is what I guess I'm interested in. Who would like to go next? It is hard for me to see.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** I think when we in Western Sydney look at the east, we question why there is an inequitable distribution of much government infrastructure and services. From Blacktown council's

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perspective, we challenge the status quo for a failure to address equity to all of the residents of Sydney. That applies to density of rail lines. That applies to density of bus routes. It applies to the frequency of services, even adjusted for net population density. We would suggest that, in terms of new expenditure, the State should not continue to add to that inequity but should use its funding to address that inequity. That is whether it is higher education places, whether it is medical research institutes or the provision of public transport—each of these decisions should be guided by a basic equity, which addresses the discrimination against the people who live in Western Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** That's an example, potentially, of the Sydney Metro West. People were pushing for an eastern extension, for example, of Sydney Metro West. How does that type of priority sit with all of you considering you don't even have your, in some ways, basic north-south connection? Does it frustrate you when these kinds of things are put on the table and potentially continue to be prioritised? Mr Niven?

**DAVID NIVEN:** From my perspective, it's about how well integrated public transport is within Western Sydney itself. Having said that, there's also an acknowledgement that the connections between the Western Parkland City, Parramatta and Sydney city are also going to be critical as well because you'll need to tie the three cities in Sydney together. They do need to have a very good connection. I think there still is a role for, if you call it that, the eastern component. The question is really then about timing.

I take the view that the time it took to make a decision over Badgerys Creek—so the lost time between the seventies and the nineties, so to speak—has put Western Sydney 20 years behind in its infrastructure. That's a direct consequence of not knowing what is happening in that big hole that sat between Liverpool and Penrith. Now that there's certainty and investment flowing into that space, the question is what's the rest of the infrastructure that needs to come around that to really make that work well and not leave it as something that's going to struggle because people need to drive there and there's no parking. There's a whole host of things that need to be thought through. It's about the balancing of those things. I think as a consequence of not having had infrastructure investment in Western Sydney for quite a number of years, that's then now got to be caught up in some way. I think that's what Kerry is getting at with the inequity of what's out in Western Sydney versus eastern Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, but we've got Western Sydney airport, for example, but in Campbelltown you're expecting the rapid bus network, which we've just been informed this morning isn't happening. You don't know when it's going to be happening. Is that correct?

**GEORGE GREISS:** My understanding is we are expecting it to be happening; we just don't expect it to be rapid. We're expecting a bus.

**The CHAIR:** That's the same thing.

**GEORGE GREISS:** I'll answer your question very quickly, Madam Chair. Yes, it is frustrating. I mean, it's not for us here to sit and talk about the future planning of Sydney as a holistic approach from the Campbelltown perspective. It is frustrating to hear connection from heavily connected areas being extended—north, south, east, whatever it is—while we don't have any basic connections at all. It is very frustrating for us to hear these things. At the end of the day, I'm here to advocate on behalf of Campbelltown and Western Sydney. We think it is the number one priority for us to connect Campbelltown to the airport through the Glenfield line, and for that connection to extend further east through Liverpool and to Bankstown. It is to connect the airport, the north-south link, again, through the airport and all the way down to Macarthur. These are our priorities and we make no apologies for pushing that forward.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I have a general question to all of you. Apologies for arriving late. Just by way of context, I am a resident of the Penrith LGA, which is heavily dependent on the heavy rail network, and that is it. Do any of you have a concern with respect to how governments have historically allocated scarce public transport resources when looking at the current and future needs of residents, particularly in Western Sydney, and whether the allocation of funding has been to build on significant amounts of infrastructure elsewhere rather than to duplicate? If I can be crude about it, there are some very well-serviced parts of Sydney where you can have a light rail network, a ferry network, a heavy rail network and a metro network all working together, whereas other parts, including some areas that you represent, rely on one mode of transport. Do you think governments have effectively looked at how you complement and integrate the public transport network, or do you think they have duplicated on occasion?

**KERRY ROBINSON:** I think it is important to sweat existing assets to get as much as you can out of them, but, beyond that, it wouldn't be silly to suggest that the last time someone came up with a decent public transport plan for Sydney was Mr Bradfield in the 1930s—which is an overall public transport network for the whole of the city which is fully integrated. In Blacktown there are calls for light rail to supplement the heavy rail.

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We recognise that the challenge of that is that capital investment in light rail compared to bus networks is so significantly higher that we're probably better off sticking with buses. But we do always come from a position of advocating for equity in the level of service which is delivered, and, as we're talking about the airport, I'd note that, at full operation, Western Sydney airport generates one plane every 73 seconds 24/7 with no curfew. That is not equitable.

**KATE STARES:** In Campbelltown, we're in a similar situation as you'd suggest in Penrith, with our central heavy rail spine, with seven electrified rail stations within the Campbelltown local government area. Our community is very dependent on that. However, our community drives to those stations in order to access them, and not just the community of Campbelltown but those of the region, particularly the Macarthur region, including Camden and Wollondilly local government areas, which are not served by that heavy rail infrastructure. As you suggested, an integrated network of public transport that enables people to access that rail spine by bus, perhaps, or other public transport is what Campbelltown is seeking so that our community doesn't have to be dependent upon the cars that cause that congestion issue in our city centre and limit our ability to densify and for growth to occur within the city centre—because of that congestion. It would enable our community to access that public transport without having to have a car.

Likewise, if I may, with the extension of the rail to Western Sydney airport, Campbelltown would be proposing that that be a metro service from Glenfield, which may be a duplicated service from Glenfield on the current heavy rail line, but that would be required so that our community are not required to change modes of transport, because we've heard from them, through our travel survey data that we've provided in the submission, that they are not happy with having to change three times to get to Parramatta, for example, or to get to the new Western Sydney airport. It would be important that that's an integrated network of different modes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I very much value your participation, expertise and the information that you bring to our inquiry. I touched on this earlier today. Dr Greiss, it was good to have you this morning too, but just in this environment, we've got the Federal Government presiding over one of the largest growth in migration numbers to Western Sydney. In the same breath, we've had the unprecedented infrastructure cuts, to the tune of \$3.5 billion, by the Federal Government to New South Wales Government, some of that being in critical infrastructure pieces. We've spoken about the importance of the aerotropolis and connecting that to Greater Western Sydney in terms of business and jobs, and I am just wondering what the view of each of your organisations might be as to where we stand on this in terms of migration, infrastructure cuts and the new housing targets. I appreciate and recognise the important role councils play in this. Have you been advocating for the council or the residents against those infrastructure cuts? How are we going to meet the housing targets?

**GEORGE GREISS:** It is a little bit easier to answer this than this morning. We didn't really lose much in the last infrastructure cut, simply because we haven't been promised anything. The review didn't really take too much away from Campbelltown. We didn't have much being promised to us. We did lose, early on this year, a car parking fund of \$12 million or \$15 million, but we ended up, with the last review, with an extra \$2 million as cost-of-living increase to the current car park. Overall, for us, it was a relatively small loss from what happened from that last review—much more significant impact on the rest of the region, however.

From the point of housing growth and immigration, it will have a significant impact on our city going forward, simply because, as I stated earlier, immigrants coming to Australia do tend to settle in Western Sydney and they tend to settle in very well-known hubs based on very well-known concentrations. This dynamic is not new. Without the resources to be able to deal with the growing population and without the resources to provide the new arrivals with opportunities to be able to enter into the workforce, to be able to pick up skills they need and to get the social services they require to integrate into our society, council will be bearing most of that grunt work. That's an issue that we haven't budgeted for, and nobody has spoken about how we're going to deal with it.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Blacktown city values the diversity of its population—a population which has grown by about 10,000 people per annum every year since the late 1960s. Ours is a story of growth, and we're happy to continue to accommodate that growth. However, the provision of State and Commonwealth services hasn't kept up with that growth. Whether it's public transport—as I said—whether it's higher education or whether it's any range of arts and culture services, those services, both the infrastructure and the operating budgets, have not followed that growth in population, and it needs to be redressed, including in relation to public transport provision.

**DAVID NIVEN:** I am very shamelessly just going to say that Kerry said it fantastically.

**The CHAIR:** That is great. I was going to push a little bit further on the commuter car park situation in Campbelltown, for example. When you said you have lost funding, we know the funding for commuter car parks has been a little controversial, but, right now, in terms of the state of the car parks around the stations in the LGA, do they get full every day and every morning within a particular amount of time? Does the fact there is no parking

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actually stop people from commuting? Have you heard these stories? Could you expand on that for the Committee?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I could probably comfortably say that all of our commuter car parks are at capacity in the morning. Campbelltown station has—something like 60 per cent or slightly more of all the cars that park there do not actually live in our LGA. They come from the surrounding suburbs, through Camden or Wollondilly, as it is our connection to the railway link.

Whether car park funding is controversial or not, at the end of the day people do need to access public transport. They need to park somewhere because we don't have any solution for the last mile. We are not talking within 10 minutes' walking; we are talking within an hour, maybe longer if you do not have a car. I've got areas in Campbelltown that need to drive for a good 15 or 20 minutes to get to that train station. Not having parking there available, all that does is just add to the social inequity that we are experiencing. It makes people's commute to and from work much longer because not only do they have to wait to get the train; they have to drive around in circles trying to find a park, which obviously spills over into the local streets and causes all sorts of other issues.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** The situation in Blacktown City is similar to Campbelltown. We have commuters from Hawkesbury, particularly, and increasingly from the Hills shire who drive to stations such as Riverstone, Vineyard and Schofields within Blacktown City and catch the train to their work from those locations. So there is significant pressure. As I pointed out in my opening statement, there are some lost opportunities for very simple densification of parking using 90-degree parking in the rail corridor or adjacent to the rail corridor, close to numerous stations within Blacktown, which the State has chosen not to pick up and construct as yet, out of the car parking funds which are available to it.

**The CHAIR:** Did you have anything to add to that, Mr Niven? Is it the same in Fairfield?

**DAVID NIVEN:** It's reasonably similar in Fairfield. We're a little more built up and so the pressure is a little different. The pressure comes back because it's in our town centres. It's then the competition for parking between the commuters and the shoppers, and it's about trying to maintain the health of the centres as much as anything else in that circumstance.

**The CHAIR:** On this topic, people have talked about the spokes, if you like—the various transport methods or modes that can get people to the stations, not necessarily by car. The State Government potentially would have this, but it's okay if you don't. What work has been done around what the Campbelltown LGA requires, for example, specifically in relation to those short bus trips to bring commuters to the station? We heard earlier this morning of strategies across the Regional Organisation of Councils. Could you expand on that? We didn't get much detail, and it would be good to get more detail.

**KATE STARES:** The council, through the mayor's advocacy, has advocated for improvement of bus services within the Campbelltown local government area and particularly between the suburbs and those transport nodes. Further, the advocacy for the truly rapid bus service to Western Sydney airport would not just service that direct connection between Campbelltown centre and Western Sydney airport but would serve the centres along that route in order to access Campbelltown railway station much faster also. So that's part of the solution, that rapid bus connection, in order to have the local bus services connecting to that trunk service, which would be the rapid bus service, and that then getting the community to the railway station faster in order for them to access the rail services.

**The CHAIR:** Are there any other contributions?

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Our focus has been on the urban growth areas, which in Blacktown are delivering about 250,000 additional people to our city, and the observation is that one needs the public transport infrastructure in early so that the patterns of commuting are established appropriately. Once everyone has bought a second car in order to move into their house in Elara, in Marsden Park, you've got no hope levering them onto the bus when it turns up later. All too often, when new areas are opened up, the planning for those was done by the State Government and the infrastructure has been delivered to allow the urban development to go ahead, but the public transport follows way too late.

**DAVID NIVEN:** I think Fairfield is in a slightly different circumstance to the other two cities. We're largely developed. We don't have the new subdivisions that are challenging the other cities. We have a fairly established bus network service that radiates out from Fairfield and Cabramatta, the two main nodes on the rail line. We were also fortunate back in the early 2000s to have the Liverpool-Parramatta transit way constructed through the western part of the city, and they connect our other two main nodes, which are Prairiewood and Bonnyrigg.

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Our four main centres within Fairfield have two strong north-south connections that service them, and then we've got the radial bus services that come in and out. The challenge, I think, to get people out of their car is to make the bus attractive enough from a travel time perspective to make it attractive for them to get onto the bus. That comes back to the competition for the road space and priority across main roads and a few other little bits and pieces like that that just add up to making the bus trip worth taking.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Sydney is still a very heavily centre-based city, where most retail, education and employment prospects reside in probably two dozen centres dispersed around the city. In any analysis that you've done within your LGAs, is most movement occurring from people's homes to LGA-based centres, or within Western Sydney based centres, or is there still a predominant commute into the CBD so far as it concerns reliance on public transport? What is the greatest utility of public transport to your residents?

**GEORGE GREISS:** For us, 62-odd per cent of our residents leave the LGA every single morning, and 68 per cent of white-collar workers get out of the LGA every single morning.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Do you have an analysis as to whether that's within Western Sydney or to the CBD?

**GEORGE GREISS:** I don't have an exact analysis. Do we have that exact analysis with us? No, but we understand they are going to Sydney CBD or Parramatta CBD and then dispersing across some of the other job centres, like Macquarie Park and the like. But we can provide it, if you like.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** That would be good. Of those, is the greatest frustration that they may articulate the frequency of service or the lack of any sort of hub and spokes from their homes to the heavy rail network? What's the greatest need for those residents?

**GEORGE GREISS:** It's a combination of things. Our lines are over capacity at the moment. At peak hours our main line connecting to Sydney CBD is about 140 per cent over capacity, so that's one issue. The other issue, of course, is that last mile. It's just trying to get people from their homes into the car parks, which at the moment there's no other viable way. Less than 1 per cent of Campbelltown residents use the bus to do that.

**KATE STARES:** If I can add to the mayor's comments, our travel survey has recently indicated that 33 per cent of respondents said that travelling by public transport takes them too long to get to their desired destination, and 31 per cent of respondents were frustrated with getting on and off multiple routes to reach their desired destination.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Blacktown City over the last 50 years has spent a lot of effort to create employment lands to broadly match the growth in resident population. We currently have about 180,000 jobs within the city, and they are spread both in centres but also across the employment zones of the centre. The community changes. It changes its jobs; it changes its locations over time and pays no heed, of course, to local government boundaries. We have a very diverse and spread population, and skills and a lot of jobs within the city. But, even with that, we still have a job containment similar to Campbelltown, at about 40 per cent. So 60 per cent of people are leaving the LGA. But there are 20,000-odd jobs on our doorstep in Norwest, which is literally across the road from our boundary, and I don't have a more detailed breakdown than that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Mr Niven, we are out of time, but if you wanted to add quickly to Mr Nanva's question?

**DAVID NIVEN:** Just very quickly. Some 68 per cent of Fairfield residents would leave Fairfield for work purposes. If you think about schools, we've got 55 schools within Fairfield, so predominantly that again is parents driving to the school and dropping the child off and then moving on to a second destination. So that is a lot of movement. A lot of that is not catered for by public transport, and I am not suggesting it should be either. So there are some challenges. We have the Smithfield-Wetherill Park industrial area, one of the largest in the State. It is very poorly served by public transport other than the T-Way running through the area and a significant number of jobs in that space. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Unfortunately, we are out of time. Thank you all very much for appearing. If we have any further questions, the secretariat will provide them to you in a few days.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

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**Dr JOSHUA BIRD**, Director, Policy and Programs, Western Sydney Community Forum, affirmed and examined

**Mr SHRAVANKUMAR GUNTUKU**, Manager, Policy and Programs, Western Sydney Community Forum, affirmed and examined

**Mr ADAM LETO**, Chief Executive Officer, Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue, sworn and examined

**Mr LUKE TURNER**, Executive Director, Policy and Advocacy, Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses. I assume both organisations will make a short opening statement.

**LUKE TURNER:** The Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue welcomes the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee today. Since our foundation in 2015, the Dialogue has been focused on the advancement of communities across Greater Western Sydney, across a variety of issues and projects but always with a particular interest in public transport infrastructure and services. Connectivity, the tyranny of distance and how long it takes to get from A to B is a staple of conversations every day for people in the region. Regardless of the work we do in other policy areas, the conversation invariably always comes back to transport.

Some of the matters raised in our submissions that I'd like to call the Committee's attention to today include, firstly—and we've heard a lot about this today—that the pace of population growth in Sydney's north-west and south-west calls for some urgency in the provision of new bus routes and services, and the full range of policy options to encourage a mode shift to public transport in these areas. A common theme in our discussions with local representatives from these areas is that service planning and provision is too often based on official population estimates and projections that are already out of date the moment they are published. Such is the pace of growth, and transport is just one of the many basic public services that is struggling to keep up. With migration now ramping up post-pandemic, we can't afford to pull back on service delivery in these parts of the city.

I note the current work of the Bus Industry Taskforce on improving bus services statewide. The recent white paper of the taskforce has highlighted a number of measures that would address many of the concerns that we and others have raised in our submissions to this inquiry. Ultimately, new funding—and quite a lot of new funding—is required to deliver on what is contained in that white paper, and to give people in the region the infrastructure, the fleets and the technology that they expect in a modern network.

We believe there is a lot of scope to increase bus patronage in Greater Western Sydney, and the B-Line project on the northern beaches shows that it can be done fairly quick and relatively cheap, but, again, funding is required to deliver these things. We also believe that on-demand transport services have potential in these growth areas. They have been a bit hit-and-miss across Sydney to date. However, where there are these service gaps, where there are fast-growing communities and where the gaps in services are compounding social isolation and disengagement, I think we need to do better to recognise the costs and benefits when we weigh up decisions on service delivery.

Secondly, we have provided some comment on the design and the user experience elements of public transport that can be addressed to improve passenger safety and perceptions of safety—and this is not a Western Sydney issue; it's a city-wide issue. Perceptions of safety and security are a massive barrier to public transport use for many, particularly for women. We commend some of the very important and impactful work done by the then Greater Sydney Commission under Commissioner Lucy Turnbull in this space, and we encourage the Committee to look further into some of the ideas that we have included in our submission on these things.

Finally, we and others have pointed out in our submissions and in evidence today a wish list for future extensions to the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport project, and a position on the independent review of Sydney Metro is attached to our submission. I won't labour through this, but I would simply say that our partner organisations acknowledge there are substantial costs attached to these projects, but they equally point out—and often with some cynicism—that our State has a track record in delivering missing links in the city's infrastructure. The failure to build the north-west metro out to Schofields is one such example, and we fear that the proposed extension of the metro Western Sydney airport line to Leppington and Glenfield may head the same way without sustained pressure from stakeholders in south-west Sydney, like we've heard today. I commend our submission to the Committee, and we are of course happy to take questions.

**JOSHUA BIRD:** Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. We welcome the inquiry and the opportunity to represent the voices of Western Sydney's community sector with the Committee. To give you some background, Western Sydney Community Forum is the regional social development council for Western Sydney, representing and supporting communities and community groups and agencies in the region. This represents a

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population of over 2½ million people and a community services industry that annually invests about \$2.7 billion into the Western Sydney economy. We have an active and broad member and subscriber base, ranging from small community-based agencies to large charitable groups. We have led and shaped social policy and service delivery across Greater Western Sydney for over 30 years.

We are involved in leading a range of projects and initiatives that respond to community priorities, particularly working with those communities that experience poverty and disadvantage. We also deliver services that strengthen the capacity of the community sector. Our submission was developed in consultation with our member organisations and community stakeholders, including transport providers, youth services, aged-care services and local place-based community organisations. We undertook these community consultations across the region, both face-to-face and online. The details of our recommendations are contained within this submission, as well as other submissions in relation to public transport in Western Sydney that we have made, but there are a couple of key points that we would like to emphasise today.

First of all, reforms or improvements to public transport in Western Sydney need to address the lack of connection to employment opportunities and crucial services for many of Western Sydney's most economically disadvantaged areas that are already those who are least connected to jobs and essential services. Secondly, public transport needs to be more accessible, both in terms of physical infrastructure for older people and people with disability, and in terms of cultural inclusion to respond to the various usage barriers faced by those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Finally, government must take steps to rebuild community demand for public transport in Western Sydney. Things like reduced cost to users, more convenient connections and greater route reliability will go some way to addressing the region's heavy reliance on private transport. My colleague and I will be pleased to speak to these points in more detail and answer any questions. Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry, and we look forward to your recommendations.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for your submissions. Dr Bird, I would like an expansion on your evidence just then when you talked about accessibility. You talked about usage barriers for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Can you expand upon what specifically you mean by that in terms of what those barriers are?

**JOSHUA BIRD:** Yes, I will give you some examples. These are real-life experiences which our members share with us in terms of the things that their clients experience. Usage barriers can go from things such as discrimination or feeling culturally unsafe when using public transport to the absence of linguistically accessible signage and communications on public transport.

**SHRAVANKUMAR GUNTUKU:** There were also case studies—I hate to use the words "case studies"—or stories that members shared about women from areas like Glenmore Park, Marsden Park, South Penrith or the newly developed suburbs, where the connection to drop their children to child care and also to come near a train station or a bus station to go to the employment is an extremely long time to travel. They choose to be at home, and sometimes even if they choose to be at home, it's almost impossible to drop their child, so they are taking care of their own children at home. The typical effect of that is both that the primary carer of the family—the woman, the majority of the time—is not going to employment and involved in economic activities, and that children not going to any early childhood education as well. If we added a layer of the language barrier and cultural barrier, as the previous witness Mr Robinson said, in areas like Blacktown and Mount Druitt there are more numbers of people with low-socioeconomic disadvantage than in other areas.

**The CHAIR:** Another barrier is the appalling situation with bus stops in many parts of Western Sydney. I was in Mount Druitt recently and there didn't seem to be many bus stops, but at one of the stops I passed, I saw a young woman sitting on the bench in direct sun, at midday, with nothing around her. That's extremely common, and I would think that's a huge barrier to people getting public transport, clearly, in either the rain or the heat. I know that communities have been advocating for a very long time, so would you care to address that? You may have seen station upgrades and some of the big, shiny new stations in Sydney and other parts of inner Sydney. The train stations are amazing and beautiful, but how does that make you feel, advocating for people of Western Sydney, when you can't even get a simple bus shelter in Mount Druitt?

**SHRAVANKUMAR GUNTUKU:** Absolutely. This is the frustration among the members who came to the consultation we ran as well. There were a number of stories that they shared in terms of not only women but also elderly people who can't walk a lot, people with disabilities, and families and children waiting for a bus for more than 30 minutes. If they missed a bus or if the bus service was cancelled, they had to wait there longer. One of the examples shared in the consultation was in South Penrith, where the nearest hospital is Nepean Hospital. It takes 12 minutes to drive, but if they had to take a bus there, it would take two bus changes and one hour and five minutes or one hour and 12 minutes, or something like that.

**The CHAIR:** Does Western Sydney Community Forum have—



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**ADAM LETO:** The Dialogue.

**The CHAIR:** The Dialogue, sorry.

**ADAM LETO:** Luke might be able to expand on this a little bit, but one of the points of our report was shifting the thinking a little bit beyond just the major infrastructure projects. There are a lot of conversations, and they're all relevant and all required. But like you're saying, Madam Chair, some of the issues and some of the things that need to be addressed we think have some short-term solutions that might help address the issues that some of those communities in some of the centres outside the major centres are currently feeling. One of the points we make is around expanding the bus services and routes to improve efficiencies and reliability of services so some of those communities in disadvantaged areas are able to participate in normal life. At the moment, because of the lack of access and reliability, some of that disadvantage continues to be entrenched.

**LUKE TURNER:** There is not much more to add except to expand on that. You point out that the physical infrastructure is really important, making it an attractive choice to get the bus or train. Service frequency and reliability are fundamental also. In some of those areas you mentioned, like the Mount Druitt area, there has been some work done by BaptistCare HopeStreet on this, which we mentioned in our submission, with some examples of how hard it is, in the peak and off-peak, just to get around for daily errands in that area of Sydney, which, as you're probably aware, is one of the most disadvantaged suburbs or group of suburbs that we have anywhere in the State.

**The CHAIR:** I was interested in your recommendation from the leadership dialogue in relation to Opal fare discounts. That's interesting because sometimes it's not an issue of the cheaper fare, because the transport system itself is full when it's needed to be used. I think you're talking about potentially off-peak. Have there been surveys or research done on this for you to know that to recommend this would assist people in the area? Is this coming from some research?

**ADAM LETO:** Not that I'm aware of. Again, Luke might be able to provide some more context to it but, to the earlier point, this is about being around to provide some of those communities in disadvantaged areas better access and more opportunity to participate. At the moment, obviously, cost of living is a major issue in Western Sydney, and these areas are feeling it more than others. Any opportunity that can be taken in a cost-effective, practical sense, we would certainly be supportive of. Far too often in Western Sydney, we are seeing communities and residents rely on cars as their primary means of transport. With petrol prices the way they are at the moment and other pressures, it's just not affordable or practical for some of these communities to get to work or move to where they need to go. If there's an opportunity or way to look at that in a little bit more detail, we'd certainly be supportive of it. I don't have any research. I don't know if Luke does. I'm not aware of any research that can validate some of that.

**LUKE TURNER:** To clarify, the recommendation was based on conversations with a number of our partners—there was no specific research on that. We know that fares are regulated by IPART. There are limitations to discounts that can be offered. You have concession fares and off-peak discounts. We have seen through the pandemic and since then that price signals can be sent to incentivise transport to particular areas at particular times of the day. I don't see why not. I'm not an expert in fare setting myself, but we've had recent examples of where that lever can be pulled.

**The CHAIR:** I think the other recommendations around safety and frequency—and we just talked about bus shelters as well—would probably also be valuable to do at the same time to incentivise people. Can I get a sense of what you would think is the most urgent? I know this is very frustrating for you or your organisations, probably because I feel like your organisations have been at tables for a very long time talking about the need for this, and you say the same things repeatedly for good reason. There is the metro west and we heard this morning about north and south. That is just metro, and there is lots about interconnectivity with buses. I hate to do this to you, but is there anything that is particularly more urgent than anything else or one or two key recommendations that you would want to give this Committee today?

**JOSHUA BIRD:** I'm not going to give a recommendation in terms of importance, but there are a number of issues which we identified or which were brought to our attention which aren't a matter of building something new or a new development or a new connection. They're actually about improving systems which already exist. It's about improving the accessibility and the demand for systems and transport linkages which already exist. In terms of a priority, there's some low-hanging fruit there which, if done properly, could unlock opportunities for people to be able to access public transport better.

Obviously we represent all of the different LGAs in Western Sydney so there are different views around which part of things should be built and that kind of thing. But, in the longer term, we want to see greater connections, particularly with an eye towards equity and economic disadvantage. Rather than building onto

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already connected areas and making them more connected, we would like to see a lifting of the floor for those areas which are underserved and underconnected, both in terms of jobs and essential services and in terms of accessibility and in terms of improving barriers which are not hard barriers but barriers around the training of public transport staff around the software of public transport, I guess. Those are some areas where there can be some real impact made in a quick way, without having to rely upon longer term big, hard infrastructure.

**ADAM LETO:** Similar to Dr Bird, we represent 70 partners. Getting a unified position on what should come first is always difficult. This is the Dialogue's position when it comes to metro. First and foremost, we would like to see the Metro West reviewed pretty soon and provide a bit more clarity and certainty around housing and things that might come off the back of that project, given it's already in play. Our position is that we want it to be built sooner rather than later, on budget and hopefully by 2030.

The other point that I'd make on metro would be around the aerotropolis and the airport. We've heard a bit about that today. I think the primary point for us is that this is Western Sydney's airport and we want to make sure that Western Sydney is connected to it. That means that both south-west and north-west have those important connections. The metro link extensions to Tallawong and the north-west and south to Glenfield and further south to Macarthur would be three where we would like to see some action in terms of planning, corridor preservation and work towards some clarity around when those will be delivered. We have the airport opening in 2026 and one of the ongoing measures that we often hear is that we need to make sure that Western Sydney has access and is connected into that airport. Those are probably, on the metro side, the three fundamentals.

There are also some supplementary connectivity issues around the rapid buses, which we heard earlier this afternoon from Campbelltown council. The metro is not the one silver bullet, but we do feel like with an integrated transport network which includes the rapid buses that we are going to be closer to having Western Sydney connected into the aerotropolis by 2026. They are a few off the top of my head. Luke will probably pick up on some that I may have missed but, in terms of the metro priorities, that's where we sit on that.

**LUKE TURNER:** The only thing that I'd add I think Adam and Josh covered pretty well. Just expanding on Josh's point, I think across Western Sydney and across all of our public transport network in New South Wales we can do a lot better on interchange planning, bus-rail connectivity, active transport and personal mobility facilities to really get uplift out of our rail network. We know we can't build trains and metros to everywhere and in Western Sydney there is going to need to be a lot of interchange, and we also can't build commuter car parks to solve every problem.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Chair, I think you covered my question, which is very helpful and efficient of you. I thank you for your written submissions and for coming today. They are very helpful.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Thank you for joining us and for sharing your expertise and very detailed submissions. I will pick up on one of the issues that Mr Turner raised during his earlier comments, which was about the rate of population growth. I set it out that we've got the Federal Government presiding over one of the largest growths in migration numbers to Western Sydney in Australia's history and then, in the same breath, we've got the announced unprecedented infrastructure cuts to New South Wales, with the aerotropolis being one of those key link roads. We have spoken about the importance of the aerotropolis and linking that to business and community.

The third thing, which was raised also by you, Mr Turner, is in terms of housing targets and what has been proposed by the Albanese Government and what the Minns Government has agreed to, and what this impact will mean for us in this inquiry in terms of public transport. I am just wondering if either of your organisations have engaged in any sort of advocacy for the Federal Government on this, in terms of the cuts and the cost and the consequences to New South Wales and our communities.

**LUKE TURNER:** Yes, we have. Adam and our chairman were in Canberra last week speaking with Federal MPs and the Federal infrastructure Minister about that very issue. The cuts were announced, I think, on the eve of our major conference a couple of weeks ago and were the hot topic of conversation on that day. Those cuts were—every State took a haircut there. Their decisions varied from some pretty half-baked ideas like a Geelong fast train to the M7-M12 interchange, which is under contract literally being built. That raised some eyebrows. We obviously want to see that money remain on the table.

You mentioned housing targets. There's a lot of talk at the moment on the potential to deliver a lot of new housing off the back of particularly Sydney Metro West and future metro projects. The only point I would like to make on that is that we are talking, at best, medium-term delivery of new housing. In the meantime, there's going to be a lot of infill development and greenfield development that is not going to be metro connected. Everything under that mega project level of investment really needs a lot of attention to make sure that we can sustain the kind of growth we are seeing. You rightly point out that we are seeing unprecedented annual population

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growth and migration at the moment. It's getting pretty urgent and it's a bit of a wake-up call after we had zero growth for a couple of years. Adam, is there anything you want to add?

**ADAM LETO:** As Luke mentioned, we did have some concerns around the M7-M12 cuts. Conversations that Christopher our chairman and I had with some of our Federal representatives last week were a bit reassuring. We are still waiting to see what comes out of that but I think there seemed to be confidence—or at least encouragement—that a resolution would be reached.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Was there anything further that you wanted to comment on?

**JOSHUA BIRD:** Just to say that, as a community sector representative organisation, we, for the most part, come at the question of housing from the perspective of the housing crisis and how it's impacting on people's ability to make ends meet. We understand that increased housing, particularly increased affordable housing, is part of the solution to that problem. But for the most part our advocacy has been more around social housing and those kinds of areas of investment.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Did the Minns Government engage or consult with either of your organisations in the lead-up to the announcement and the agreement of the housing targets in terms of New South Wales meeting 75,000 homes each year for the next five years? Was there consultation, discussion or guidance? Are we ready that this is coming?

**ADAM LETO:** We've had some engagement with the Minns Government and its various offices and departments, particularly. On the transport front, we're very pleased with the level of engagement from Transport for NSW. For a long time now, they've probably been one of the leading agencies when it comes to being proactive in the conversations that they're having with industry and industry partners. We meet with them fairly regularly, where they provide us an update of where things are at. We ask numerous questions of where certain projects are at. They have regular industry meetings—I think quarterly over the last 12 months—in particular with the aerotropolis and airport precinct. We're pretty comfortable with the engagement and communication that we're having from government. Specifically on housing, I can't recall getting a specific briefing on that. But any questions that we've had, I think we feel pretty comfortable being able to raise them with the relevant departments.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I have one final question, if I could. In terms of Western Sydney train stations, we've had reports of good upgrades to Doonside railway station, but then people are also reporting, and we've touched on it, in terms of commuter parking. It's not available. People are walking long distances. It's nearly as long to walk to the station as it is to ride the train. Are there any other reports or reflections in terms of where we need to be doing more?

**ADAM LETO:** I'll let Luke add a bit more to this, but in terms of the general messaging, the first and last mile connectivity between stations is something that we hear a lot about. We've been hearing about it basically since our inception in 2015. I think there's definitely room for improvement in there. Some of the points we raised earlier around improved bus connectivity and frequency of services would help address some of that, but it is definitely an issue. I don't know that commuter car parking is the silver bullet that everyone makes it out to be. I think it's part of a solution that's required. But everything from taxi and Uber services through to bus services and walkability within our centres, and how the centres are planned around our train stations—that probably ties to your earlier point about future housing and how that might integrate with the future of those stations. The commuter car park issue is something that has been raised. A lot of councils are dealing with it because of the parking and congestion that it creates. It definitely needs to be resolved, but it needs to be one part of an overall package.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I was previously going to ask for your thoughts about priorities and the lack of an integrated public transport network in Western Sydney, but you've all answered that very effectively. I have one other question. I think everyone would be in furious agreement that we would like to see more public transport, more reliable public transport and greater frequencies, but often the conversation then turns to funding, given how scarce resources are at the moment. I am wondering if either the Dialogue or the Forum has a view or any analysis of innovative funding models with respect to the delivery of public transport? The Treasurer has spoken about value-capture mechanisms such that, if the unimproved value of land significantly improves as a result of that land being made more appealing, productive or accessible, then a fair share of that uplift in value ought to go to the delivery of the very infrastructure that has delivered the windfall gain, effectively. Do you have a view or any analysis on the merits of those innovative funding schemes?

**LUKE TURNER:** The short answer is yes. We have done a lot of work on this, going back some years now with regards to the Parramatta Light Rail project. We convened a group called the WestLine Partnership, which comprised landowners, developers, councils and stakeholders that were interested in that project being built, particularly between Parramatta and Sydney Olympic Park. We commissioned some analysis on the

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potential for a value-capture mechanism to be implemented on that project. Some of the Committee may recall that back then there was a decision announced by the government of the day that they were going to go ahead with a \$200 per square metre infrastructure contribution on new residential development that occurred off the back of that project. It was later abandoned. We commissioned some analysis on different options and some discussion of the different approaches that you could take to implementing value capture on that project. We'd be happy to share that with the Committee. I think it's out there in the public domain. But, yes, there is tremendous potential, particularly with Sydney Metro West and the uplift that can provide to the precincts that you've heard people speak about today.

**ADAM LETO:** I'll just add that from the conversations that we've had, and we've been having some of these conversations for nearly a decade now, the private sector—the developers and the contractors—seems to be pretty open to having that conversation with government. The sticking point has been an agreed position that works for all parties, in particular the community. Our position would be that it's something that the Government should definitely interrogate with developers and get an agreed industry position on. There seems to be an appetite there from the private sector to work with government to come up with a way of helping offset some of those costs.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** What seems fascinating to me is that the uplift is twofold. It's firstly just in the base delivery of the infrastructure, which results in the uplift of that land. But, inevitably, what follows the infrastructure is a rezoning and a significant uplift in zoning and transit-oriented developments, which, in and of itself, would increase the value of land. There's a twofold increase, but it doesn't seem to be getting captured.

**ADAM LETO:** It's one that has gone off the boil a little bit. There was a lot of momentum that seemed to be building back in 2016-17. It sounds like the Government's at a position now where it wants to look into that a little bit further. The pleasing thing is that you've got an industry that would be willing to partner. The other side of it is, from the community standpoint and looking at where the value and benefits are going to lie, there needs to be a level of engagement with communities to make sure that the uplift and the return back to the communities sits where it needs to.

**JOSHUA BIRD:** I will just say that, although we've been following the discussions around value-capture approaches, I don't think it would be accurate to say that we have a formal position on the matter. But to echo Adam's point, any new approaches which are introduced must be seen as delivering equity to the community. Generally, we would be in favour of anything which delivers a more equitable public transport system and one which allows people who are not able to access essential services and employment to be able to access those in a way in which other parts of Sydney are able. That is about as far as we'd go, I think.

**SHRAVANKUMAR GUNTUKU:** Also, when it comes to Western Sydney, one of the other things that we have to add is that it is very multicultural, as we have been hearing from a lot of people since earlier this afternoon. Without adding that layer of language barrier, community safety or cultural safety and competence to transport, and also providing accessibility and frequency, along with why people are not using it where it is available, is also important. Without having these issues addressed for people who are coming to Western Sydney as part of the migration increase, however many bigger, innovative infrastructure things that we do for Western Sydney, they might not be as accessible as possible. Having that Western Sydney lens, with the multicultural language barrier and community safety views, is a significant issue for Western Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** I also wanted to just get a little bit of evidence in relation to the importance of active transport options. The forum's submission also makes mention of e-scooters and other technology in terms of mobility. What are the most urgent priorities in that regard? It does sound like just ensuring as much as possible that connectivity to some of the major transport hubs potentially to start with, because in a lot of places—I don't think even walking, let alone cycling, mobility scooters, bikes and what have you. I'll start with the Forum and go to the Dialogue, who I think also mentioned that in their submission as well.

**JOSHUA BIRD:** We've had some discussion this afternoon about, you know—it's not just about building things; it's ensuring that people are able to get to the transport hubs. So part of it is about thinking in new ways about how to unlock the access to those transport hubs. One of those ways is by using or building in greater capacity for people to use things like e-bikes, e-scooters for that first part of the journey.

**SHRAVANKUMAR GUNTUKU:** As we mentioned in our submission, we have seen this successfully run in States like ACT and also pilot programs done in New South Wales as well, which, of course, we have not seen the impact, as in scientific or any analysis done. But we have definitely heard from our members that there are a lot of young people, for example, in Blacktown LGA, areas like Bidwill or Willmot or Lethbridge Park—this population of young people who are not involved in any active employment because of the transport accessibility. These ones could possibly use these e-bikes because they're able to and go to the nearest station and go to their employment place—that could be an option. Also, essential requirements, as we mentioned, again, in

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our submission—some of the stations in Western Sydney are also not fitted with essential accessible equipment. That could also be integrated in this innovative equipment funding—could be used for Western Sydney.

**ADAM LETO:** It touches on Ms Merton's point earlier around first- and last-mile facilities. When it comes to the infrastructure itself, I think there's probably a perception around some of the stations in Western Sydney that don't have the same access to the facilities, the bike-changing facilities or e-scooter facilities that some of the inner city areas might have. I think if we look at the investment in active transport links historically, a lot of it is focused on inner city areas. There are some missing links that still need to be resolved in Western Sydney. Some of them have been achieved in the last 12 months in places like Parramatta. But, beyond that, I think there is a network that could be better connected and better considered that hasn't been traditionally.

**LUKE TURNER:** The only point that I would add on e-scooters and e-bikes—the tremendous potential for them to boost the first-mile, last-mile connection, which is always the challenge for transport planners. There's been, I think, unfortunately a culture in our State of banning things first or trying to regulate things before we embrace them and normalise them. We're seeing e-bikes and e-scooters all over the roads, but apparently they're illegal at certain speeds or in certain places. But people are out there using them. I would love to see a culture less of banning things purely on safety grounds and seeing how we can do things reasonably and manage something that people are going to start doing anyway.

**The CHAIR:** We are out of time. Thank you very much for coming and for your evidence. If we have any further questions for you, the secretariat will be in touch. I appreciate the work you do. The Committee will now break for afternoon tea until 3.15 p.m.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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**Mr STEVE LONGHURST**, Member, Sydenham to Bankstown Alliance, sworn and examined

**Mr DAVID REYNOLDS**, Member, Sydenham to Bankstown Alliance, sworn and examined

**Mr ROYDON NG**, Convenor, Restore T2 Inner West Line and Save T3 Bankstown Line, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back to our next session. Any short opening statements? Mr Ng?

**ROYDON NG:** Good afternoon, everyone. The Restore T2 Inner West Line and Save T3 Bankstown Line community campaign advocates for the enhancement of rail services in the West of Bankstown area, which caters to around currently 19,000 commuters that will likely be worse off arising from Metro Southwest and are facing an uncertain long-term future after 2030 of whether stations will remain open. I refer to tabled document 1. The removal of T2 Inner West Line services from the City Circle to Liverpool and Bankstown via Regents Park in the 2013 timetable and the subsequent removal of peak express trains from Lidcombe and Granville in the 2017 timetable have rendered the West of Bankstown area as one of the most transport-disadvantaged areas in Sydney, as evident from Transport for NSW's own *Sydney's Rail Future Implementation Plan*, which has been obtained under freedom of information under the GIPA Act.

Encouragingly, the New South Wales Government has agreed to restore direct trains to City Circle from Berala, Regents Park, Sefton, Chester Hill, Leightonfield, Villawood and Carramar between 2024 and 2030. However, concerns do arise for Birrong and Yagoona, the only two stations on the Sydney Trains network to be without any train connection to Central station. Due to Metro Southwest from Sydenham to Bankstown, the T3 Bankstown line will soon be reduced to a shuttle between Lidcombe and Bankstown after 2024. Thus Broken Hill will have more trains to Central compared to Birrong and Yagoona. I table the Western New South Wales train timetable. Transport for NSW needs to cease and desist from closing west of Bankstown stations after 2030. Transport for NSW needs to focus on new north-south connections, such as perhaps between Parramatta and Bankstown, including consideration of utilising both Lidcombe Junction West and also Sefton Junction as well.

The T3 shutdown temporary transport plan shows a lack of understanding of the west of Bankstown area as many of the intersections in Cumberland Council are omitted while congestion from the temporary transport plan will see the near doubling of buses in Lidcombe from about 383 to 757 every day, including two routes that will use the single-laned Tooheys Lane outside Lidcombe station. I table the Temporary Transport Plan. The West of Bankstown should not just be an afterthought for Transport for NSW planners to close at the stroke of a pen apparently with the supposed authority of the Transport Administration Act 1988, which apparently gives Sydney Metro authority to have control over Bankstown to Lidcombe and Liverpool stations in that corridor despite the west of Bankstown being outside of the approved Metro Southjohn browest project.

I'd like to also draw attention now to the astroturf group, Locals for Metro Southwest, that has its property development office in Double Bay. They've been armed with public relations consultants that have shown genuine contempt for the commuters of the T3 Bankstown line by striving for an all-means-necessary approach to achieve windfall from their \$200 million worth of developments on land-banked sites in the south-west corridor around Canterbury, Campsie and Belmore. That will leave the rest of the community simply as collateral damage. I table a document with the director of Locals for Metro Southwest and from CRK Properties and his LinkedIn profile, showing his claim that he has \$200 million worth of developments. I also table an article on ABC News that shows Locals for Metro Southwest based as property developers in the eastern suburbs that have funded their campaign.

The Locals for Metro Southwest have also had exclusive VIP status with the former New South Wales Government, such as an exclusive stakeholder meeting with Sydney Metro in the Campsie office on 26 February 2019. I table the invitation from Sydney Metro to Locals for Metro Southwest. I should also note that the Locals for Metro Southwest received an exclusive ministerial video from then transport Minister Andrew Constance for their group's launch on 20 June 2018, which so happened to be the start, the very first day, of the Sydenham-Bankstown Metro's preferred infrastructure report's public exhibition period.

For their launch event, Locals for Metro Southwest got an exclusive ministerial video from Andrew Constance. I table again what is document 9 in the bundle, showing that Minister Constance's office acknowledging that a video was made for this group. But, furthermore, Locals for Metro Southwest got an invite into former then Premier Gladys Berejiklian's boardroom on 28 June 2019 for a secret meeting without any minutes taken. This group was represented by lobbyist Harry Hughes who organised this meeting through Premier Berejiklian's planning policy adviser, as opposed to the transport policy adviser.

Ultimately I stress that, whilst transit-oriented development is important, it needs to be transparently planned because transparently planned transit-oriented development is a vital part of reducing car dependency, particularly for Western Sydney as well. So ultimately I go back to the request from the 19,000 commuters in the west of Bankstown area. We used to have two direct lines to the city, firstly T2 Inner West, Liverpool and

**CORRECTED**

Bankstown via Regents Park and also T3 Bankstown via Sydenham to the city. That was before 2013. From 2030 we might not even have any train stations. So again I draw attention of the Committee to Transport for NSW document titled *2026 to 2056*, questioning, "Is it desirable to retain the reintroduced T2 services to the harbour CBD in the 2030s?" So Transport for NSW is questioning whether, after 2030, stations west of Bankstown should even have a train station. I'll leave it there, and I leave it with a question for everyone: Is it unreasonable to request a train station with a train to Central? Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Ng. We'll go to you, Mr Reynolds.

**DAVID REYNOLDS:** Thank you. I'd like to just make this opening statement. The justification for the conversion of the T3 line to a metro has not been made to the community. There has been no modelling released that shows how or why the metro conversion will alter residents' heavy dependency on private car transport, particularly for travel to work, as the metro has similar interconnection points to the existing T3 line. Earlier today in the Business NSW and Business Western Sydney submission to this Committee it recognises that public transport is not a suitable substitute for all business-related travel, due to flexibility, convenience and the need to transport tools and goods.

The T3 conversion is costing many billions—I think I've seen a number as high as 10 billion—of taxpayer dollars for something that is not materially different to what is currently there. What are we getting—the connectivity to the metro is largely the same as the existing T3 rail line, with less seats. The duration of the trips into the city will not be any quicker. Passengers are less likely to be able to be seated in peak periods. If the justification is to free up space in the city circle, this is a misrepresentation. The facts are the city circle current peak capacity is 20 trains per hour in each direction. Current usage is 19 trains per hour in each direction, therefore two additional train services that can be added to the city circle, regardless of the T3 Bankstown line using the city circle or not. To put it another way, the T3 Bankstown line uses 10 per cent of the city circle capacity. Removing it will only allow a marginal improvement in the services of the T2 Inner West and Leppington lines, T8 East Hills to Macarthur train services. This is not a game changer.

Upgrading the Sydney Trains network signalling will actually increase the capacity to 30 trains per hour. That is a 50 per cent increase in capacity. This is a game changer and is much more cost-effective than converting the existing rail line to a metro line. To put it more simply, the digital signal upgrade beats metro conversion as a value proposition. As Mathew Hounsell, Senior Research Consultant, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, who consults and works with the New South Wales Government, Transport for NSW, Sydney Trains and Sydney Metro partners explains, the Bankstown line does not have the patronage to warrant prioritising it for metro conversion. I have shared this document with the Committee today. It shows that in detail.

The value proposition to the T3 locals and the New South Wales taxpayers who are funding the conversion has not been made. Nor has the Government released the business case that explains the justification, noting that this was a recommendation of the 2019-2020 New South Wales Legislative Council inquiry, recommendation 1. Additionally, the shutdown of the T3 line for potentially 12 months for the conversion and replacement by a shuttle bus service will cause great inconvenience for passengers. And my final point, it is unclear where the massive number of buses and drivers will come from to provide the train replacement shuttle service, noting the current shortage of both buses and drivers Sydney is experiencing. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I'll jump in with the first couple of questions. With the Sydenham to Bankstown line, I'm aware that there's been quite a few inquiries. You've noted in your submission, in fact, the other submissions that you've made to other inquiries. For this inquiry now, in terms of recommendations, you note that the previous Legislative Council inquiry recommended that the business case be released—the first recommendation. That hasn't been done. In relation to this particular line, what's your key recommendation that now, given practicalities, we could recommend to the Government?

**DAVID REYNOLDS:** In earlier submissions I was listening to here today there was some honest and frank discussion about value capture. I believe that business case will articulate the real value capture for the conversion of the T3 line. If that business case is released then the community will see what the real value is for it and what the impacts on the local community is anticipated. If that is made public, then we can have an honest and open discussion about the reality of the T3 conversion to a metro line. At the moment, the community is hamstrung without having all the facts and to be able to have a realistic conversation about the impacts. It is likely—I'm making an assumption—that there is going to be massive infill and intensification and gentrification along the Bankstown line, dislocating the low-rent, affordable-housing residents that are along that line. They will be displaced, and where will they be pushed to?

**STEVE LONGHURST:** I might add that my personal recommendation would be to proceed no further with the conversion to metro. The stations have been upgraded. We now have lifts, so the moneys spent have been

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useful. But I think any further conversion would be a waste of money. The residents don't want it. It's not needed. Train services can be increased in frequency with a much cheaper signalling option.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Ng, that plays into your evidence, doesn't it, in terms of developers?

**ROYDON NG:** Yes, I do agree that with the Sydenham-Bankstown line, signalling beats metro. Again, that was a finding from the previous inquiry of this Committee. Again, the business case should be released, and it's long overdue that it does get released.

**The CHAIR:** This is the final business case—I assume it's been confirmed that there was a final business case?

**ROYDON NG:** From my understanding, this was done in around 2016. But then since Sydney Metro City and Southwest and rapid transit, this was all based out of *Sydney's Rail Future*, the 2012 document, and *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan 2012-13*—this goes back to basically when Ms Berejiklian and Premier O'Farrell were touting, "Fix the trains". This goes back all the way to then. The business case is, from my understanding, modelled on 2012 stats. Basically, a project that opens in 2025 is really relying on statistics and data collected from over a decade ago. It does not factor in COVID. It does not factor in anything of the global economic crisis. It does not factor in anything else, but is simply based on data from over a decade ago.

**The CHAIR:** If we could just talk about which options you're talking about, the fact that—I will just get your evidence—there are no trains west of Bankstown. What is the Government recommending? What additional services of different transport modes has it recommended or has it put in already for communities west? I think you said there are 19,000 commuters west of Bankstown?

**ROYDON NG:** Yes. That 19,000 figure, firstly, is—

**The CHAIR:** Out of date?

**ROYDON NG:** —from a letter from four former executives, including Ron Christie, who did the famous 2001 Christie report, which was widely receive by both sides of government as well. The 19,000 figure is for the nine stations west of Bankstown. For these commuters right now—the history goes, pre-2013, two lines to the city: Liverpool and Bankstown via Regents Park, the Inner West line, T2; and also the alternative route of T3 via Bankstown and Sydenham to City Circle. The year 2013 saw the Inner West line, Liverpool and Bankstown via Regents Park, removed. Thankfully, this Government has confirmed that they are going ahead with plans to restore the T2 Inner West line, Liverpool via Regents Park—it is a partial restoration.

That is actually the part of the only recommendation from the last inquiry—the Sydenham-Bankstown metro inquiry—that has been partly adopted. But that recommendation actually stated restoration of direct trains for all stations west of Bankstown. There are nine immediate stations west of Bankstown. Birrong and Yagoona are the two that are not going to have any direct train to Central because Bankstown to city via Regents Park—the other part of the former Inner West line—has not been restored in the 2024 timetable. That's the first issue there: In 2024, Birrong and Yagoona do not have a train to Central. Then in 2030, per the evidence I've just tabled, there is a Transport for NSW document that says they want to remove the train services that are getting restored in 2024, which means, basically, West of Bankstown after 2030 could potentially have no train station or Sydney Trains whatsoever.

**The CHAIR:** Which document is the—

**ROYDON NG:** I refer to attachment 4, and also the last page of attachment 1 as well. It is titled "2026 to 2056".

**The CHAIR:** Document No. 4—is there a date on that, in terms of when it was produced?

**ROYDON NG:** This is Transport for NSW's GIPAA application 21T-0844. From my understanding, this was produced following the last inquiry, which was in 2019, so this was produced around 2020. Transport for NSW, despite my frequent requests, has not actually confirmed an exact date, but the formatting and the branding of the Sydney Metro style guide shows it's 2019-20, after that inquiry. This was done within the last couple of years. I also note that I've presented this at the previous inquiry in Sydney Metro West, because it does say, "Is it desirable to retain T2 services given Sydney Metro West?" I presented this to the Sydney Metro West inquiry, which I gave evidence at about a month ago. I'm still yet to receive a response, also, from Transport for NSW to refute this, either. I have presented previous documents to the previous inquiry that have since been ruled out by Transport for NSW—and I thank Transport for NSW for ruling out those previous plans—but this has not been ruled out.

**The CHAIR:** I didn't sit on the last inquiry; I'm not sure whether anybody on this Committee did. I assume the Government last time, when questioned about the need to convert to metro, talked about more



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frequent trains; I assume they talked more commuters being able to get on to those trains. Is that correct? Is that basically their selling point in terms of why they're doing it?

**DAVID REYNOLDS:** I believe that's the marketing, but the reality is that because it goes to roughly the same locations, you're going to have the same people that are going to be able to use it. Being more frequent, it's not going to encourage people who use cars or other modes of transport. Only 19 per cent of people currently, I think, in the Campsie area use the train to go to or from work; that's from the Campsie town plan. I think it's similar numbers in Bankstown. Over 50 per cent of people use cars to travel to and from work. As I said, the connectivity to other locations—say, to Parramatta, to Burwood or to Hurstville—there's ring connectivity. That's not being introduced. There's no added functional aspect to the metro to encourage more people to use it than the current T3 line.

**STEVE LONGHURST:** Again, signalling beats metro, the cost. It's much more cost-effective to improve signalling than to convert to metro.

**The CHAIR:** What about improvements to other parts of Sydney? In terms of your submission here and your evidence today, are there other recommendations for the areas you represent in terms of connecting to not just the CBD but recommendations for the Committee to connect the areas more broadly to other parts of Western Sydney, which of course we've heard a lot about today?

**DAVID REYNOLDS:** The connectivity that's being proposed at the moment ends at Bankstown. Where it connects to post then—Mr Ng, have you got clarity on when and if that's going to happen?

**ROYDON NG:** I'm happy to speak in regard to West of Bankstown. From my understanding—I'm happy to be corrected—this current New South Wales Government does not appear to be proceeding with Bankstown to Liverpool metro. On that point, I should state to the Committee that the T3 Bankstown Line does currently continue west to Liverpool and also to Lidcombe as well. We exist as rail stations right now, but also in 2024 the direct train between Bankstown and Liverpool, or precisely between Birrong and Sefton, is getting taken out for reasons unexplained. Why is a direct train between two major town centres of Liverpool and Bankstown getting removed? Extension of south-west metro, Bankstown to Liverpool or not, there should be no reason to remove existing trains that are running already between Bankstown and Liverpool.

Also, as I spoke about earlier in my opening statement, other opportunities to improve connectivity in Western Sydney from the Bankstown area—Bankstown to Parramatta, the Future Transport Strategy has identified that as an important corridor. Future Transport Strategy 2056—the Greater Sydney indicative network map—does suggest that a new corridor be formed between Bankstown and Chester Hill, and then going South Granville, Granville North and to Parramatta CBD. Note the section between Bankstown and Chester Hill. That's not the existing rail corridor. That is not Yagoona-Birrong. It is bypassing those two stations. That's why there is also community concern that if future transport 2056 is implemented, Birrong and Yagoona again get left out, hence going back to concerns about the closure of stations West of Bankstown.

But, ultimately, we should really consider using existing track infrastructure. There is actually a railway track right now from Bankstown through to Parramatta. It just isn't used at the moment. Between Berala and Auburn, there is actually a direct railway track. It hasn't been used, probably, since the early 2000s. This used to be a critical part of when the western suburbs used to have a direct train to Cronulla beach during the summer days, back in the eighties—don't quote me on that—before my time. But many years ago you could probably go from Blacktown through to Parramatta, and then from Auburn the train would turn right down to Berala through Bankstown and Sydenham. From Sydenham then you would go down all the way towards Cronulla. At least, right now, we could re-use the direct track on Lidcombe Junction West for some direct services from Bankstown to Parramatta. That's a new north-south link. That's connecting Bankstown to Western Sydney. I'd encourage the Committee to look into that as well.

**The CHAIR:** I am sure you have recommended something like that, in various forms, to parliamentary committees and the Government before, Mr Ng, because it just seems to make such good sense. It is crazy to have train lines like that which are not being used, and it sounds like we will get a few more that are not being used. What has been the response to the Government's rationale for not having those trains? Birrong and Yagoona seems completely crazy.

**ROYDON NG:** Yes, it is. In regard to the Transport for NSW project planning for future rail in 2024, the link between Bankstown and Parramatta, that was—I asked the Transport for NSW project team. They told me that was out of scope, despite the fact that Berala is on the Bankstown Line right now. They refused to consider it as something that was—I think, in their words—unsubstantiated or not of merit for their consideration for 2024. But, ultimately, Birrong and Yagoona both serve a lot of schools. There's the Birrong Boys High School and Birrong Girls High School there, and a lot of multicultural and diverse CALD communities as well.

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Firstly, making passengers—being the only two stations without a train to Central, that is disadvantage enough and then, in future, potentially even closing those stations west of Bankstown. People will end up driving to Lidcombe, which reduces the sustainability of the environment and also increases traffic congestion in Cumberland council area. Cumberland Council is on the T3 Bankstown Line. Sydney Metro and Transport for NSW do not like to talk about the Cumberland Council area, but actually about three and a half or four stations on the Bankstown Line west of Bankstown are impacted by Sydney Metro, yet Sydney Metro ends its consultation—if you could call it consultation at all—with Canterbury-Bankstown council to the west.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I firstly declare that I live in Lidcombe, so this line is certainly one my family and I use regularly. One of the arguments that was put before the previous committee, about whether you could extend the proposed metro from Bankstown through to Lidcombe so that those stations had a life with metro, was that there was some structural issue around integration with the freight lines at Regents Park. Could you explain what that is about?

**ROYDON NG:** Yes. I'm glad you're familiar with the railways as well. You're quite right. Sefton junction is both a passenger rail service, at the moment, and also the entrance to Enfield and Chullora yards. So between Regents Park and Birrong—if we're coming from Regents Park towards Birrong, on the left-hand side there is a freight track that goes in. So the Southern Sydney Freight Line, from my understanding, goes underneath, but there is also an above-ground freight connection there. Approximately, near Birrong, under the Auburn Road bridge, that's where the freight line from Regents Park just about turns into the freight yards. Hence, if the metro was taken through to Regents Park and Lidcombe—basically, if you extend it west of Bankstown, you would actually cut off freight access to Enfield and Chullora, from my understanding, as well for freight coming from the northern side from Lidcombe down through Regents Park. That's my understanding of why Lidcombe can't be converted into metro as per the original 2012 plan for rapid transit.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is there not an engineering solution to that problem?

**ROYDON NG:** You would probably have to do a flyover. Considering that there already is a flyover there, you would have to do a flyover over a flyover. I'm not sure how much capacity there is for that one. Also, given that, if you would do metro on the Bankstown to Lidcombe branch and take the metro up that end, you would then rule out any Sydney Trains coming from Liverpool, which means Sefton, Chester Hill, Leightonfield, Villawood and Carramar stations would almost be condemned to bus only between Cabramatta and Regents Park, because metro and Sydney Trains can't share the same track. It is either the whole thing stays as heavy rail Sydney Trains, or you convert the whole thing into metro, and then you knock out all freight. But then, if you convert the entire west of Bankstown existing corridor into metro, you also run into the issue at Cabramatta. You would need a new turnback at Cabramatta for metro, otherwise you would remove every single heavy rail train going from Liverpool through to Fairfield and through Merrylands and Granville as well. One would probably say, I think, the choice of the Bankstown line was curious, but no-one thought it through properly, whether the whole Bankstown line should have been converted in the first place at all.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What about an alternative proposition around extending the inner city line so that it connects up to Bankstown via Birrong and Yagoona? What's the impediment there?

**ROYDON NG:** City to Bankstown via Regents Park, that service ran pre-2013. Transport for NSW actually, in its project documentation for planning for rail service in 2024, acknowledged that running direct trains to stations west of Bankstown could be done using currently available infrastructure, and that's a quote—"currently available infrastructure". There is no real impediment on the Sydney Trains network as to why a train from the city via inner west couldn't continue turning through to Lidcombe, then Berala, Regents Park, Birrong, Yagoona and Bankstown. In track work right now, sometimes those trains use that diversion as well. The tracks are there. It is just not used, from my understanding.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Are the turnbacks that exist at Flemington and Lidcombe an impediment to having that direct line from Bankstown to the city?

**ROYDON NG:** No. The Homebush and Lidcombe turnback—I don't have it in front of me, my apologies. But, from memory, when reading the Transport for NSW environmental impact statement or the REF, when they were constructed—it actually states in those documents that it is not to turn back every single train. It still allows capacity for some trains to continue down to the West of Bankstown area. It is more the timetabling decision that's been made in 2013 that basically truncated it entirely, which left the West of Bankstown, as per Transport for NSW's own document, as one of the worst-impacted areas with the most increased travel times. This is a Transport for NSW Sydney Rail Future map. The areas in red are the stations West of Bankstown: Lidcombe, Auburn and basically every station towards Cabramatta and Bankstown. This is saying in 2021, as a result of the 2013 timetable change, the West of Bankstown area will have significantly increased travel times. This is a Transport for NSW document.

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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** One of the arguments around the turnbacks that led to this deterioration in the services for those stations west of Bankstown was the capacity on the Western line and trying to free up that capacity. If the Metro West goes ahead, obviously that's going to create new capacity in that east-west corridor. Does that eliminate some of the arguments around allowing more frequent services to run from Bankstown through that inner city line?

**ROYDON NG:** That's a good question. I have put that question to Transport for NSW. They've refused to comment and probably haven't drafted a future timetable for 2030 yet either. I note, again, the Christie report, which I'm happy to table additionally—Long-term Strategic Plan for Rail by Ron Christie, who ran the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games transport. He does note that a future rail network development has his recommendation: that there be a sextuplication of the rail line between Homebush and Lidcombe, so he does recommend additional tracks. Again, I am happy to take this on notice and submit it to the Committee. Transport for NSW in 2014 and 2015 did start a project for that additional capacity but, for whatever reason, they did not proceed—one partly being Metro West. But also looking at some of the WestConnex Stage One documentation, the State Significant Infrastructure Application Report, SSIAR, cites that timetable changes around 2013/2014 would appear to impact traffic volumes on WestConnex. So one could arguably say that there's a case to be made that this upgrade for more tracks to increase the capacity was actually dumped for WestConnex in 2015.

**The CHAIR:** On that note, we're over time so we do have to finish. The Committee will be in touch if there are any supplementary questions from members, and you did take some on notice. Thank you for your evidence.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

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**Mr JOHN BROCKHOFF**, National Policy Director, Planning Institute of Australia, sworn and examined

**Mr TYM PIEGLOWSKI**, Planning Institute of Australia, sworn and examined

**Mr COLIN SCHROEDER**, Committee Member, EcoTransit Sydney, affirmed and examined

**Mr MATT DOHERTY**, Committee Member, EcoTransit Sydney, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses. Would the Planning Institute like to give an opening statement?

**JOHN BROCKHOFF:** The Planning Institute is the professional body representing planners. We include a transport and young planners network who have contributed to our submission. We strongly support improving equity of access to public transport throughout Sydney by improving the availability and access to services where there is existing development. There is the potential for further housing growth and density where public transport capacity and amenity are available or can be improved. Reducing car dependency can offer time and cost savings for residents throughout Western Sydney. The Planning Institute acknowledges that a transport network for Western Sydney is embedded in the entire regional network and is difficult to consider in isolation. We support more deeply integrated land use and transport planning across Sydney.

We support a reinterpretation of the distribution of transit links in relation to housing and job concentrations throughout Greater Sydney and support stronger orbital connectivity, including north-south links—including through Parramatta and the aerotropolis. The Planning Institute supports addressing public transport needs alongside complementary improvements to local walking and cycling environments, including and especially at night. PIA supports a "movement and place" approach. We acknowledge the role of planning to achieve better value from metros and other major transit investments. We note that an integrated land use and transport plan is vital for well-located growth to improve the return on public investment in services and infrastructure. In particular, we support the early preparation of business cases for potential transit infrastructure alongside forward planning for density and land releases. Tym, if you would like to continue?

**TYM PIEGLOWSKI:** Sure. Thank you, John. Committee members, thank you for the opportunity. I'd like to start by making you imagine that you live in Middleton Grange, north of the M5-M7 interchange, and you're trying to get to Town Hall on your daily commute. You have to walk 15 minutes to the nearest bus stop. You jump on the first bus, which takes 15 minutes. You wait five minutes at another bus stop, which takes 20 minutes to get you to Glenfield station. You wait 10 minutes for a train, and then 40 minutes later you're in Town Hall. All up, it is one hour and 45 minutes. On the way back, you stay at work and there is a work function that finishes at nine. That commute is not one hour and 45; it is 2½ hours due to bus services—your last-mile or first-mile journey—not integrating with the train services. In comparison, in the car it only takes 45 minutes. So public transport takes more than double the car time. Now imagine that you live in Wentworth Point—you had enough of living in a public transport desert—near Sydney Olympic Park. It takes you 45 minutes by public transport and only 30 minutes by car. So that is only a 50 per cent difference rather than more than double.

On top of that, you also pay more in public transport fares. If you live in Middleton Grange, you pay more than \$2,000 on public transport fares, and you spend 600 hours annually on commuting. This example illustrates the points that we are making in our submission. First of all, we need to expand availability of public transport not only for peak services but also outside to enable access to the night-time economy, particularly for women. Women's safety is something that's currently neglected. To have equitable access to public transport, we need first- and last-mile services to be catered for. Currently we don't have bus services that are meeting the train services, and that would be a very simple solution.

The main question we would like to ask is why do people have to travel 50 kilometres to the Sydney CBD? This is the main point we want to make as PIA: We need integrated, interdependent land use and transport planning. We need people to be able to live and work within 15 or 30 minutes of where they live—15 minutes by active transport, like walking and cycling, and 30 minutes by public transport or by car. We support Sydney Metro West, which enables quick access between the river city and the eastern harbour city. We also believe that infrastructure should come first, then development. To pay for the infrastructure, value capture and other mechanisms can pay for it.

**MATT DOHERTY:** I'd like to take a different tack to begin with because I am very much a proud westie who has an intimate knowledge of so many of these public transport needs. I grew up next to the Ingleburn army camp, which is now Edmondson Park, and I went to school at Glenfield. I have vivid memories of when the East Hills line, which terminated at East Hills, was extended through to Glenfield, and what a boon that was for all us people at Campbelltown. It literally cut 20 minutes off the trip to the city. Further to that, to bring it to the modern time as well, there are still some really strong advantages with the current network. This all goes to my

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major point, which is that we should be building on what we've got, on the existing infrastructure, rather than bringing fandangled new metros through cow paddocks around Luddenham.

Getting a train in peak hour from Glenfield in the outer western suburbs to Wolli Creek, an inner-city suburb, takes 22 minutes as of now. The quadruplication of the East Hills line from Revesby to Wolli Creek has been great. If we continued that quadruplication as far as Glenfield, it would be even better. There are so many small-bore amendments like that that make a real difference to people's lives. I can't count the number of times I would be on a train late at night, coming home along the East Hills line, and because of the timetable we would need to dwell for no reason. My train would need to sit at East Hills train station for three to five minutes just so that we could hit the timetable. But the principles that need to be front and centre in transport planning for Western Sydney include accessibility as a human right for all. I believe our Disability Discrimination Commissioner made mention of that in the past two weeks.

Connectivity is critical. Making bus services link up with the train services would be a great boon. As EcoTransit, we have a great focus on sustainability as well. More concrete tunnels under paddocks—that is, metro developments—is not what we are after. We would advocate for a great many small-bore changes. The wonderful new amendments at Redfern and Erskineville stations are brilliant. I don't begrudge them. But if we had the same at Granville and Lidcombe train stations, both of which have seen massive development in recent years with much more high-rise, we'd improve the walkability and accessibility for some major junction stations beyond recognition. My major point to the Committee is that so much can be achieved with these small-bore changes.

**COLIN SCHROEDER:** I might say something about EcoTransit too. People might know that EcoTransit is a not-for-profit public advocacy group advocating for sustainable public and active transport. To this extent, our focus is on expanding the city's light rail network and Sydney's world-class heavy rail network. Over the past 12 years, governments have invested billions of dollars in transport infrastructure. Much of this investment has been in its operation and the building phase, and with a very large carbon footprint. The misnamed metro, for example, requires huge amounts of carbon-intensive concrete in its construction phase and is a large consumer of energy in its operation. We say that Sydney metro is misnamed as it is not a true metro. It is essentially an expensive underground rail network with inferior single-deck trains and too few stations.

Paris Metro is an example of a true metro, with stations as close as 400 metres apart. It is not uncommon to stand on a Paris Metro station and see the next station down the tunnel. The Sydney metro, in one instance, has six kilometres between stations from Epping to Cherrybrook. As far as the west metro is concerned, at the moment it doesn't have enough stations. It has been designed to have a fast timetable between the river city and the CBD, to make it more competitive with the existing rail service, but it doesn't provide the utility of more stations and allow for more development. If speed was the answer, it would have been built as a heavy rail line, which would enable you to run fast trains from west of Parramatta through to the CBD.

**The CHAIR:** We might leave it there. We are running out of time for questions, to be honest, because we ran over time. I will jump in with two questions. To the Planning Institute, you talk about integration. Clearly that's ideal, and we've heard a lot about that, but what we are still getting is new suburbs being built without the infrastructure being put in place right now. We know the south-west growth centre is one of the worst in terms of public transport options. What actually needs to happen to change this? My second question—I'll throw two in. I know the Greater Cities Commission did a little bit in regards to this. What's your view around the work that the Greater Cities Commission did in terms of that? They were recently, of course, abolished and have moved into Planning.

**JOHN BROCKHOFF:** Firstly, we commend the work of the Greater Cities Commission, and the Planning Institute were strong supporters of them establishing a sound centre structure to hang the next steps around integrated land use and transport planning. Understanding the way they conceptualised the city, the way they highlighted priority nodes and potential links, was really important. But getting to your particular question, what we can do better is, based on using a network model and considering potential future growth areas, asking ourselves through a strategic planning lens what are our acceptable standards of access, then looking at what growth scenarios and transport scenarios will achieve those standards of access. Then, working backwards from that, what is the critical enabling infrastructure that is necessary to achieve those standards of access, whether it be investment in multiple local projects or major transit links.

If it's major transport links, we need to have the business cases. We need to identify what those critical investments are and do the business cases for them early, rather than wait until a problem emerges to do the business cases and progress those projects according to the routine ways we progress major projects now. I think a no-regrets pathway forward, by doing the good strategic planning based off a regional framework of centres and a standard of accessibility, is simply working out what are the critical, no-regrets enabling pieces of infrastructure and doing the business cases for those early.

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**The CHAIR:** I have a question for EcoTransit. You really stressed that we've got to capitalise on what we've got in terms of existing infrastructure, but when it comes to the new growth centres, sometimes that new infrastructure isn't there. We've also had a lot of people today talk about the north-south connection. What are you suggesting? Obviously metro has been touted today as north-south, but what are the transport options for the south-west and north-west?

**COLIN SCHROEDER:** One example is the termination of the line at Leppington. Now there's a plan to convert that to metro. To connect to the new airport, the intention was always to extend the Leppington line, which would then provide much better connection from that area. If the line was then extended south from the airport to, say, Macarthur, or Glenlee, as was one of the original intentions—

**MATT DOHERTY:** It's low-hanging fruit.

**COLIN SCHROEDER:** It's a very simple and cheap solution to connect the new airport to the city. Now, for example, if the line was extended from Leppington to the airport, the transit time between the airports would be something like 47 minutes but with the metro being built and having to change at St Marys and then change at Central to get to Kingsford Smith, you're looking at about 87 minutes. It's a no-brainer to extend the line from Leppington instead of building a metro and then converting the Leppington line to metro and having people change trains again to get from airport to airport.

**MATT DOHERTY:** That's true. I'd also like to make a point about the south-west growth centre because it's visible. It is so tangible for us in the south-west that housing estates are sprouting up either side of the Camden Valley Way. As a child, I saw housing estates sprout up either side of the Campbelltown Road as well and there was never any public transport links for those. There was, however, with the south-west rail link, an identified corridor, I believe, going towards Narellan via Oran Park, so my strong recommendation is that that be revisited and that the South West Rail Link be extended as heavy rail in a cost-effective way down towards Narellan, at least.

**COLIN SCHROEDER:** If that line would link through to the main western line, it could then be used as a freight bypass line, which is always an intention—to get the freight out of the Sydney metropolitan area and to give more capacity within the suburban network.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** This idea that a lot of Sydney's mobility problems are being caused by a lack of integrated transport and land-use planning, I am just interested in your thoughts as to whether some of those issues are a result of poor planning decisions at the outset or poor transport decisions. It's a sort of chicken or the egg. Is it the case, do you think, that Sydney's urban sprawl—probably dating back to the 1950s, I suppose—has led governments to pursue or prioritise road-based transport options rather than public transport options? If that is the case, then do we really need to reconsider our planning instruments so that we centre high-density developments around public transport projects?

**JOHN BROCKHOFF:** That's a very wideranging question and I thank you for it. There have been a succession of lost opportunities by doing ad hoc planning that hasn't enabled us to conceive of the scale of growth and the scale of infrastructure investment to support that growth. There was an attempt to change that outlook with the Growth Centres Commission—the development of the north-west and south-west growth centres conceived of it at one time with a single authority: then the subsequent establishment of the Greater Cities Commission and a coordination committee in Cabinet.

The short answer to your question is that we haven't, on the public transport side, been able to find the funds to address the strategic planning that we've done. While on the road side, we've had a strong succession of road authorities and a strong road-planning capability that's been able to be sustained, also given that the tollway funding of major road projects, to some extent, has been able to be seen as not so much off budget but at least available. We haven't spent the political capital and spent the necessary attention that we needed to look at the value created by land-use changes and urban development on the fringe to invest in public transport infrastructure. The knowledge and capacity to know what public transport infrastructure is needed is available. Indeed, I recall when I worked on the north western growth and south-west growth centres projects we did identify an infrastructure budget, which included the expansive public transport links, but the ability to deliver that has proved operationally and politically difficult whereas the ability to deliver the road projects followed a tried-and-true pathway.

**The CHAIR:** Why is that? Why has it been politically difficult and operationally difficult? Could you explain?

**JOHN BROCKHOFF:** I think, firstly, because road budgeting has followed a tried-and-true formula and there's the ability to fund major freeway projects—at least tollway projects—through future tolling, whereas

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funding major transport infrastructure is on budget and requires prioritisation against every other issue that competes in the budget process.

**TYM PIEGLOWSKI:** I would just like to add to this one. I'm a transport planner and analyst as well. The theory says that it's not a chicken and egg. The infrastructure comes first and then the development and, if that's not possible, then at least a corridor production because then it's too expensive to retrofit that. So if there are any growth centres, you really want to plan for the infrastructure first before you actually develop anything.

**The CHAIR:** We are almost out of time. Before we finish up, does EcoTransit want to comment on this particular issue? I suppose you have successive governments that prioritised funding the building of arterial roads and highways over public transport. We've just heard evidence that that's potentially the situation because of the funding mechanisms. Would you care to comment on that?

**COLIN SCHROEDER:** I think we agree with that assessment. The only line, I think, that's been built prior to any growth is probably the Leppington line. The Leppington line was built basically as a greenfield line, which allowed for growth to develop around it. So yes, reserving corridors is very important if you don't invest in the infrastructure to start with.

**JOHN BROCKHOFF:** Chair, would I be able to provide a supplementary answer?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, you can.

**JOHN BROCKHOFF:** Land costs are enormous and a huge component of funding corridors, whether it be road or public transport. One issue why it makes it particularly difficult for public transport is that to purchase the land corridor requires a strategic business case and to do the strategic business case you actually have to have begun to, at least, go quite a long way down the project development and environmental assessment pathway to the point that you actually identify a broad easement. Then that easement, and the land value of that, is costed and fed into an infrastructure business case. It's very unwieldy and time-consuming and it's quite scary to create that expectation that a public transport corridor is going to be seen right through the project development, business case preparation and, ultimately, funding.

We've seen with so many projects in Sydney that they don't make it that far. There's a lot of reluctance to start the process and to begin to do the early corridor planning that will enable a budget allocation to be made to actually purchase the corridor well in advance of the detail of the business case being prepared. Perhaps we need a process that allows us to make a no-regrets decision that there is no regret in purchasing or acquiring or establishing an easement for that land early, even though we haven't crossed all the t's or dotted all the i's on how that will look—whether it will be a metro, whether it will be heavy rail or whether it will include a freight corridor. We seem to get hamstrung on those issues and end up not purchasing the corridor or not reserving it.

**The CHAIR:** I will just see if there's any burning questions, recognising that we're just a bit over time. I'm sorry you've had such limited time.

**COLIN SCHROEDER:** Can I ask the permission of the Chair to make a supplementary submission?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, absolutely. You can hand that to the secretariat and we'll consider it. The members can also ask you supplementary questions so the Committee secretariat will be in touch if we have supplementary questions for you. Thank you very much for your evidence, your submission and your supplementary submission. They will be carefully considered.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

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**Mr ALEX CLAASSENS**, State Secretary, Rail, Tram and Bus Union (NSW), sworn and examined

**Mr DAVID BABINEAU**, Tram and Bus Division Secretary, Rail, Tram and Bus Union (NSW), affirmed and examined

**Mr RICHARD OLSEN**, State Secretary, Transport Workers' Union of NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr DANIEL PERIC**, Research and Policy Official, Transport Workers' Union of NSW, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses. Are there any opening statements?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** We are splitting ours because we have the expert from the bus taskforce here, because I thought it might be useful. We supplied the written submission some time ago, as you would be aware, back in September. We've got a longstanding view that we wanted to see the cancellation of the conversion of the Bankstown line. We believe that that was a decision that was fraught for a number of reasons, as is clearly articulated in our documentation and backed up, of course, by previous transport experts like Ron Christie et cetera. There was no need at all to convert the Bankstown line. And, like I said, for all the reasons that come with that—I'm happy to go into more detail on that, if you need to, but it's there on the public record. We've always opposed it. We think it's ridiculous, and we stand by that submission.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Who else would like to make an opening statement?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** Thank you, Chair. To begin with, I'd like to thank the Committee for providing us the opportunity to speak at this hearing. We believe this inquiry is a necessary first step towards developing the future of public transport in Western Sydney and ultimately meeting the evolving needs of our communities. However, we are also of the view that many of the current issues in the industry need to be addressed moving forward. The underlying central point of our submission is that the public transport system in Western Sydney, with particular reference to buses, can only be so effective with the current state of the industry.

This extends to multiple fronts. Bus drivers are subject to unreasonable and entirely inadequate conditions on a daily basis, ranging from excess demands, a severe lack of suitable facilities, poorly resourced routes and many more. The quality and quantity of service have suffered due to numerous influences, including privatisation and competitive tendering, as well as a significant shift in favour towards the development of Sydney Metro at the expense of bus services. They are just among the other factors, of course, that need to be carefully considered for the development and advancement of the industry and acknowledgement of just how important bus services are and will continue to be for Western Sydney communities.

The Transport Workers' Union believes that if the desired result implied by the terms of reference of this inquiry is to be achieved, then the recommendations we make and have made must be taken into account. We would further raise that consultation is the key component in creating the best possible outcomes. Consultation needs to be a viable option between relevant unions and the New South Wales Government, particularly in regard to regulation and key decisions focused on buses in any capacity. Subsequently we urge for the pursuit of best practices. Once again we thank the Committee for the opportunity here today to put our case forward.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Mr Babineau, did you have an opening statement in terms of buses?

**DAVID BABINEAU:** No.

**The CHAIR:** That's fine. I thought that's what Mr Claassens had suggested. We will go to questions.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Thank you all for appearing this afternoon. Mr Olsen, if I could start with you, we have heard a lot today, obviously, about the state of transport in Western Sydney and the role that buses play both now and potentially in the future. It seems to me, though, that we might be missing out on a big piece of that, and we haven't really talked about it, which is the experience of the workforce currently, allowing that part of the transport sector to operate. Could you perhaps describe for us the key problem, as you see it, with what is happening currently? What kind of barrier does that provide to expanding transport in Western Sydney in the future?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** Yes, and I thank you for the question. I think, in the main, what we are not looking at here is the health and safety of bus drivers, how they operate today and how they are probably having to operate into the future. We've seen an example of that at Parramatta. For example, where we have an overlay in to, I think, Smith Street, there are two portals that are available for bus drivers to have their half an hour to an hour rest period and to have amenities afforded to them. There are well over 100 drivers over a 24-hour period who are required to park in that area. Up to 10 buses, I think, can be there at any one time, which is quite ridiculous.



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Now, we think that the health and safety of the bus driver is paramount about how we move forward and how we allocate where buses are required to take their rest breaks—anything up to an hour or more—and how they are treated, both within that environment but also with their health and safety in mind. A bus driver may sit in the bus but be unable to utilise the air conditioning because they're not allowed to. But they have to sit there in 45-degree heat and/or in minus three degrees cold without the facilities that are afforded to most others—as we enjoy right here as we sit. They are the health reasons and concerns of ours that we have for bus drivers.

Obviously there are other wide-ranging issues with bus drivers: the way they interact with the community on a daily basis, which is normally great. However, there are issues, obviously, from time to time, with violence against bus drivers. That has not been properly addressed, in our view. Very little training is given to a bus driver once they have got their training and their certificates to drive a bus. Very little comes in the way of support for drivers, and we believe that is paramount. And, in moving forward with the new communities, we certainly need to have the input of drivers who drive the proposed routes before they become the routes. They should be also engaged in conversations about how they are set up so we can ensure the health and safety of each and every bus driver that takes this journey along with us.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Thank you, Mr Olsen. If I could ask a follow-up question, I understand that there is a huge shortage of drivers across Sydney, but that would be, I guess, reflected in Western Sydney as well.

**RICHARD OLSEN:** Of course.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Are there other issues that are contributing to this as well?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** Well, obviously, yes there are. We've talked about health and safety of bus drivers. There's also the very low pay. The competitive tendering, which has been set up by the previous Government, has really seen a downward spiral in relation to increases in rates of pay, which have been very minimal for years. That's a direct result of the privatisation and the competitive tendering that has been occurring within this industry. What we need to have is a process moving forward to attract more people. I don't subscribe to the view that there is a shortage of bus drivers. There is a shortage of good paying jobs in the bus industry. Why would you want to work in an industry where you can't go to a toilet; where you can't sit in comfort for an hour's break in air conditioning, whether it's cold or heating; and where sometimes you're away doing your shift in a split shift arrangement for well over 12 hours, but you're only getting eight hours pay? And with bringing in the question of the cost of living for people who are doing split shifts, who are travelling to and from work twice in any 12-hour period, is unacceptable these days, and those matters need to also be addressed.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** My question is to Mr Babineau. With the loss of State Transit Authority contracts, it wasn't just a case of having a public provider in the system for the sake of it but quite often the signal that a public operator, like State Transit, would provide in terms of baseline expectations for service standards, labour standards and frequency of services to all the other operators in the ecosystem. Now that they are no longer in the mix, have you seen a diminution of standards among other operators and, effectively, the delivery of services to commuters?

**DAVID BABINEAU:** Yes. There's no doubt that privatisation has had a detrimental impact on all of those things. One of the benefits that State Transit delivered was a little intangible, but in a non-professional industry they semi-professionalised it. If you did a couple of years at State Transit, successful driving through the guts of Sydney, to a large degree you could walk into a job at most bus operators in Sydney because the training was excellent, the environment was challenging, and you had sort of been able to operate in one of the most difficult areas in Sydney. Now that we don't have that, we are effectively just spiralling to the bottom. I'm struggling to find one example, but in literally every aspect of service delivery we are failing to deliver for the people of Sydney. For the workers, we are completely failing and if you went across to all of the four within Sydney—five, if you want to include Newcastle bus companies that took over ex-STA contracts—it would simply require days to go through the problems, and they're not insignificant.

We're talking about really basic stuff. For example, three of the four companies in Sydney now don't give you a pay slip. They give you a pay slip and an Excel sheet or similar, and you have to sit down in your own time and reconcile the two. You're talking about a job that delivers not just different amounts day to day but the different components of that amount vary as well, depending on the penalty being attracted. Then you're thrown to the next company that's unable pay you correctly and you, as an employee, are unable to deliver oversight to your own finances. At a basic level, we are absolutely failing what was once a dedicated public service.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** I have a question for you, Mr Claassens. As far back as 2011 and, I think, also 2015, Ron Christie articulated some concerns with respect to what the metro would do to the existing heavy

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rail network in terms of cannibalising its capacity and certainly at the very least restricting its ability to cater for increased congestion and growth. Is that a concern that you share?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Oh, absolutely. Bradfield, who designed most of our railway system many, many years ago, had it right. There were a whole bunch of things that he put in place that were meant to address the expansion of Sydney and it covered lots of that area. The Bankstown line has actually been one of our good points in that it's underutilised. We could easily run more trains on it tomorrow if we had the trains to run around it and it is used on many occasions, particularly late at night when we're doing track work on the other lines, as a way of moving trains around the city system so that people could still get their train home. That will disappear with conversion to the metro. There's going to be stations along that line that will never get a service again and they'll have to convert and change.

That's what we've seen in the privatisation of buses. You used to be able to get on a bus and go right to your point of destination. These days you've got to change multiple times. That's exactly how Transport for NSW and their bureaucracy have designed this. If you look at every other project that Transport for NSW has been involved in, it's usually a mess. You've only got to look back to the weekend or a few days ago of another what should have been a fairly straightforward process of putting some new roads in Sydney. They made a mess of that as well. The problem we've always had has been insufficient conversations with the people that are actually running the system. The ferries that were brought out, the trains that have been brought out—every time they've done a project, they've made a mess of it.

Ron Christie was right. He was an expert on what the railway needs and we definitely need to keep the Bankstown for our heavy rail system and we need to give ourselves the flexibility to move trains around. Take that away, and you'll lose it forever. There's a reason why they've designed some of these tunnels to make them smaller so we can't run double-decker trains through them, and all the arguments they've used to build metros and convert our existing railway lines are all really about giving developers a leg up and making money for people. It's not about providing a commuter service, because you can do both. You can actually run metro trains where we don't currently run anything. That is a possibility, absolutely, and they should be doing that. Sydney, if it's going to be a world-class city, needs to have multiple modes of transport but don't go out there and wreck a perfectly good railway system just for the sake of it.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Claassens, is it your evidence that the conversion should be stopped and can be stopped? I think you're arguing that it should be—

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIR:** —but is it your evidence to the Government that it can be?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** I believe it can be, but then I'm not privy to the contracts. I don't know how much money has been spent. I don't know where that money has been spent. I don't know what the contracts are. The previous Government was very good at hiding all that stuff. We couldn't get anything out of them, but based on—

**The CHAIR:** I don't know how this one's going with that, either, to be frank.

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** For my purpose, we believe that there was no need to do that. Obviously we did need to upgrade the stations and I know that that's been happening and they've now got lifts. I remembered arguing to try to get lifts at Unanderra since 2006. We finally got them. Why people have had to wait that long for lifts defies logic. Those stations definitely needed upgrading and that's now been done, and I think that's great, but they could still make the decision to cancel that contract tomorrow. Run a metro, absolutely, but run it through Western Sydney airport, for example? There are plenty of other places in Sydney where they're throwing lots of people that need transport.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It is nice to see you all. Thank you for your submissions and coming today. It's nice to see you again, Mr Claassens.

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Thank you.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Can I ask each of you whether you do support metro in principle?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Who's going first?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Do you support it at all?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** Well, from the TWU's point of view, we support all modes of transport. Whatever is the most cost-effective and serving to the community is what should be built and promoted and that, we believe, will take in all forms of transport for the betterment of the community.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** So that includes metro?

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**RICHARD OLSEN:** Yes. It includes all modes, wherever and whatever, although we would like to see everything manned, if that's where we're heading. Certainly one aspect from our point of view that is always important—be it buses, be it metro, be it trains—is they should be manned by people.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. RTBU?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just following up before I get to Mr Claassens, given that metro tends to be driverless, do you support that aspect to provide another form of public transport to assist commuters, travellers?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** Is that a question for me?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes. And I will come to Mr Claassens.

**RICHARD OLSEN:** I understand that that is obviously a controversial issue. Again, we would much rather see that all trains and platforms and buses will always be manned by people. And we would always argue that that is the best form of transport.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Right. I will take that as a no. Mr Claassens, you said that metro was a mess. Do I understand your evidence correctly to apply that description to Northwest Metro?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** No, I think we've grudgingly come to accept that the north-west system is doing what it was designed to do. It was a purpose-built system. Yes, we were pretty angry at the time when they took our Parramatta-Chatswood line away from us—sorry, the Epping-Chatswood line. These days, of course, it is stood up and it is providing a service and it's safe. So that's a good thing. But we've always insisted that you don't need to cannibalise the existing railway line to make a metro work. And our preference would always be that, if you're going to build a metro, you can do it where they've done it in other locations where you build it specifically to suit a transport need and you crew it appropriately.

We're obviously the same as the TWU. We are a trade union and we're all about creating jobs for people. It would be remiss of us not to sit here and say that. Certainly there are States in Australia where they're building metros and they're putting people on them. You're getting good customer service and you're providing those needs for the people. And that is what we would always ask for, is that it has to be a coordinated—transport has to be coordinated across all its modes, and we see that metro is just another one of those modes and it needs to be coordinated across the whole spectrum, and that hasn't happened for a long time. We've had buses that have gone off and done their own—

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I'm pleased that you've recognised—sorry, I thought you had finished.

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** No, you're right.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** At least you have recognised the upgrades done to train stations and those fantastic lifts, which were done by the Coalition Government. I just wanted to ask about Metro West, given that's under review. If there was any additional money going to Metro West, would you rather see that put into other public transport options rather than Metro West?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Look, I think that's a position for other people to make. I think our position has always been we want to protect what's existing. We want to upgrade what's existing. We believe that our existing railway is more than capable of doing a lot more work. These days with ETCS and all this other technology that's available today, we could easily be running trains a lot more than what we are today. And give us the same technology as the money that's been invested in metro and we can do wonderful things with the heavy rail system.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just to direct that comment specifically, there's been talk about additional stations being added to Metro West—of course, at significant expense. Would you rather see that go into better buses? We talked about conditions for bus drivers, would you rather see that money go into additional services for drivers and buses and bus services?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Absolutely. The amount of money that people have been prepared to throw at metro—something that's not there—and yet we can't even get some of the basics done. Like my friends here have said, we don't have proper bus facilities, we can't get bus drivers for love nor money at the moment because they're just not being treated respectfully. Then, yes, absolutely, we should be fixing the problem first, dealing with what we've got in place already—make it better, fix it—and then talk about how we can improve things for the future. Everybody seems to be able to throw money at this shiny new toy, but they're ignoring the needs of the existing system that is struggling to keep up with what we need. Even the closing of the Bankstown line is going to take 1,200 buses per day to do that. Where the hell do they think they're going to find those?

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**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just to be clear, your evidence to this Committee is rather than spend money on new or more stations for Metro West you would rather see that invested by this Government into other services such as buses, trains and other alternatives?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Yes. I would certainly want them to spend money where it's needed right today, and then let's sit down and talk about how we do things better for the future so we don't make a mess of it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Ward. We have another question from Mr Nanva.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I just have one more question.

**The CHAIR:** I can come back to you if you like. I think it was on this issue.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** Mr Claassens, would an accurate reflection of your evidence be that to meet the transport needs of the current generation and future generations, scarce resources should be invested into, I suppose, public transport that builds upon, rather than duplicates, services? Where there are services lacking in outer metropolitan areas, that is probably where the investment is needed, rather than inner metropolitan areas that might have three, four, five different modes of transport for residents to use?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Absolutely. That's always been the case for us. We believe that there needs to be proper, open and transparent conversations around what the current need is, what the medium term is and what the long-term need is. We haven't even talked about regional transport yet. Regional transport needs a lot of money spent on it as well. There's a lot of things that we could be doing much better and we do need people to sit down and have a proper conversation. But, yes, you very succinctly tied it all up.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** With respect to outer metropolitan areas, if we take Penrith as a case study, it's heavily reliant on the T1 heavy rail line. It has no other options to get into the CBD. What sorts of investments can be made by government—just low-hanging fruit—to increase the reliability and frequency of services, hypothetically to Penrith?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** I mean, like I said, we are looking at this ETCS now that they are talking about introducing on the Cronulla line, which is technology which allows us to run the trains a hell of a lot more frequently by doing that.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA:** That's just signalling changes?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Yes, which basically replaces lineside signalling and puts them in the cab. You can also do duplication and build a separate freight line and take the freight trains away from the passenger train network. There are a number of things which we could all sit down and talk about and plan, like we did on the southern Sydney freight line. We separated out the freight trains from the passenger train network and that sped up the trains and their reliability a lot better. There are lots of things we can do very quickly if we sit down with a mind to actually doing it.

**The CHAIR:** I will throw back to Ms Ward now and check if Mr D'Adam has any questions and I have one from Dr Kaine after that.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Lots of Government jumping in here. Just another question I was curious about—the rail resilience work that's underway by the Government. Mr Claassens, has that been undertaken by rail union workers or by outsourced workers?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Sorry?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The rail resilience work.

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** This is the fixing the network work that's been going on?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes. Has that been undertaken by the rail union?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** I'm not 100 per cent sure, because that's not my area of expertise. My understanding is a lot of that work is being done by mostly our existing staff, but I think they have been supplemented in some areas because the expertise was needed. But don't quote me on that one, because I'm not 100 per cent sure.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** All right. In terms of planning for duplication and where stations should go, is that your area of expertise?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** No, not at all. I'm a train driver and I know all about driving trains but I'm not a planning expert. There are people a lot smarter than me that can do that work. Again, I would say that all that needs to happen is people need to talk, sit down and have a conversation.

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**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** And in relation to bus drivers, if conditions are improved, how would we approach recruitment of drivers? We've got lots of reviews underway and lots of talk, but what is your input in relation to if the Government was to implement further bus services, additional bus services and rapid buses, how can we get people to—what's the recruitment strategy?

**DAVID BABINEAU:** Until you address a lot of the issues that have been previously made—Richard mentioned quite a lot of them—training is substandard, remuneration is low. You are asked to be responsible for not just the amount of people on the bus but everyone around you, everyone in a vehicle around you. It is an undervalued position across the board. There has been talk for decades about making it more attractive to women to come and work, for students, for example. None of this pans out because no-one is willing to turn around and address the issues that have been around for decades. Instead, we fiddle around the edges and we offer retention bonuses and sign-on bonuses. Until you fix those fundamental issues, all you're going to do is allow the companies to go back to the churn of experienced drivers leaving, inexperienced drivers coming on board and then when that drops away you're in exactly the same position a year later.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Would you agree that retirees or semi-retirees might be a good source of experienced drivers but that perhaps one of the issues, apart from some of the ones you've mentioned, is the potential effect on their pension or pension status and that might be something that could be explored by this Government to the Federal Government?

**DAVID BABINEAU:** That is an idea that has been bouncing around. I would also suggest certainly through the last couple of years in regions 6, 7, 8 and 9 that most drivers there left for a reason and would probably not be wanting to come back unless they were offered at least their ex-SDA conditions. It is unfortunate that privatisation drove what had previously been a very resilient core of public servants out of the job in an admittedly aged workforce. Nonetheless, these were the people that allowed the government operator to weather a lot of the things that the private sector suffered more acutely—shortage of drivers being one of them.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** We just heard there about the idea of expertise and using that as a way of informing what we do. Mr Olsen, Mr Claassens, Mr Babineau, you represent people with a wealth of expertise in transport, including where routes should go and that kind of thing. I think, Mr Olsen, you mentioned consultation before. What type of consultation do you think is appropriate when we are thinking of either fixing the issues that you've raised or indeed planning for the future?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** I think everything which has already been spoken about needs to be taken into context. The health and safety of drivers, the terms of conditions of drivers, the way in which they work and the risk they take each and every day all needs to be explored and consulted with to ensure that when the drivers go out on the road each and every day, they are safe, they are free of fatigue, their health and safety has been taken care of and most importantly to the drivers as well as all of those factors is of course the remuneration. The remuneration is so low that they're much better off leaving, as they are in droves, and going and holding a stop-and-go sign for some contractor because they will earn another \$10 an hour. That is the problem, essentially.

Overall the cost of living is really catching up and we're not planning for that for now and into the future, so that is one aspect. Then we've got the amenities issue where most other people can enjoy an office-type environment to sit down and relax in a controlled environment that is either hot or cold, depending on seasons, and may even have a pie warmer or a microwave oven to heat up their food et cetera. All of these things are not available to bus drivers overall, and they're matters that are really essential for a worker in this bus industry, and in all industries obviously but in this industry where they're asked to stop on the side of a road and sit there for an hour. That is not appropriate. That's why we don't have bus drivers. That's why they're leaving. We may be employing a few but there would be much more. Many more people are leaving this industry than what we are re-engaging.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Mr Claassens, Mr Babineau, have you got thoughts on consultation, perhaps a reflection on whether there was consultation, say, in the last decade or so?

**DAVID BABINEAU:** Both the TWU and the RTBU are currently represented on the Bus Industry Taskforce. The fact that we had a white paper this year that for the first time I think in living memory articulated things like standard template construction basically for bus stops and the furniture around them, the idea that greenfield developments should incorporate bus stops and terminus, and the fact that this hasn't been considered previously is ridiculous. Transport for NSW for the term of the previous Coalition Government has been reduced to effectively adversarial contract manager and they have completely lost their way in terms of service delivery and putting the people that catch the services and the people that provide the services at the forefront of their thinking. Now the ship is turning. It's not turning with great speed but it is turning, and hopefully what is being done now can become a template, obviously if it delivers, for how we can approach a genuinely interlinked and well-developed transport system that fits the needs of our city.

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**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** If I could just pick up from the bus driver shortage, and I'm aware that particularly earlier this year this issue was front and centre to New South Wales commuters and the unions and what action would be taken on this. If I could ask each of you in terms of this: When did you meet with the Minns Government last on the issue? Who attended and what was discussed? Are we seeing any progress or outcomes?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** I am sure Alex has something to say on the issue or Dave. From our point of view, those—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Just as to when your last meeting was, when it was held, who attended, what was discussed, what were the outcomes.

**RICHARD OLSEN:** We don't have one. We haven't had one.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** So there has been—

**The CHAIR:** If you could just—

**RICHARD OLSEN:** If I'm allowed to answer it, but those matters have been taken up through the taskforce to my knowledge and discussion has been held there, which I'm not personally involved with. To that extent, I understand that those matters have been discussed and they're talking and having further discussions about how to move that forward. That is my understanding.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** The taskforce, yes. Mr Claassens?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Same with me; I haven't been involved in any conversations about the buses. I've left that to David in the bus taskforce.

**DAVID BABINEAU:** That has been the primary vehicle. It is relatively new to us to be involved in that. The union is not happy to be used as a letterhead for something that doesn't deliver for workers and commuters. It's robust discussion but it is good discussion, and that's primarily where most of our concerns have been funnelled through.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** I think, Mr Olsen, this might be your submission on the TWU just on page 6. We are talking about notes from bus drivers just in terms of speaking to receiving notes from members in the past. You're highlighting the observations and comments from bus drivers which speak to your comments about them not being respected. If I could just touch on reports about how Parramatta portaloos are putrid, there is no key access to facilities, there is no key to the Blacktown toilets at the station for the drivers. What has changed on this? What are the conditions today? Have any of these been picked up and addressed?

**RICHARD OLSEN:** There are some that are in the process of being addressed, such as the Opal card for bus drivers to use at railway stations.

**DAVID BABINEAU:** There is actually a separate consultation process going on specifically focused on facilities that both unions are a part of. That operates independent of the taskforce. It may well loop back into it, but it was acknowledged that that was a significant issue as well as a basic human consideration, and so that is ongoing.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It was a matter of some consternation about the fact that we had multiple gauges in multiple States, and it seems that in the metropolitan area we're not going to ever build any heavy rail again. It seems every new project seems to be metro, and it seems like we had an integrated system once in New South Wales and now we're rapidly moving away from that integration. Perhaps you might be able to shed some light on this, Mr Claassens, about how the metro idea became the hegemonic one in transport planning. Is that something that we can ever walk back from?

**ALEX CLAASSENS:** Yes, I doubt it. Like I said, I think it was specifically designed to have smaller tunnels et cetera, which in itself creates a safety issue, by the way—you know, smaller squeezeways et cetera. People are going to be stuck inside tunnels when the power goes out and they're going to have to walk up little alleyways. I know the New South Wales fire brigade had issues with emergency tunnels et cetera, et cetera. None of us were really surprised, every time they did anything. We put trams back into New South Wales, into Sydney, and we've got two different types of tram running in Sydney. We've just rebuilt it and yet we had to make it different. Why? Because it was probably in some contract somewhere to do something different. None of this makes any sense in the Transport portfolio. We've got stuff that goes back years, where Transport have made decisions, and the ordinary person sitting around the meal room table of a night would be wondering why in the hell they've made some of those decisions.

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Like I said, as late as a week ago we've got another decision being made by Transport that makes no sense to people. Are we surprised? They never wanted to talk to the people who operate the trains, the buses, the trams or the ferries, for that matter. Every time we turn around there's been some strange decision made somewhere in the bowels of Transport that they think was a good idea. You're right: If it was left to some of these people, we'd have different gauges again in New South Wales. But there are times at night when you lay there curled up in a ball worrying about the future of transport in this State. I must admit over the last so many years I've got a lot of grey hairs because of some of those strange decisions that could have been easily averted if they had actually had conversations with people.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Claassens. On that note, we are over time. If there are any members who have further questions, please put them in as supplementary questions. That is the end of the session. Thank you very much for appearing today. The committee secretariat will be in touch with any supplementary questions or anything you may have taken on notice.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 17:05.**