

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

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

IMPACT OF THE ROZELLE INTERCHANGE

At Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Friday 3 May 2024

The Committee met at 9:00 am

CORRECTED

PRESENT

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

The Hon. Bob Nanva

The Hon. Natalie Ward

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hon. Sam Farraway (Deputy Chair)

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The CHAIR: Welcome to the third hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts inquiry into the impact of the Rozelle interchange. 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 any 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.

CORRECTED

Mr CHRIS FORD, Former Director Traffic and Transport, Roads and Traffic Authority, affirmed and examined

Mr LES WIELINGA, AM, Former Chief Executive Officer, Roads and Traffic Authority, Former Chief Executive Officer, Metro Trains, and Former Director-General of Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

Mr PAUL FORWARD, Former Chief Executive Officer, Roads and Traffic Authority, sworn and examined

Mr STUART McCREERY, Former Engineer, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome and thank you for making the time to give evidence today. There is provision for a short opening statement. Is one of you making that? Mr Forward.

PAUL FORWARD: Thank you, Chair. I understand that members have received our submission.

The CHAIR: That is now public, and it's on the Committee's website.

PAUL FORWARD: Yes. So I won't go through that word for word. However, there are a number of points that I would like to make that are in the submission, and I think these are important points for the Committee to understand. Could I say on opening that all four of us have extensive experience in working on, planning, procuring, delivering and operating complex, large-scale infrastructure projects, particularly in the transport sector. Three of us—Chris, Stuart and I—worked on WestConnex from 2011-12 to 2015. During this time Les Wielinga was establishing Transport for NSW. In 2011, with the election of the O'Farrell Coalition Government, Infrastructure NSW was established. They were given the task of developing for New South Wales a 30-year infrastructure plan. Stuart and I were approached by Infrastructure NSW and asked to prepare a document advising them on the next road project for New South Wales, for Sydney. That was the beginning of WestConnex.

At the same time, and even before that time, the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales was working on a very detailed motorway strategy for Sydney. We were not privy to their work. However, both documents had very similar objectives—that is, both documents were trying to improve the connectivity from Western Sydney to the airport and to Port Botany. Both documents recognised that the Anzac Bridge was running at peak capacity. Both documents recognised that any strategy should not put any more traffic onto the Anzac Bridge. The RTA was also looking at a different alignment for a second or third harbour crossing, and that alignment went up through the Gladesville Bridge, up through the M2, providing improved connectivity from the north-west sector onto the ports. That was their preferred alignment, not the Western Harbour Tunnel and certainly not the Beaches Link.

The documents that Chris, Stuart and I prepared are available on the Infrastructure NSW website. They were published in 2012; they are still available. Infrastructure NSW was keen to get innovation into this project. The plan that we had come up with was a high-level plan. They wanted more detail, and what we decided to do was to engage Australia's best road designers, which also included some of the best road designers in the world. We had French and Spanish road designers. Four consortiums were invited to participate in this detailed exercise. The four consortiums were split up into two groups, one group looking at the southern part of the motorway and one group looking at the northern part of the motorway. The southern part of the motorway was pretty well what has now been built. That is the M8, the St Peters interchange and the connections to the port and the airport.

For the northern section, what was recommended by the world's best road designers was very different to what has been built today. Can I say that there was no Rozelle interchange. The mainline tunnel was much further south, and there was connectivity to the southern part of the city around Camperdown. This was seen as important because it provided a link to Sydney university, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and UTS. Notre Dame university was expanding at the time. It was also a link to the growing Redfern-Waterloo redevelopment area, and there was a lot of talk at the time, as there always is, about building over the railway line at Central to Redfern. So the connectivity there was seen as an important part of this particular project.

We then formed an expert review group which involved people from Infrastructure NSW, Transport for NSW and RMS. Urban Growth also got involved because they were very keen about the Bays Precinct and what would happen to the Bays Precinct if there was any motorway construction in that area. We looked at the area around the southern part of the motorway and felt that what the consultants had come up with was an excellent design. As I said, that design was then ultimately built. We then looked at the northern design. We were quite happy with that northern design. However, people from Transport for NSW started to question the connectivity of that, the connectivity to the Anzac Bridge and the connectivity to the city. Fifteen different options were developed for that northern section. The 15 different options all had traffic modelling undertaken for them. WestConnex has had more traffic modelling undertaken than any other road project in Sydney. What the traffic modelling demonstrated was that connecting to the Anzac Bridge would, in fact, overload the Anzac Bridge. What is happening now was predicted in the traffic modelling.

CORRECTED

We then went through a very extensive analysis of the different options. In 2015 the Evans and Peck team of Chris, Stuart and I were told that our services were no longer required and other consultants took over that particular role. In 2016 when we were no longer involved—so we dropped out in 2015—other consultants were engaged. Various changes took place, including the removal of the Camperdown ramps, the movement of the motorway—the mainline tunnel—further north and the connections to the Anzac Bridge, which, I must add, showed that, in fact, it would be overloaded. The traffic models within Transport for NSW and the private sector traffic models of Masson Wilson Twiney all predicted what is happening now. It should not have come as any surprise. If the Committee wants to see how the changes evolved over time, I draw your attention to the Auditor-General's report of 2021. There are some excellent diagrams there which demonstrate how this motorway has changed over time.

I just want to add two further thoughts here and then we're obviously open to question time. I think an important consideration for the Committee is to understand that the model for delivering WestConnex is very different to all the previous toll road models in Sydney. Up to this point, all the toll roads in Sydney were developed at no or very little cost to government. The private sector took the traffic risk. The private sector took the construction risk, and the private sector took the financial risk. They were all funded off balance sheet. Treasury like this approach because there were no financial implications for the State budget. WestConnex is different. WestConnex—the Government took the traffic risk, the construction risk and the financial risk. They developed a single asset entity to deliver the motorway. It's undergone a number of name changes, but it started out as the Westlink development corporation and then it morphed into the Sydney Motorway Corporation. It had a private sector board, but it also had people from Treasury, Transport for NSW and RMS on that board.

The aim of the exercise was then to build the motorway using government funds. Once the motorway was built and operational, it would then be sold to the private sector. Treasury had two particular interests at this stage. One was clearly to try and reduce the costs of the motorway, which were getting bigger and bigger every year, and secondly to raise the most amount of money for that motorway. The models that we had a look at demonstrated that pushing the traffic onto the Anzac Bridge—and remember, you've got 14 lanes going into four on the Anzac Bridge—actually generated more traffic on the motorway, which meant the motorway was more valuable as an asset when it was sold.

Now we also hear that the Western Harbour Tunnel will help resolve this problem. I've got to say all four of us have doubts about that. With the Western Harbour Tunnel, we will have 14 lanes not going into four lanes but going into six lanes. The modelling that we did, and that the private sector did, demonstrated that there will be some relief but not sufficient relief to actually address the congestion problems on the Anzac Bridge. We are also concerned about the absolute design of the Western Harbour Tunnel. We now have three motorways—Sydney Harbour Bridge, the harbour tunnel and the Western Harbour Tunnel—all coming onto the Warringah Freeway at very similar locations. Have a look at the work that is underway now on the Warringah Freeway and the question, clearly, to the Committee is: Is this another Rozelle interchange about to happen? We are now happy to answer any of your questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Forward. The Committee really appreciates and thanks all of you for making the time and approaching the Committee to give your evidence today, which is of course extremely valuable given your experience with this project. It must have been, no doubt, a big decision for you all to make to come before this Committee today. Why did you decide to come forward and expose, in some ways, what has happened? Mr Wielinga, I'll go to you first.

LES WIELINGA: I'm the fault of that, unfortunately. About two weeks ago I realised how bad the intersection was behaving. I couldn't believe it had gone on for four or five months and I felt that I had to come and explain what was going on. So I did my own assessment—like I'd been appointed director general, and I can talk to that if you want me to.

The CHAIR: Mr Wielinga, you said that a couple of weeks ago things were so bad that you wanted to do this. What do you mean by that?

LES WIELINGA: I live up on the Central Coast, not in Sydney anymore, so I wasn't picking up on all the media, but I picked it up off YouTube one night. I went through all of the complaints people were having about the site and I thought, "This can't be right. There is no way any government department would build a piece of rubbish like this."

The CHAIR: But it was built. Your evidence today is that, at some point, all of the good planning and decision-making and expertise was thrown out the window, it seems, for Rozelle interchange. Is that correct, Mr Wielinga?

CORRECTED

LES WIELINGA: I got treated bad—worse than these blokes did—because part of the powers that Infrastructure NSW had was that they could take projects away from us and run them. Now, I lost the complete project and the arguments I was having with Infrastructure NSW at the time were in the media everywhere, so you knew where I stood on this. But there is an answer to fix this bloody intersection, and we can talk about that in a while, too.

PAUL FORWARD: Perhaps, Chair, if I could make a comment. One of the problems with government organisations is that over time they lose the corporate memory. I was concerned that over time Transport for NSW had lost that corporate memory. We were involved virtually full-time—when I say we, I mean Stuart, Chris and I with a small team from the different agencies—in this project for about four years, so we had a lot at stake in terms of the intellectual effort we put in to helping to design this motorway. We relied upon the best consultants that were available: traffic modellers, engineers et cetera. We felt that this was a particularly important inquiry and that there were clear lessons that could be learnt from our involvement in it and so, even though we are all retired, we thought it was of some benefit for the Committee to hear what we had experienced during this time.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Your submission and your opening statement made the point a number of times about the 15 different options that were being considered. I think this is for what was ultimately stage 3B— or just stage three?

PAUL FORWARD: Stage three.

The CHAIR: Yes, stage three—how much traffic modelling was undertaken for those stages and that all of that traffic modelling for those 15 different options, or the traffic modelling, found that the Anzac Bridge would suffer. Is that right? Could you explain why you said pushing traffic onto Anzac Bridge—14 lanes to four— would generate traffic? There was no other endpoint but more traffic onto Anzac Bridge?

PAUL FORWARD: No, no. Let me just clarify. Thank you for that question. The 15 different options involved different designs to the motorway—to stage three, as you say. Traffic modelling was done for each of those 15 different designs. All of those designs had a different impact on the Anzac Bridge. The Anzac Bridge, it was well known, was that critical bit of infrastructure, so it was no surprise that we focused on the impact on the Anzac Bridge. But I would ask, perhaps, Chris Ford, who is arguably I would say one of Australia's best traffic engineers and was responsible for traffic management in the RTA while I was chief executive, to comment on the different modelling that was done in terms of the traffic impact.

CHRIS FORD: In June 2015 I was involved in the preparation of a stage three business case traffic report, and that report clearly showed that Anzac Bridge, under all the scenarios we talked about, would be operating at capacity during the morning peak in the forecast year of 2031 to a point where the volumes involved with the modelling were actually higher than what currently existed in 2012. I've indicated in the document I've put forward that the robustness of that conclusion needs to be verified with current demand modelling because on the face of it what we see out there, as Paul indicated, was what was clearly modelled in 2014.

If you're just looking at numbers for moment, the 2012 morning peak trips, for example, on Anzac Bridge were running at about 9,800 vehicles. The model showed that that would increase to 10,800 to 12,000 depending on what scenario you looked at; the daily traffic, about 142,700 in 2012, increasing significantly to 160, almost up to 200,000 in the forecast year of 2031. They are significant changes that the modelling in fact produced. I don't plan to go into every scenario that was looked at because we haven't got the time for that. But as a brief overview, what I'm suggesting here is the issues that we see today were very clearly established in the modelling in 2014.

The CHAIR: What was being suggested at the time then to prevent the type of congestion that was being predicted to hit Anzac Bridge that we're seeing hit Anzac Bridge as a result of what was ultimately built? What was being suggested? Not to do it in the first place?

CHRIS FORD: My role at that time was involved with other traffic modellers to make an assessment for the WestConnex authority on the traffic implications of what was being proposed at stage three. We were not tasked with taking it to the next step.

The CHAIR: Mr Wielinga, do you have a comment on that?

LES WIELINGA: Yes, I do. You can do this traffic assessment yourself. Every urban arterial road carries a maximum of about 1,800 vehicles per hour, and you can match that up with the lane configurations. So 12 lots of 1,800 vehicles per hour doesn't fit into four.

The CHAIR: I think every member of the public has been able to work out that 14 lanes into four is going to cause a huge amount of congestion. They don't have to be a traffic modeller. Clearly a lot of people knew that this was going to happen—it seems everybody in government did know—so the solution was not to build it in the first place I'm assuming. It wasn't recommended; that's what you're saying.

CORRECTED

PAUL FORWARD: Perhaps if I could comment, Chair. The modelling demonstrated that the ramps at Camperdown assisted in terms of the impact on the Anzac Bridge. I just want people to understand what these ramps were going to look like because I think in Transport there was a bit of skulduggery about these ramps. If you take the Eastern Distributor and you look at the on-ramp on the northern end of Anzac Parade in what's known as Drivers Triangle, it's a very subtle ramp onto the Eastern Distributor.

There are two off-ramps, one in Moore Park Road and also an off-ramp on Anzac Parade as well, that subtly fit into the urban fabric. We had an architect design those ramps, an architect by the name of David Chesterman, who was one of Sydney's leading architects at the time. The ramps at Camperdown would have been designed similarly to the ramps on the Eastern Distributor motorway. That intersection at Camperdown was vital to make sure that the Anzac Bridge would not be overloaded. It was dropped in about 2016. The Auditor-General makes the comment, and I think it's sort of an interesting comment the Auditor-General makes, that:

TfNSW documented, but did not publish, the rationale for the design changes ...

That was in the Auditor-General report of 2021. I think it's a very interesting document for the Committee to see, if it's available. Where is the documentation for these design changes that happened in 2016? What is the rationale? We were told that we were no longer required in 2015. There were a lot of changes that happened in 2016 that we were not privy to.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I just ask where that Camperdown ramp was proposed for? What intersection?

PAUL FORWARD: Perhaps Stuart might be able to elaborate on the Camperdown ramp.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are we having allocated time or not?

The CHAIR: Yes. We'll just go to questions from the Opposition and we can answer that later.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you gentlemen for coming along today and for your assistance with the Committee's inquiry and your submission, which is very helpful. I think you've referred to it in your submission, but could each of you just inform the Committee when was the last time you were formally involved in the WestConnex project?

LES WIELINGA: I retired in 2013. I hadn't had any involvement in WestConnex up until that point.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Mr Wielinga. Mr Ford?

CHRIS FORD: In 2015, June.

PAUL FORWARD: I can't give you the exact date or month but it was early 2015.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'm not fussed about the exact date but thank you for that.

STUART McCREERY: For me, it just depends on how you define "WestConnex". WestConnex originally had a connection to the airport, which is now being delivered as Gateway, so I did have involvement in Gateway in 2018 but prior to that on WestConnex it was 2015.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And I think that's consistent with the submission that most of you—apart from you, Mr Wielinga, in 2013—were 2015 and then you had perhaps ongoing involvement in Gateway after 2015.

STUART McCREERY: Only in 2018.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you for that. At what stage was WestConnex up to at that point for your involvement in 2015 for each of you?

STUART McCREERY: I think stage 1A and 1B, so that's the M4 East extension and the first parts of the tunnel; they were under construction. Stage two was in construction but stage three was still being developed.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So one and two for you.

PAUL FORWARD: I have the same recollection. Stuart and I were working daily on this project.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes. I just want to be clear for the Committee about what stages you were involved in. Stage one and two or so?

PAUL FORWARD: We were involved in all three stages but we didn't have a lot of involvement in stages one and two. Stage one is an extension of the M4 East. We did have a lot of overview of the design, what they were coming up with et cetera, but it's similar to what the traffic engineers from the private sector had designed at Parramatta where it splits and there's a viaduct and whatever; you're probably familiar with it.

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Somewhat.

PAUL FORWARD: That wasn't all that controversial, and so was the stage two works, what's now the M8. We did a review of that and, once again, it was put forward by the international traffic designers and road designers.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We'll get to that. I just want to be clear about the time line.

PAUL FORWARD: So it was stage three where we spent most of our time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So you were involved in one, two and stage three.

PAUL FORWARD: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Up to 2015.

STUART McCREERY: Less involved in one; more involved in two and three.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you. Mr Wielinga?

LES WIELINGA: The last I saw of WestConnex was that it was going to do the southern bit first as a construction, get the right traffic splits where the old M4 came onto the new one between Parramatta Road and then another one with them going south and the rest going into the city via The Boulevard. That's my last memory of the project.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Ford?

CHRIS FORD: Stage three. The traffic impact assessment, stage three.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: At the time of that involvement for each of you, was the original traffic modelling for WestConnex complete?

STUART McCREERY: Can I comment?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I think each of you—given your involvement at each part, it would be helpful to understand.

STUART McCREERY: In the evolution of the strategic studies for stage two and stage three we would get together a group of people, meet on a regular basis, have it up on a whiteboard what the connectivity might be, where the ramps might come out and how big they might be. Then the modellers would go away to model that and come back at the next meeting to explain to us what the ramifications of that would be. As a group, we would say, "Maybe we should change something," and we would evolve it. That's where the 15 options came from.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Is that your recollection, Mr Forward?

PAUL FORWARD: Yes, and I should add here that Chris was part of our team. Chris is a very experienced traffic modeller, but Chris wasn't doing the traffic modelling. Traffic modelling was done by a team from Masson Wilson Twiney—probably the best traffic models in Australia—worked on it. And, can I just say—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'm limited for time so I'm going to direct you back. Were you aware? Did you see a final version of traffic modelling, or was that an ongoing process? I'm just trying to understand and the time line.

PAUL FORWARD: It was more of an ongoing process for looking at all the different options. Whether you'd call it the final—it was certainly the final for some of the options, because the options were then dropped.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Wielinga, did you see final traffic modelling for the time that you were involved?

LES WIELINGA: No, I didn't. As I said, the project was taken off me and given to Infrastructure NSW.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's not a trick question. I'm just trying to line up the facts about what timing and where the traffic modelling was at at each of those iterations. Mr Ford?

LES WIELINGA: I was excluded to the extent that I had to resign from that board because they won't let me tell my Minister what was going on at the time.

The CHAIR: Who was your Minister at the time, just to be clear?

LES WIELINGA: Gladys Berejiklian.

CORRECTED

CHRIS FORD: My involvement, as I mentioned earlier, was up to June 2015. I was involved in having an assessment, if you like, of some of the modelling that was done for stage three. But that modelling by and large was done internally by another project team within WestConnex.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can I get to stage three then? It seems that at some point stage three changed.

CHRIS FORD: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: There were different options, stage three changed. There must have been a point at which a decision was come to. Did any of you have direct experience in the change for stage three?

LES WIELINGA: On any project?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: For stage three specifically.

STUART McCREERY: As I recall it, we did a strategic design in 2015 for stage three, excluding connections to the CBD and excluding the Western Harbour Tunnel. Then we did a supplementary report which included what was termed at the time the inner link, which became the Western Harbour Tunnel. So at the end of 2015 or in the last Q3 or Q4, that's when we did a supplementary report on that bit.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In your experience then, looking at that change, what were the reasons underpinning those changes?

STUART McCREERY: The objectives changed from the original ones that Paul described, which was to get trucks from Western Sydney to the ports, to include two other aspirations, objectives. One was to connect to the CBD and one was to connect to a possible future western harbour tunnel.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Your involvement in that, did that involve modelling as well? There was a change to the design, "Let's extend it. Look at these options"—

STUART McCREERY: For that supplementary report, we developed more than the 15 options. There were another three or four, something like that, in that process, and then we did a supplementary report on that basis, with two recommendations.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Then the objectives changed around the project and the design changed. Is that correct?

STUART McCREERY: It changed from the original one, which was on a completely different alignment. So, yes, it did change.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And you were involved in that change, but the rest of you gentlemen were not involved at that point, at the change of design and implementation?

PAUL FORWARD: No, we were not involved in that change. We were recommending against it, because we saw the damage it was going to do to the Anzac Bridge. There were two—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I understand. I've got one minute so I'm going to redirect you. Thank you very much, but I've got limited time. I want to be clear about the objective and direction change on that. You made recommendations but you weren't involved in that part of the process. That's correct, isn't it?

PAUL FORWARD: That's correct. The change at the end was made, as we understand it, by the Sydney Motorway Corporation board with advice from the department. The finance people in the department made that advice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Mr Forward. I have one minute left so I might go back to my questions. You're welcome to put further information later, if you'd like. You note in your submission that the world's best traffic designers did not come up with the Rozelle interchange concept. Do you want to clarify that point, perhaps, on who did come up with that design?

PAUL FORWARD: We were working as part of an expert review group and there were representatives in that expert review group from Transport for NSW, RMS and—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So it was Transport, essentially. Groups within—

PAUL FORWARD: Transport were part of it.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Who designed that? Was that Transport for NSW?

PAUL FORWARD: I think one of the consultants to Transport saw there were some advantages in using the Rozelle goods yard as a construction point.

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Who designed it? I've got 20 seconds left.

PAUL FORWARD: My understanding is it was Transport. Transport came up with that design.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So Transport had ownership of the design, you would say?

PAUL FORWARD: I'm not sure I'd use the word "ownership" but, yes, they were the ones who were promoting it.

STUART McCREERY: It would've been SMC at the time.

PAUL FORWARD: It would have been the Sydney Motorway Corporation, the company that was set up to deliver this project.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If the Rozelle interchange is the incorrect—I'll come back to that, Chair.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: We've since learnt that the Sydney Motorway Corporation was privatised for approximately \$21 billion. Is it your view that WestConnex's delivery model, as well as the significant redrafting of the motorway strategy and, ultimately, its design from the original concepts, was influenced in some part by increasing the number of toll trips and essentially fattening the pig for sale?

PAUL FORWARD: It's my view that the final design was an attempt to maximise the value of the motorway when it was put out for sale, because it had a larger number of toll trips on it than some of the previous options.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: If I'm following the time line in your submission correctly, in 2014 there was a fundamental change to the motorway strategy. In 2015 the design had been changed to what had previously been prepared and reviewed, particularly with respect to stage three, contrary to the previous work of the RMS, the expert review group, the consultants that had been brought in and the designers. Who made that decision, or on whose advice was that decision made? Was it the Sydney Motorway Corporation or the WestConnex Delivery Authority? Was it the Minister?

PAUL FORWARD: Can I suggest, and I'm not being flippant here, that that's a question you should ask the people in the Sydney Motorway Corporation. We were not part of this process. In 2015 we were edged out. They didn't like the advice we were giving.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: So you had no visibility on who ultimately made the decision to the strategy and the design?

PAUL FORWARD: Correct. But I suspect it was the finance people who were pushing, because it was more valuable to sell the asset if it had more traffic on it.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Can you recall who was on the board of the Sydney Motorway Corporation at the time?

PAUL FORWARD: It's a public document. Tony Shepherd was the chair, there were people from the private sector and there were three representatives from government. The representatives from government—there's a press release that Duncan Gay, the Minister, put out when the board was formed. The representatives from government were Peter Regan from Treasury, who was subsequently appointed as executive director of finance for Transport for NSW; Peter Duncan, who was head of Roads and Maritime Services at the time; and David Stewart, who was head of Transport for NSW, I recall, after Les retired. David Stewart came from Queensland, was there for—I can't recall exactly how long—possibly about two years, and then moved on back to Queensland. So there were three government representatives on that board.

LES WIELINGA: You do realise that we're just touching at the edges of what created this problem, don't you? What created this problem was you had one of the biggest projects government was ever going to produce. It should've appointed a project manager from day one and let that person take the project all the way through. That's the way we do it these days: a lead project manager very close and they take it all the way through. That didn't happen because it was such a big project which jumped government streams and goodness knows what else. They put their own people in there, so they're entitled to do it, but they shouldn't be able to do it for these major projects because it creates these sorts of problems we're talking about today.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Mr Wielinga, you were earlier saying that you lost a certain degree of visibility over the entirety of the project. You mentioned that, in part, that was to exclude you giving advice to your Minister at the time. Is that correct?

LES WIELINGA: I can't hear you, I'm sorry.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BOB NANVA: In some of your evidence earlier you were saying that you lost a degree of visibility over the project, and in some part that was due to skulduggery and people not wanting you to give advice to your Minister. Is that correct?

LES WIELINGA: That's correct.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Could you elucidate on that?

LES WIELINGA: Yes. At that stage I had built about 500 kilometres of bloody motorway around the State. I was moving on to rail—I was really looking forward to it—but they should have let me put the right project manager in there to deliver it, and then they could come and influence it any way they like. Because if they had the right project manager in there, that person would have carried it across the different governments—the whole lot of it. It would have worked.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Given your collective public sector experience, is it your view that all the concerns, all the modelling information, the advice of members of the expert review group, and the opinion of Evans and Peck with respect to the final stage three design, effectively being opposed to it—would all of that information have been relayed in some way, shape or form to the Minister at the time in charge of delivering the WestConnex project?

LES WIELINGA: I don't know because I don't know who was managing it at the time. You would have to go back to all those individuals.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Is it plausible that the Minister would not have known?

LES WIELINGA: Yes.

PAUL FORWARD: Can I just say that I cannot answer that question and I don't think either of us can answer that question. We never spoke to the Minister on this project. I think another point that's perhaps worth considering here is that the different government agencies overall had slightly different objectives. I think this is an important point. Clearly, RMS—Roads and Maritime Services—were responsible for managing the whole of the network. Transport for NSW have got to manage a multi-modal strategy. Urban growth—we were looking at the Bays precinct and looking at what was going to happen there in terms of the developments, and Treasury was certainly concerned with the finances and what it was going to cost and how much revenue they were going to get back. So there were competing objectives amongst the government agencies, there's no doubt about that. The question then is who had the final say? That's a question we were not involved with and we really can't answer.

LES WIELINGA: I did the exercise in writing that up in a few days. I cannot find any similar reports for any public transport. It should have been done at the same time by a central agency and it was never done.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I'm curious—your proposition in terms of the M4 East was that it would end at Haberfield. Is that right? So there would be no on-ramp that would lead to the Anzac Bridge?

PAUL FORWARD: No. I suggest you look at the Auditor-General's report, because she has a number of very clear diagrams that illustrate the variations to the design of this project over time. There's a diagram there of what we originally came up with, another diagram that we worked on—probably 2014, from memory—and then there's the 2016 variation changes to the diagram. When we first wrote the paper for Infrastructure NSW, we referred to it as the "inner west bypass" because the idea was, as I said earlier, to try and get trucks off Marrickville and off the inner west to the port and the airport. The mainline tunnel was quite south of the Anzac Bridge, Pyrmont—the goods yard area. It was quite south of that. The diagrams show that. It had the ramps at Campbelltown on there for 2012, 2014 and I think they got dropped off in 2016.

STUART McCREERY: In 2016.

PAUL FORWARD: In 2016 they got dropped off. It was never explained to us why they dropped off. As I say, the Auditor-General makes reference to that in her report.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So it's your contention that those ramps would have alleviated the traffic that runs off the Anzac Bridge and basically goes back through Glebe?

PAUL FORWARD: Just think about it, if you want to go to Sydney university or if you want to go to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and you're coming along WestConnex, you are forced to go across the Anzac Bridge. You then exit so you go through the southern part of the city. The RTA was very, very clear on this point: You should not be putting more traffic into the CBD. This puts more traffic into the CBD. It's not what we want. We've got light rail in the CBD now. We've got to give priority to the light rail that's going north-south. It's crossing over that traffic. So traffic coming into the CBD that impacts on the light rail then will queue back and we get another issue. So it is the wrong design.

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The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So it's your contention that that decision was directed to boosting numbers that are running through the tollway?

PAUL FORWARD: That is my personal view.

The CHAIR: I want to go back to a comment that was made that somewhere within Transport for NSW the decision for the redesign for Rozelle interchange in 2015/16, I think, was made. I think, Mr McCreery, you may have indicated to Mr Forward that it was at Sydney Motorway Corporation. Where did it come from, from your perspective? How was the decision made? Who made the decision?

STUART McCREERY: Sorry, which decision?

The CHAIR: The Rozelle interchange decision to change the design against all advice, against all modelling and against all of the world's best experts on motorways and traffic modelling. According to you all, somebody—a unit or people somewhere—made the decision to go ahead with the Rozelle interchange, you're arguing today, to increase traffic.

STUART McCREERY: My memory of it is that the three stages of WestConnex were developed with different groups. Stage one was first, stage two was second and stage three then started with a project director, and he gradually built a team. We were part of the expert review group looking at the modelling and doing the different options and trying to work out what seemed to be a good idea. In that process we wrote these two strategic review reports, one in 2015 without the Western Harbour Tunnel and access to the CBD and one with. As a consequence of the second report, we said, "We think these are the two options which should be reviewed carefully with a business case." That was the end of our involvement. By that time the team had built up but it hadn't come to its final conclusions. What we understand—again, from the Auditor-General's report—is that a decision was made after a substantial review in 2016 and the Camperdown ramps were deleted, and the final design was an evolution of that.

The CHAIR: Is it your view—because I've got the summary of the Auditor-General's report in front of me, and you mention it as well—that Transport for NSW did not publish the rationale for the design changes, including how the changes address the limitations of the previous design while providing increased community benefit through the creation of open space? Is it your view that the directive, if you like—was anybody talking at the time within your Transport community? I'm sure there was a lot of discussion about this about whether the directive was coming from within government, within the SMC or within a particular unit within Transport for NSW. What's your view in terms of that design?

PAUL FORWARD: Can I just say, we were not close enough to the decision-makers to say what was happening. There was a lot of discussion by the consultants that Transport for NSW were employing at the time to try to push the mainline tunnel further north so that it went underneath the Rozelle goods yards or within the Rozelle goods yards. But in terms of making the decision, we cannot answer that question.

The CHAIR: You're here today because you do believe that it has been a bit of a disaster, and you're warning today that the Western Harbour Tunnel and what's happening with the Warringah Freeway will be another disaster for the people around North Sydney.

LES WIELINGA: Certainly, if the intersection stays the way it is, it's going to be a bloody disaster. When you're looking at this sort of transport planning I'm talking about, if you look between Penrith and Parramatta, for example, we've got the Main Western rail line; we've got the M4, which is a motorway; the M4 West, which is an urban arterial road, or the Great Western Highway; and two strategic bus corridors running about a kilometre either side of it. That's the planning that has to be done before you get into all of this detail about bloody road projects and all this sort of stuff, because those other modes are going to have an influence on the number of lanes you need and the whole lot of it. That's the only time Government can really get involved in projects, because they can then look at what percentage of those total movements in corridors is going to be rail, what's going to be—

The CHAIR: Buses.

LES WIELINGA: Roads and the whole works. That's the only time, and that's the time you've got to consult, otherwise you're stuck with—

The CHAIR: Mr Wielinga has just said that the Western Harbour Tunnel going through and opening out onto those changes at the Warringah Freeway will be a bloody disaster if changes aren't made. Mr Forward, do you agree with that assessment?

PAUL FORWARD: I'm not sure I'd use the exact words, but I do have some concerns, having looked at what they're doing there. I have a lot of concerns about the design. It wasn't the preferred alignment when I was

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at the RTA and subsequent work that was done after I left the RTA. They wanted a more western link crossing the harbour that went up through the Gladesville Bridge onto the M2, not putting more traffic onto the Warringah Freeway. The other issue that needs to be thought about here is, of course, the motorway is now being tunnelled underneath the harbour, which has some benefits, but it's at one of the lowest points in the harbour. So the gradient from that low point up to North Sydney is going to be very steep, and that raises the whole question about emissions in the tunnel. You've now got three motorways coming out into this short area and, whilst I would recognise there are some exit points—some off-ramps—those motorways are now all going into the Lane Cove Tunnel. I'm not sure of the count of the number of lanes, but a large number of lanes are going into two lanes at the Lane Cove Tunnel. Sounds familiar?

The CHAIR: Are there measures that can be taken? We had the mayor of North Sydney Council give evidence to this inquiry at our last hearing, who wanted it to stop, basically—to see if the Government could pull construction. Is that possible? Do you advocate that? If not, what measures could be put in place to make sure that we don't see Rozelle interchange 2.0 in North Sydney?

PAUL FORWARD: Chair, I've been involved in probably five or six motorways in Sydney. I was a project director for the Eastern Distributor. The communications on the Western Harbour Tunnel are very poor. It is very difficult as a layperson—as a citizen—to find out what they're actually doing there. All I see around North Sydney is slogans. Have a look at it. Have a look at what they're doing there. It's a very poor way of developing a major motorway for Sydney.

The CHAIR: Mr McCreery or Mr Ford, do either of you have any views as well? This Committee unfortunately probably can't make Rozelle interchange go away, although possibly I'd like to make that recommendation. I'm not sure it would get support with all my Committee colleagues. But the Warringah Freeway exits the output from the Western Harbour Tunnel, if it is constructed and it's opened. That hasn't happened yet. Do either of you have views on this, how much of an impact it's going to have on that community and what could be done to prevent it occurring? Mr Ford?

CHRIS FORD: Unfortunately, as Paul indicated, there has been a lack of information coming forward on the detail of how it would interface with the existing road network. I do share some concerns, but in the absence of that detail I'm not in a position to make a comment on that.

The CHAIR: It sounds, potentially, a bit like Rozelle interchange in terms of lack of detail and the potential impact as well.

CHRIS FORD: Yes, exactly.

The CHAIR: Although you are arguing today there was a lot of detail. I will go to you in a second Mr McCreery. Mr Wielinga, were you about to say something?

LES WIELINGA: Yes, I was. I thought you'd asked me the question why did I think it was going to be a disaster. There's a simple answer to that. When the school holidays are on and traffic drops just 2 per cent or 3 per cent, the whole thing flows. But this new Western Harbour Tunnel has got all these little ramps feeding themselves into the intersection itself, and there are at least four lots of 2 per cent or 3 per cent feeding into that, so it's going to blow the whole bloody thing up. You reckon you've got problems now. You wait. If you don't change this bloody intersection soon, you're going to have a lot more to deal with, I can assure you.

The CHAIR: Just expand on that. If we don't change this intersection soon. You're saying if we don't change the way in which Rozelle interchange is operating—is that what you mean or Warringah?

LES WIELINGA: No, the Rozelle interchange. It should have just one lane ramp heading south. You should hook the Iron Cove Bridge up with the Anzac Bridge. Let that traffic flow through, for goodness sake. It's the largest arterial road in Sydney at the moment. You can't have a motorway flow into that intersection—the largest bloody arterial road flow into that intersection—and expect that bridge to handle it. Your constraints are on the Anzac Bridge—period.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Gentlemen, we were speaking last about your submission that referred to how the world's best traffic designers didn't come up with the Rozelle interchange concept. I want to go back to that. Mr McCreery, I think we established that it was Transport for NSW with potentially some other experts—but it was owned, in a sense, or managed by Transport for NSW. That's correct, isn't it?

STUART McCREERY: As I understand it, in 2016 there was a redesign done by SMC, which was working for Transport for NSW at that stage.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Is it correct to say that for that scale of infrastructure projects, you would need specialised skills for that style of project?

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STUART McCREERY: Absolutely.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If the implied criticism is that the concept is not correct—that is, that the transport design of it was not correct or has not been prepared properly or not with adequate thought for the change—that would mean that Transport for NSW designers, the people who were designing at that point or somebody in there weren't the world's best traffic designers, in a sense. Is that what we're to take?

STUART McCREERY: There would have been consultants working for SMC, briefed to progressively work through this and come up with the optimal solution. But, as Paul has said, government agencies come from different viewpoints and there would have been four competing viewpoints—Treasury, Urban Growth, Transport and Roads—trying to come up with the appropriate solution. In 2016 this WestConnex was into construction. It has the longest urban road tunnels in the world. It is a very complex piece of work. Sooner or later they'd have to make a decision and they made that decision in mid-2016. For what reasons, we don't know because it wasn't visible to us.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Do you think that, perhaps, Transport for NSW needed to improve their road design team, given what we're seeing, based on your view that you've given today of the Rozelle interchange?

STUART McCREERY: They probably had a very expert bunch of consultants working on this but, again, the decision sitting behind this 2016 change was invisible to us. But it would have been a balance between the needs and wants of those government agencies.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: But, I guess, getting to the tintacks of the design, which seems to be the issue—I'm just interested in that design. I get the decision and I get the involvement of the parties. I've heard what you said about the input, and obviously there would be a fair bit of input to that. Am I to understand what you said is world-best planning and roads planning perhaps was not implemented here. Is that correct?

PAUL FORWARD: I wouldn't want to say that. We are not in a position to say that. I know that within Transport there were some excellent traffic models. There still are in Transport.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can I go on to the design? WestConnex was obviously designed to be a motorway connection to connect the western suburbs of Sydney. Do you think that it's meeting that objective, Mr McCreery?

STUART McCREERY: From personal experience, if I come from the south-west and I go underground and I come up 15 kilometres later, I'm in the heart of the inner west. For me it's a fantastic experience, yes.

PAUL FORWARD: I think we do need to allocate credit to the people who have built this motorway. There are mistakes, but it is an amazing piece of infrastructure that will actually change the way Sydney operates as a city. There are significant benefits, but there are also some problems with it.

CHRIS FORD: I will put my traffic engineer's hat on. There is no simple solution to what we're experiencing at the Rozelle interchange. At the very best, we can run around with some band-aids and address some minor issues or some local issues. But, from a traffic point of view, there are no simple solutions.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Let's move on. Transport for NSW has publicly stated that their goal is to wait and enable the traffic pattern shifts to emerge rather than to take any action. That's what they've said publicly. Do you think that's a sensible approach?

LES WIELINGA: You can't expect the public service to provide government with the advice when you allow structures that were in place to exist. The reality is Transport for NSW is just building it. They've had a design passed on to them and that design was probably created in good faith, and the people at the time thought they had the appropriate advice but, as it turns out, they just bloody didn't.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: With respect, Mr Wielinga, that wasn't my question. I understand what you're saying, but my question is to about the current stated goal of Transport for NSW, which is to enable the traffic pattern shifts to happen—to let those emerge—rather than to take action right now. Should they wait for the traffic shift to emerge or should they be taking action now? What do you think is the sensible approach? Mr McCreery, I'll start with you.

PAUL FORWARD: Perhaps if I could respond to that.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I will start with Mr McCreery and then I'll go along.

PAUL FORWARD: Absolutely.

STUART McCREERY: I didn't ever work in government. I've advised government. If I'm looking at the concrete that's there now and the difficulties in changing that with construction contracts, it's not something

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you'd want to be doing first. You'd want to be letting the transport patterns try and evolve themselves and solve the solution. That may not work, but that is certainly what I'd be doing for the next little while.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: When you say "little while", how long?

STUART McCREERY: Yes, good question.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How long do you wait for traffic patterns to emerge while people are stuck in traffic, cannot get out of their driveways in Drummoyne, cannot back their cars out and cannot get their kids to school? How long do you wait?

STUART McCREERY: Even now, if they're approaching a point of change of lanes, people are working out now what to do better and you're going to be in the better position. I find myself doing the same thing. So the public will be doing that as well.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So how long, in your opinion?

STUART McCREERY: It would be a guess.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Would it be six months, 12 months?

LES WIELINGA: I reckon you've got a month or two.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'll come to you, Mr Wielinga.

STUART McCREERY: I would allow six to 12 months.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: After this? So continuing on?

STUART McCREERY: From now.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So another year?

STUART McCREERY: I would still be looking at it from an engineering point of view and trying to work out if it doesn't solve itself, then what could we do? The answer to that question might be that there's nothing you can do now.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Forward, how long would you wait?

PAUL FORWARD: We have attached to our summary 16 recommendations.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: They were helpful. Thank you.

PAUL FORWARD: They're prepared on the premise that people in the inner west of Sydney have suffered a financial cost. Accessibility within and to their suburbs has been reduced. They need to be compensated. The way we are arguing for them to be compensated is through improved public transport through the inner west. There are lots of suggestions there. Some of those suggestions can be made almost immediately.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: About the traffic patterns, Mr Wielinga, I think you wanted to add something to that. Do we wait, as Transport has recommended? They've said, "We'll wait for the traffic patterns to emerge," or do you think something should be done now?

LES WIELINGA: Something should be done now, in my view. But I've been building things all my life.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What do you think should be done now?

LES WIELINGA: I'd be out there with a bulldozer tomorrow knocking over some of that stuff and getting rid of the bloody toll. You can't have part of the connection to the bridge from Anzac Parade tolled and then not tolled.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You're suggesting remove the toll and that would fix the congestion problems?

LES WIELINGA: No, I don't know. Until I get to have a detailed look at it—if I get a chance to have a detailed look at it—I don't know. But I do know that the final outcome is straight through from Victoria Road to Anzac Bridge. I think I'm the only one that's had a look at this so far. I've spent a few days—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Do you want to perhaps take that on notice? I've got two minutes, so I might move on to Mr Forward. You might want to give us an answer on notice, if you'd like time to consider it. Do we wait for traffic to settle or are there things that could be done right now? Mr Ford?

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LES WIELINGA: I don't think the community can wait that long because they're that bloody frustrated out there. I'm surprised they're not in here with guns. That's how serious I think it is.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Ford?

CHRIS FORD: I believe there are a number of things that can be done in the short run, but, as I mentioned earlier, they are bandaids. They will not fix the overall issue, which is severe congestion on the Anzac Bridge. For example, some of the merging sections are inadequate. The links are inadequate. Three into one over a very short distance doesn't conform to any current road design standard, and there are few of those around. We've indicated in our recommendations that a clear review of the merging arrangements needs to be undertaken and I think it's a matter of urgency.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Immediately?

CHRIS FORD: Yes. I'm a resident of the inner west. I use Victoria Road every day. I came that way this morning. My wife was driving, and we both needed a cup of coffee by the time we got here.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sure. I'm sorry. I've got 40 seconds, so we might get to the end of the—did you get the coffee?

CHRIS FORD: Yes. I don't waste time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can I get to one of your recommendations in your submission that calls for a tidal flow system on Anzac Bridge. The bridge has eight lanes. How would you foresee the breakdown of the lane configurations in the AM and PM peak?

CHRIS FORD: In the morning peak, an extra inbound lane. But I must stress here—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Would you change that over and make that inbound?

CHRIS FORD: Yes. But that lane needs to be focused immediately to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Let me explain. Years ago we had a problem with Bathurst Street ramp queueing back up past the Goldsbrough Mort building. Once the queue got past the Goldsbrough Mort building it would block off access to the city and to the Harbour Bridge, and immediately the queue would go straight back across Anzac Bridge. At that time the coordination through the city in Bathurst Street was east-west and very heavily focused in that direction. With the light rail, it's now north-south. The probability of a queue coming back up the Bathurst Street ramp is now a lot higher than what it was before. The only way we can actually free access to the Sydney Harbour Bridge and stop that tailback onto the Anzac Bridge is to dedicate a separate lane for Sydney Harbour Bridge traffic and to keep the city traffic out of that lane.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So keep that, for example, as the far left inbound straight onto the Harbour Bridge?

CHRIS FORD: Correct, yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And PM?

The CHAIR: Order!

CHRIS FORD: That lane would need to be marked back to the fish markets offload.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You might take on notice the PM?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How would that work with what Transport describe as the "weave", where you're trying to get off the King Street exit? The traffic is flowing on the Anzac Bridge. Some are going onto the Harbour Bridge ramp and the others are weaving back across. If you had a dedicated lane, that would obstruct that, wouldn't it?

CHRIS FORD: But in doing so, you would need to have to generate an additional lane.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: But you'd still have the weave problem, wouldn't you?

LES WIELINGA: Not on the bridge, on the city side of the bridge.

CHRIS FORD: There will be a weaving movement—that's correct—and I think you're talking about the on-load from the Fish Market and that weave. Or are we talking about a weaving movement from—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Past the Goldsbrough Mort building. As you go past the Goldsbrough Mort building, there's the lane that takes you onto the Harbour Bridge and it's merging with traffic that's coming up from Harris Street and the traffic is weaving across. Some are going across to the Harbour Bridge, some are going back onto the ramp that takes you up King Street.

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CHRIS FORD: No, my point is you'd separate the Sydney Harbour Bridge traffic well back on the Western Distributor in an additional lane, for example, so that weaving movement would be between the Bathurst Street, the King Street traffic and traffic into the Cross City Tunnel. That is one element of the weaving movement that's been removed.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: In relation to other major transport projects you've been directly involved with, what is the chain of command with respect to approval processes for business cases and final designs? Presumably there's a chain of command.

LES WIELINGA: There are only two decision-making areas that matter, the budget committee of Cabinet or the infrastructure committee of Cabinet, and the project manager's authority under his contract. That's the way it should be.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: You've made a number of helpful suggestions with respect to resolving congestion in Rozelle. Were those suggestions ever provided at an earlier design stage to the previous Government?

LES WIELINGA: From Anzac Bridge up until the new interchange that brings us southern stuff in, you would need two lanes plus two bus lanes. I'd then change through that intersection to three lanes plus two bus lanes all the way into the city.

PAUL FORWARD: But to answer your question, no.

STUART McCREERY: I was going to say that. No.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: First of all, essentially your evidence seems to be that the Government has inherited a structural design flaw which, whilst at the margins might be ameliorated, is basically that we've got the proverbial sandwich and we've got to live with it as a result of that structural design flaw. Is that the case?

PAUL FORWARD: What we are saying in our recommendations is that we need to get people out of cars in the Inner West. If you can do that at the margin, you'll have a significant improvement. You won't solve it but you'll have an improvement. The people of the Inner West need to be compensated through better public transport. There are many options to do that and we mention those in our recommendations.

LES WIELINGA: We can't change the past.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: No.

LES WIELINGA: If I was looking at this project today, I'd build the Western Sydney Metro first, get that done and see what traffic it takes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes. Given that structural inheritance that this Government now has to deal with, and you're saying that public transport is a way forward—

LES WIELINGA: No, you have to decide what percentages you're going to put on roads, what percentages you're going to put on trams, what percentages you're going to put on rail, and you need to do them all in a transport study. Identify those roads like I spoke about between Penrith and Parramatta now. You have to do that straightaway. Somebody's got to sit down and produce a dozen or so maps like this with all the transport modes on it so you can see the interactions. If you can't see the interactions, you cannot build with confidence.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Just going back to the process, I'm just struggling to understand how a secretary of a department and CEOs of major bodies having inputs into the initial designs which would have solved—

LES WIELINGA: They write the Cabinet minutes that go up to the budget committee of Cabinet.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: How is it conceivable that a government who is going to finally push the button on turning the sods and getting the construction going isn't privy to this previous information?

LES WIELINGA: That's why I said I don't think they've done the right thing by you. They should have given you more information. They should have taken you out and shown you what the problems are—those sorts of things.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But if you're a Minister in charge of this project, wouldn't it be fairly procedurally normal that all the previous input data, no matter how many variations there were, get presented on their merits and then, "Minister, you should be aware of X, Y, Z from previous studies as to the effects of it"?

PAUL FORWARD: Can I answer that question? I think that the model is flawed. As I said earlier in our presentation, you've set up a separate entity to deliver a motorway, a separate entity that's actually chaired by

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the private sector, has private sector representatives on it and has people from government on it. The Minister is quite distanced from that process. It was different to every other motorway built, every other toll road built in Sydney. There are lessons there to be learnt.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: But it was a State-owned corporation.

LES WIELINGA: The frustration in all of this, of course, is by the time you find out a project's going bad it's too late to do anything about it. Something has to be done about that.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I just find it inconceivable that elected officials would have been unaware of the advice prepared by engineers, road designers, expert reference groups, the RMS at the time. It just seems inconceivable to me that elected officials would not have been aware of any of those concerns or anxieties.

PAUL FORWARD: We can't answer that question clearly. We were not in a position to observe what was happening at that decision-making level.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mr Ford, your evidence previous to my colleague's question is that part of that problem is this idea of government, that you give it to an arms-length body and once they come back to you the Minister just accepts what they've given because they're the experts—"I'm not going to look too far into it."

LES WIELINGA: It's related to the fierceness of competition you get for resources from the budget committee. They just want to—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Say it again, sorry.

LES WIELINGA: It's the fierceness of competition between departments for resources from the budget committee because they work out what they need to get the next decision. They put it up at a Cabinet meeting to do that at, usually, the direction of the Minister's office to get what they want at that stage. They never look back.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Would it be fair to say that a key driving factor in this would have been Treasury's desire to maximise the uplift of the sale and what that would do to the bottom line, and therefore they would have had, at the time, the overarching influence over the final decision?

PAUL FORWARD: I'm not sure about the last statement, that they had the overarching, but your first statement, in my opinion, is correct.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Having absorbed all the risk, there would have been a motivation to make sure that as many toll trips were pushed through as possible to maximise the sale price?

LES WIELINGA: The State has a whole history of projects that it has delivered in the past. Surely someone can go back and say, "Your modelling is saying this. You have 2,200 or 2,300 bloody vehicles per hour going through that lane. How's that going to work?"

The CHAIR: Mr Forward, you were about to answer as well.

PAUL FORWARD: All I want to say is there are Ministers and there are Ministers. Some Ministers, from my experience, are all over these projects. They take a very personal interest in what's happening. They have regular meetings with the teams, they look at the evidence and decisions are made. Other Ministers are very much at arms-length. I wasn't privy to the Ministers of the day when these decisions were made.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: There's a real—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Chair, we're out of time.

The CHAIR: I'll just allow one more question.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We're also overtime.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: There is something that we all need to learn here in terms of project delivery.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I wasn't allowed to ask an extra question.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Is it your view that many of the flaws structurally with the project can be traced back to the delivery model that was established in the very first instance with WestConnex?

PAUL FORWARD: I'll answer it and then Stuart can have a go. My response to that is, yes. Remember the model that we've got with WestConnex is very similar to the CityLink model in Melbourne. Melbourne, Victoria, has now changed back to a more government-controlled model. It's a different approach. They've now gone back to what we were doing with the Eastern Distributor, Western Sydney Orbital et cetera. I think Victoria

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has noted the flaws as well. It might be an area worth exploring, but it would seem to me the premise of your question is correct.

The CHAIR: Final words, Mr McCreery.

STUART McCREERY: You asked at the very beginning why are we here, why we were prepared to come and give evidence. For me, I have always thought as this thing has evolved that there's a book in there somewhere that steps through how this thing has changed and how through the evolution, through the stages of 12, 14 years that it's taken, what's happened to the role of authority? Who's had authority and influence at a particular time to be able to make a decision? It's not clear to me. I think if anything is to be learnt out of this, it's to make sure that those processes work going forward.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. That's an excellent statement to finish on. We're over time. Thank you very much for contacting the Committee and offering to give evidence today. It's been extremely useful. The Committee will be in touch if we have any further questions for you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

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The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM, Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism, before the Committee

Mr STEVE ISSA, Executive Director, Community and Place, Greater Sydney, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

Mr GRANT KNOETZE, Executive Director, Customer Journey Planning, Operations Group, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

Mr JOSH MURRAY, Secretary, Transport for New South Wales, affirmed and examined

Ms CAMILLA DROVER, Deputy Secretary, Infrastructure and Place, Transport for New South Wales, affirmed and examined

Mr HOWARD COLLINS, Coordinator General, Transport for New South Wales, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome back. Does Mr Murray or the Minister have a short opening statement?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I believe Mr Murray does. I'll just say a couple of things first. It's a delight to be back with the parliamentary committee. The Government has supported this Committee. I think the work is really important. From a Government point of view, we are looking for solutions. We understand this has had an impact on the community. The fact the Committee's prepared to help in that search for solutions is really welcome. What we'll try to do today is go into some of the specifics, too, about what we know about how the Rozelle interchange is performing. It helps to be as specific as we can be, but I'm happy to deal with that in the evidence.

JOSH MURRAY: Thank you for the opportunity for Transport for NSW to join the Minister in front of this inquiry. Delivery of major transport infrastructure in an urban centre of a major city is never easy, but often least of all for those living in the immediate vicinity of the projects. Providing these major projects, while ensuring genuine empathy and engagement to local communities, is a responsibility that Transport for NSW takes extremely seriously and dedicates itself to mitigating wherever possible. Transport wishes to acknowledge the disruption that inner west residents have experienced over many years while bearing the brunt of delivery of what is arguably the most complex underground motorway junction ever constructed. Delivery of this final intricate stage of WestConnex and the Rozelle interchange has been noisy, dirty and disruptive for an extended period.

As witnesses have been clear to this Committee, it has also delivered significant traffic and productivity benefits across the city and further afield, but these have been felt least in the very areas where that construction impact was centred. We acknowledge that these experiences—congestion, constant change, delayed openings of the parkland and now rat running through parts of the inner west concentrated on those peak two hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings—have tested the local community's patience and their confidence in the project. We are continuing to work with residents, councils and stakeholders to examine additional models and options on a week-by-week basis. We are now at the six-month mark, which we advised repeatedly at the time would be necessary to monitor traffic and its impacts. We are assessing what has worked and what remained to be done to provide more assistance to the Drummoyne peninsula in particular.

Just as we did with the City West Link, initial delays and the flow-on choke points at Robert and Darling streets exits at Rozelle—resolving those shows the average trip through the inner west is now generally taking the same amount of time to journeys prior to the opening and in some cases less. Daily traffic volumes on Victoria Road at Rozelle are down by half from 62,500 vehicles a day at Wellington Street in March 2023 to 30,500 vehicles a day in March this year. Further afield, as the Committee heard from Transurban, commutes from Penrith to the city have shaved 30 minutes per trip, and from Liverpool, 20 minutes. That's up to five hours more at home a week for some Western Sydney families who may have few choices but to drive. The afternoon peak is getting motorists home more reliably on a daily average as four westbound Anzac Bridge lanes connect to those multiple express options. But, again, we accept it is the east Drummoyne community that is still experiencing the worst congestion in those key morning peaks and rat running on local roads. The concerns of those residents are our current focus. We also are delivering major capital projects and public transport service upgrades that will add even more options to the inner west commute.

Chair, our Transport team here today joining the Minister includes our Deputy Secretary of Infrastructure and Place, Ms Drover, who can assist with questions about the scope of the project and its technical delivery; our coordinator general, Mr Collins, who can speak to our operational preparations and communications; our Executive Director of Community and Place, Mr Issa, who can address questions about the inner west engagement and overall network integration for that area; and our Executive Director of Customer Journey Management, Mr Knoetze, who can assist with operational insights and the work of the Transport Management Centre following your visit there earlier in the inquiry. We welcome your questions.

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The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you all for coming on. Minister, thank you for attending today and coming on to assist the inquiry. It's good to see a Minister here. We appreciate you and all your team's assistance. Can I ask about the opening of the Rozelle interchange to anyone that you consider appropriate to answer? Following the opening of the interchange, Transport for NSW made emergency changes to adjust that traffic flow northbound on the City West Link. What consideration was given to the Drummoyne area of the impacts of introducing those changes?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I'll hand to the Secretary and the team in a minute. There were a number of changes, as you've identified. I'll quickly characterise them. Eleven days in after the opening, there were physical changes made to the road network around that City West Link. That was followed by light phasing changes sometime later that really did assist on the Balmain-Rozelle peninsula in particular, and changes to make as much of this data public as possible. They're three key interventions which have improved things, as you've heard, but we're obviously conscious of the impact it has had. I might ask the team to answer more generally.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You will be aware of the limited time, so forgive me for jumping in—specifically, relating to the impacts affecting Drummoyne.

JOSH MURRAY: As we said in those initial days, as we examined some of those infrastructure improvements, our biggest concern in making those was that we would move congestion to other areas. Attaching ourselves to that inner west and the initial City West Link concern was our first priority because that was building back on those initial days. We were conscious of Drummoyne, but we had to see how those models would play out as different changes were put in place. The City West Link was the first one to look at and then that created the additional pressure at Robert Street in particular. That prevented the buses from coming back onto Victoria Road. So it was an evolving process as we worked through different pinch points. Each element that we tested, including the traffic light phasing the Minister's just mentioned, had a different impact. In fact, it was some of those early traffic light changes that caused even greater concerns for Drummoyne, so finding that balance over those days was the task.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: As part of that, you mentioned the traffic signalling. I'm happy for anyone to answer; there's no trick questions here. We have different options, and different solution and impacts. I'm interested in the consideration of those. It's evident that the traffic signalling on Victoria Road, Drummoyne and Balmain-Rozelle was changed to ease those impacts on the Balmain-Rozelle section, but how were those considered specifically to affect Drummoyne and in those changes you mentioned?

JOSH MURRAY: I might ask Mr Knoetze to speak to that in terms of the work that the Transport Management Centre did.

GRANT KNOETZE: In those first few days, and those first 11 days, we were obviously looking at balancing all the entries and exits within the Rozelle interchange. As the secretary's just mentioned, our focus was balancing City West Link and also Victoria Road. We were looking at those as corridors in their entirety in terms of how the travel time was impacted through those corridors. In getting that balance right—which is largely what we ended up doing after those first 11 days when we understood a little bit more about how the patterns were moving—part of our opportunity to actually manage the traffic through those corridors would have been right through from Rozelle up into Drummoyne, which is where we know we were having the issue raised about local traffic impacts.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What specific consideration was given to Drummoyne impacts?

GRANT KNOETZE: We gave consideration to the whole of Victoria Road corridor. That included all communities along the corridor. But it was very clear to us from feedback from the community in Rozelle and Drummoyne in those first few weeks that there were local traffic impacts as a consequence of that corridor.

JOSH MURRAY: Ms Ward, you saw the Transport Management Centre and the expertise that's there. Especially, we had the JOC stood up as a special operation to monitor all of the intersections that were affected at the time. We had a huge amount of information coming in from the public, the media, parliamentarians, and we were managing that with the expertise that was in there. Certainly, all the questions about could we mitigate this through these changes were worked through with what would be the flow-on impacts in that regard.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: All right, but I'm specifically asking—it's now the third time and I'm up to five minutes. It's not a criticism, but I'm interested in the very specific impacts to Drummoyne and what consideration was given to those, given there does seem to be some evidence that it's moved forward. I might move on to specifics. Canada Bay council has advised the Drummoyne residents' committee that Transport for NSW informed them of the need to undertake a local traffic study to mitigate the impact of the opening of the Rozelle interchange. The estimated cost for such a study is circa \$200,000, potentially more. How does Transport for NSW expect the council to fund this?

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The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you for the question. Just to be as specific as possible about what's going on in Drummoyne, the advice to me—but the Committee should feel free to ask the Transport people here today—is those trips along Victoria Road are now about the same time as they were in March 2023. At the peak, on average, that is now the same time. There is an issue in Drummoyne, though, that's been created as this has opened up. The view that's been put to the Committee—and I've looked at the submissions—but also to the Government, is it's very much about the rat running in those streets, particularly people crossing over into other streets. I'm not prepared—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sorry to interrupt you, Minister, but to get to those specific traffic studies, the recommendation to the council, dealing with this group, has been "Go and get your own traffic study." My question is very specific: How does Transport expect council to be funding that local traffic study? Does it expect the ratepayers to pay for that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will answer from a Government point of view, which is I think that would be unreasonable, given what we're dealing with. There is an impact here on local traffic. I'm not prepared to wait for the 12-month network assessment to deal with those Drummoyne issues. What I've asked Transport to do is some immediate work, a report on those Drummoyne rat runs, working with the local council so that they don't have to do that work.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Is that a traffic study, Minister? Have you asked Transport to do that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That should include some of that traffic study work. I expect it to be completed in June. That work will be done with the council, but it should be done by Transport in order to make sure that we get a grip on this issue, because I understand it is having an impact.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So I'm to understand that perhaps that advice may now be changed somewhat—that Transport for NSW is not saying to council, "You go and do your own study and pay for it" but that you are directing, or somehow saying, "We will do that traffic study on those rat runs and those local roads, and Transport will wear that cost?"

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. These are local roads, but I've asked Transport to lead on this process, work with the council and examine those local road issues in Drummoyne—in particular in east Drummoyne. That should make it easier for the council to deal with, but feel free to—you can certainly ask some of the team about what's involved.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Does it make it physically—in terms of cost, will Transport bear that cost for that traffic study?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. My expectation is Transport's the lead. They will be actually conducting that work, working with the council.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: They will be conducting a traffic study, just to be clear?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might hand to Mr Issa, who is the lead, on this question.

STEVE ISSA: I personally met with Drummoyne council in March, and we actually indicated that we would undertake the traffic study and we would do the assessments, not that council would do it.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Council's wrong in their submission or that's changed?

STEVE ISSA: There may be some confusion. But given they are the local road authority, we would have to work with council to undertake the traffic study.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Issa, excuse me for interrupting—I've got one minute—but it seems there's a disconnect, as at yesterday, that they have been told that they must go and get a traffic study, just to be clear.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Ms Ward, just to short-circuit that, they will not be paying. Transport will lead and pay. I think that's important, given the impact.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Okay. Thank you, Minister, that's very helpful. Residents who contacted Transport for NSW prior to and subsequent to the Rozelle interchange opening were consistently advised in writing that the congestion being experienced along Victoria Road and adjacent streets would resolve itself after the Iron Cove tunnel opened. Do Transport for NSW believe that to be true and, if so, on what basis?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might just put those times that the secretary's put again. If you're coming from Penrith or Liverpool, there are significant savings: 30 minutes or 20 minutes. Those, six months in—the advice to me, but the Committee should feel free to quiz this, is that coming down Victoria Road it's the same

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time. Coming down the City West Link now—five minutes faster than it was in March 2023. This is at the peak. So those predictions that we made as this opened are now coming true: real traffic issues but then it will improve. But I invite the Committee to quiz those details.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You believe the interchange is working and it's resolved itself?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I believe the interchange is working to the extent it can. There are very real issues with the design and the limitations of this design—and the Committee heard some of those this morning, including in concerning evidence about some of the design decisions that were made in 2015 and 2016.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sure, but getting to the very specific question of it resolving itself now that it's in place, I just want to be clear: Is it your view and Transport's view that that, from your evidence, has resolved itself given that the travel times you say are now consistent? Or is there more work to be done on that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No. There's more work to be done and I'm happy to spell out some of the reasons why—some of the expectations about what that work is for the Committee.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We want to get to solutions.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Exactly. I agree with that.

The CHAIR: Minister, you just said that there were some issues with the design—or given the limitations of the design—back in 2015. Is there anybody on your team here today that was working within the department back in 2015, firstly?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I believe that may be the case, but I'm happy to put that to the team.

JOSH MURRAY: Not in a design capacity. Mr Issa was in the organisation at the time.

GRANT KNOETZE: So was I.

JOSH MURRAY: And Mr Knoetze.

The CHAIR: So we have Transport for NSW here today but nobody, just to be clear, that was working within Transport for NSW? Because the submission by the Government states—or it would have been RMS, Roads and Maritime Services, of course, at that time—that stage 3B was procured and delivered by the then Roads and Maritime Services agency. Is there anybody here that can speak to what happened in 2015 to get us into this mess?

JOSH MURRAY: Ms Drover will do her best, as our head of project delivery across the organisation, to look at the decisions that led up to the delivery.

The CHAIR: That would be very helpful, Ms Drover.

CAMILLA DROVER: I note that I joined government in late 2017, and by that stage the Rozelle interchange was being procured by Sydney Motorway Corporation. You may remember the procurement was halted when they only received one bidder. After that stage, it was transferred to the RMS for the procurement and the delivery. I might go through the time line, as I understand it. INSW's State Infrastructure Strategy was released in 2012.

The CHAIR: Can we fast-track to 2015? We know a lot. The question is what happened within Transport for NSW and if that has been documented in terms of how the design suddenly shifted to include the Rozelle interchange and to get rid of Camperdown. There was that particular decision that we've heard about from the previous witnesses. They allege that it was all about driving more traffic onto WestConnex to increase the sale price, to bring more money into Treasury and to increase the sale price of the WestConnex. We're very keen to know what happened during that period—2014 and 2015.

CAMILLA DROVER: In 2015 there was an updated strategic business case for WestConnex. At that time, there was a decision to duplicate the City West Link and bring that road to Rozelle.

The CHAIR: Is there a trail of decisions made about how the updated strategic business case was ordered? Who ordered it?

CAMILLA DROVER: My understanding is it was done by Sydney Motorway Corporation.

The CHAIR: Sydney Motorway Corporation delivered the updated strategic business case that included Rozelle interchange?

CAMILLA DROVER: That is my understanding, and there were three primary changes. One was the duplication of City West Link towards Rozelle, as I said. There was also provision for the future connection of

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the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link. At that stage, I understand that the Camperdown connection was still within the design for the Rozelle interchange. Then we move to 2016, and there was a significant design review so that by about August 2017, when the EIS for stage three of WestConnex—I note that stage three of WestConnex included the M4-M5 link and the Rozelle interchange, both what we call part 3A and part 3B of WestConnex. By the time the EIS was released in late 2017, the design of the interchange had been undergrounded, because prior to that, it was an above-ground interchange of viaducts et cetera. The reason for that, as I understand it, was to deliver that 10 hectares of parkland. There was also the introduction of the Iron Cove Link—the toll-free connection between the Iron Cove Bridge and Anzac Bridge.

The CHAIR: Back earlier with that strategic business case in 2015, does that go to a particular Minister to be signed off to go to Cabinet? What was the process internally with that strategic business case that was delivered to the Government by Sydney Motorway Corporation? Where did it go?

CAMILLA DROVER: I can talk about processes more generally.

The CHAIR: But can I ask, are you saying you can talk about processes more generally because the processes aren't documented? If they are documented, I'm asking very specifically who approved it and who it went to when it came into the department.

CAMILLA DROVER: All I know is the design and the EIS were prepared by Sydney Motorway Corporation.

The CHAIR: Upon instruction by anybody?

CAMILLA DROVER: Of course, the project was always under the INSW assurance process, so it would have been through that assurance process.

The CHAIR: If you've had a look at the paper trail—and we really appreciate you doing that for this inquiry—was there instruction by anybody within Government, by Ministers, to SMC to provide a strategic business case? Or are you saying it was just Infrastructure NSW?

CAMILLA DROVER: I wasn't there at the time, but it is normal practice, before projects go out on display for an EIS, for the design and the EIS to have government approval before it goes out on display.

The CHAIR: Is your evidence here today that Sydney Motorway Corporation came up with that strategic business case without direction from government?

CAMILLA DROVER: Well, Sydney Motorway Corporation at that stage was 100 per cent owned by the government.

The CHAIR: Without direction from a Minister?

CAMILLA DROVER: I can't comment on exactly what occurred there because I wasn't there until late 2017.

The CHAIR: No, but you've looked at the paper trail, Ms Drover. That's your evidence today. You have looked at the paper trail to give evidence here. Was there a ministerial direction?

CAMILLA DROVER: I don't have visibility of what happened within Sydney Motorway Corporation.

The CHAIR: What about outside of Sydney Motorway Corporation? What do you have visibility of? The question is, was there any direction from a Minister to produce that strategic business case?

CAMILLA DROVER: I suspect the Government would have been fully across what was being prepared at the time, given the scale and nature of the project, and it was also part of the INSW assurance process.

The CHAIR: Have you seen any documentation that is a ministerial direction?

CAMILLA DROVER: No, I have not.

The CHAIR: Have you seen any other documentation that suggests the Minister requested that the strategic business case be created?

CAMILLA DROVER: It is fair to say I haven't gone looking for that evidence. My evidence is my experience, which is from late August 2017.

The CHAIR: Yes, but you are here today giving us the paper trail, which, again, I very much appreciate. Minister, you were about to step in before.

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The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I was only indicating that I think Ms Drover had confirmed that the usual practice would be for the government to be informed. I haven't seen these documents, but I can confirm that's the general practice before those steps are taken.

The CHAIR: What we have heard today—and it has been apparent as well with other witnesses—is that everything was pointing to the fact that Anzac Bridge could not really take much more traffic. The Anzac Bridge was at capacity before the Rozelle interchange was approved. Was the department then aware? I know that you weren't around at the time or involved in it, but you're dealing with it now. When did you become aware that there would be such chaos as a result of the opening of the interchange, because it wasn't going to work with the 14 lanes flowing into four? I assume Transport for NSW knew this all along?

CAMILLA DROVER: Yes. The EIS was quite clear in 2017 that there would be disruption with the delivery of the Rozelle interchange. In fact, there was a specific condition in the planning approval of 2018—E63—which required Transport, as it is today, to undertake a network plan, because the EIS was done in 2016-17. The project was delivered at the end of 2023. Prior to the opening of the project, there was a network plan that was undertaken to redo the modelling and assess what the actual conditions were across the network at the time and to assess what interventions were required prior to the opening of the Rozelle interchange. That was undertaken. There are a number of mitigations and interventions that occurred prior to the opening of the Rozelle interchange. A couple of them are still in train, and there are further ones that we are pursuing. In fact, if we look at the results of that network plan, many of the levels of service across the network were predicted in the EIS to be worse than what we are experiencing today, given the interventions that have occurred just prior to the opening and that continue.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Quoting from the Transport for NSW submission to the Committee, "Following the release of the 2013 design, the NSW Government made three decisions which generated several necessary design changes captured in the 2015 design change". Can you provide the Committee with some clarity on who the reference to the New South Wales Government is? Is it the WestConnex Delivery Authority, the Sydney Motorway Corporation, the Minister or Cabinet? Perhaps take it on notice.

CAMILLA DROVER: I might take that on notice.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: The Committee has heard some evidence that in 2014 there was a significant change in the motorways strategy and then in 2015 a fundamental design change to stage three of the project. The concerning thing is that it's seemingly gone against significant amounts of planning advice and concerns. Any information that could be provided to the Committee with respect to the rationale of those changes would be welcome.

CAMILLA DROVER: I accept that "government" is a broad term. We'll bring back whatever information we can. I would note that in 2014 the Infrastructure NSW State Infrastructure Strategy update—so the update from 2012—did advocate for some north and south connections to WestConnex. It was then that the provision for the Western Harbour Tunnel came into play.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: To assist the Committee I have two comments about the principles that apply here. The first is as an incoming Minister I don't have access to these documents. I've got the expert advice of Transport, which is extremely helpful, on the principle that incoming governments shouldn't have access to a former government's documents. That's appropriate. I think that's a really important principle in government. Secondly, I do want to indicate—and I think it's reasonable for Ms Drover to take these questions on notice, given she wasn't there—that my expectation is the parliamentary Committee has got to do its job as well and it is reasonable for the Committee to ask Transport, "Where were the decisions made?" and expect answers to that. I think it's appropriate to take it on notice, but it's also appropriate that that information be provided to the Committee, where it is known.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: The submission also states:

... as noted in the Network Plan, constraints downstream of Rozelle Interchange which pre-date WestConnex – the capacity of the Anzac Bridge, Western Distributor and CBD – limit the scale of mitigation measures which can be implemented.

It's apparent the capacity constraints on the Anzac Bridge were known to Transport at the time of the stage three design process. Has any modelling been undertaken with respect to what impacts the stage three design change would have on Anzac Bridge?

CAMILLA DROVER: As I said, the initial modelling, of course, was done with the EIS, and then we did the network plan. I might hand to my colleague Mr Issa, whose team did that network plan. It wasn't done by the project itself. That plan was redoing the modelling, prior to opening, based on actual network experience, just prior to the opening of the Rozelle interchange.

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The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That was 2018, was it, when that network plan was developed?

CAMILLA DROVER: No. It was developed in 2023. It was required to be done just prior to the opening of the Rozelle interchange, which opened in November 2023. So it was done late 2023.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So there had been no network planning prior to that?

CAMILLA DROVER: The EIS occurred in 2017. It was approved in 2018. The project was awarded at the end of 2018. There were some network integration initiatives pursued during the construction of the project, but prior to the opening that network plan was done. If I can hand to Mr Issa for the detail.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I clarify: It wasn't until 2023 that the actual micro traffic impacts were really being assessed? Is that fair to say?

CAMILLA DROVER: No. From the construction commencement there were some network integration opportunities looked at, and some of those were developed in parallel to the delivery of the project.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: But there was no plan until 2023? That's when that was—

CAMILLA DROVER: They're separate things. There were initiatives, but the discrete task of doing the network plan was a condition of approval that was required to be done in addition to everything else just prior to the opening of the Rozelle interchange.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Are you privy to any modelling that was done, specifically with respect to Anzac Bridge, concerning the stage three design changes in 2015-16?

CAMILLA DROVER: There was significant modelling done as part of the EIS, which came out on display in 2017. That reflected the design, which was then approved and has been delivered. There were some minor modifications to the project post the main planning approval. I can take you through those if required. But the configuration of the motorway is largely reflective of what was out on display in 2017 and approved in 2018. That is what has been built.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Were the concerns of the expert review group with respect to those changes and Evans and Peck considered during that process?

CAMILLA DROVER: I'm not familiar with what you're referring to in terms of Evans and Peck.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Sorry—the consultants that worked on the design of stage three prior to the changes in 2014-15.

CAMILLA DROVER: The last changes that I'm aware of occurred in 2016, which were led by Sydney Motorway Corporation. They formed the basis of the EIS design, which was displayed at the end of 2017. The traffic modelling for that EIS reflected that final design, which, as I said earlier, was the undergrounding of the interchange and the inclusion of the Iron Cove Link. That is the design that was effectively frozen and formed the basis of the EIS, and then what we have gone ahead and delivered.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Issa, can you clarify the extent of the traffic modelling? It seems the backlog of traffic to the Gladesville Bridge, I'm not sure whether that was taken into account. Perhaps you could elaborate on whether, in the traffic modelling that was done, that situation that exists between the Gladesville Bridge and the Iron Cove tunnel had been anticipated?

STEVE ISSA: As outlined in our submission, and as Ms Drover has outlined, the assessment of the EIS for stage three did indicate increased traffic congestion in and around the inner west, including on Victoria Road and the City West Link. That was forecast and outlined in the EIS as an anticipated impact of stage three and its delivery. So it was known and it was as forecast back in 2017.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. The rat running was anticipated?

STEVE ISSA: Not the rat running. From a network perspective, the EIS anticipated the congestion and delays on approach to Victoria Road and the City West Link. We've worked since then to develop operational modelling. We obviously had COVID, which significantly changed driver demand and driver behaviour. We updated our work through 2021 to 2022 to understand new traffic volumes, new traffic baselines—what would we expect on opening. As part of that process, we worked through mitigation strategies to help preparation for the opening of the interchange. Across the full stage three, which includes the M4 to M8 link, 21 initiatives were developed. Of those 21 initiatives, 17 have been implemented, three are in delivery and one is yet to commence. Specifically in and around Rozelle there are nine, and six of those nine initiatives are in place today and they're helping us manage the network.

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What we're seeing specifically across the network, as we predicted, is it would take some time to settle in, as it has with major motorway openings over many years—be it the M4 East, the M4 West, the M8, the M4-M8 Link. It takes time for these things to settle—people learn how to use the networks, they understand their trips, and they work out what they want to do and how they want to use it. So there is always a settling-in period. We obviously had a disruptive period, which we acknowledge, in December. But, more broadly, what we're seeing is a normality of the performance.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Surely we're at normality now, aren't we?

STEVE ISSA: Yes. What we're seeing on the Victoria Road corridor today—and Mr Knoetze can talk specifically on travel time—is a return to travel times on Victoria Road to pre-opening between The Gladesville Bridge and the Anzac Bridge. Specifically, what we're seeing in Drummoyne, as the Minister has outlined, is some localised rat running.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Was that ever identified in any documentation as a potential issue?

STEVE ISSA: Not the rat running that we're seeing today.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So that's a surprise to the department?

STEVE ISSA: With congestion on a road we would expect some delay with accessing that road. What we're actually seeing is AI in-vehicle navigation trips routing people off the main corridor onto side streets to re-enter the main corridor. What they're saying is if you're on the main corridor, turn left or right here, duck down some side streets, go back around, do this and get back on the corridor again. Modelling at a network level, or even at an intersection level, cannot account for individual behaviour, what AI will tell you, or whether 100 people will follow that advice or 300 people will follow that advice. So it's quite variable.

I personally was in Drummoyne yesterday morning in preparation for today. We've had a prolonged period of monitoring, and access in and out of East Drummoyne on that particular morning—I acknowledge that that's not reflective of everyone's experience—I would say was not unusual, with no significant delays. But in my conversations with residents and with the correspondence we're getting from residents, there are days where they're experiencing heavier delays. A lot of that can be attributed to the randomness and some rat running. Particularly on a local road, if you have in one hour an additional 100 vehicles use that particular local road at five metres a vehicle, that's 500 metres of additional queueing on that local road. If that traffic signal isn't configured to accommodate that increase in demand for that particular morning, that will have a significant impact on that local community's experience and how long it takes them to get in and out of the local area. On another day, if you don't have that many people go in, then it operates normally.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It seems now that the system has—

The CHAIR: Order! That's the end of your question time. We'll go to questions from Ms Natalie Ward.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Getting back to the local issues, can I pick up on the traffic modelling point. What traffic modelling or traffic counts or impact assessments to local roads—and when I say local roads, I mean the minor and major roads connecting to Victoria Road—and Victoria Road itself were undertaken during the design phase and prior to the opening of the interchange?

STEVE ISSA: I think Ms Drover can talk about design and then I will talk about roads opening.

CAMILLA DROVER: As I said, to inform the EIS design of 2017, which would have been frozen or effectively locked down perhaps in 2016, there would have been significant traffic modelling undertaken. It would have been strategic traffic modelling and there would have been also some localised operational traffic modelling. There are two types of traffic modelling. That would have confirmed the impacts of that design, which were displayed as part of the EIS, and those impacts are quite clearly outlined within that EIS. Then if I can hand to Mr Issa for commentary on what actually occurred in 2023 prior to opening to satisfy that condition of approval 63.

STEVE ISSA: Prior to opening we were required to produce a pre-opening road network performance plan. As part of that performance plan, we collected data across both the M4-M8 Link and the 3B project. We shared a particular plan with council and undertook intersection modelling and performance-based modelling based on what we saw as the current demand at those locations or what we forecast, a particular performance.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: On the local roads?

STEVE ISSA: For the side street intersections. Some of the local roads don't have intersections that we can model, but there are particular intersections that we modelled at those locations and we also collected traffic data on those local roads.

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The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Could you perhaps, given time, take that on notice about which roads those were and which intersections?

STEVE ISSA: Yes. The plan is public; it's available on the website so we can share that.

CAMILLA DROVER: Because of COVID, some of the data was actually from prior to COVID so that we were not modelling lower traffic models.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That's helpful; I understand that. But if you could assist the Committee with what that impact study said about rat running specifically, Mr Issa—

STEVE ISSA: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: —and the likelihood of those local roads becoming congested and blocked with this commuter traffic, whether by AI or otherwise. What did it say about that?

STEVE ISSA: We obviously couldn't forecast what in-vehicle navigation trips would do to route people, but it did indicate a worsening of performance at key intersections as part of the opening plan, which is why we expected and announced six months prior to opening heavier traffic on Victoria Road and City West Link as we normalised and managed that behaviour. As outlined, what we're seeing today is actually a better performance than predicted.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: When you talk about better than predicted, that may well be so compared to what was predicted, but given what you've also said about AI and feedback from local residents in Drummoyne specifically, is it your evidence—I just want to be clear—that that is resolved or that that's—

STEVE ISSA: No—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can I just be really clear on Drummoyne because Drummoyne is not better than predicted. Drummoyne is a problem. East Drummoyne is a problem, and that's why we're doing this work by June to fix it. I don't accept for the residents of Drummoyne this is the new normality. It has to improve. I think with the focus that Transport is about to bring to that, I'm confident it can be improved, but we need to because this is having an impact on people's lives.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Residents are concerned, though, that they don't seem to have that consideration, so that's the reasoning for that. With those residents—Minister or Transport—the member for Drummoyne, Steph Di Pasqua, did write a number of times to Transport and to you seeking a community meeting to engage the residents and have communication with Transport. She was unable to secure, first, the courtesy of a response or, second, the meeting. A meeting was subsequently granted to a Labor councillor on a Monday night upstairs at a pub, which was obviously not accessible. She found out through a constituent and did end up attending. But she did write to you multiple times, Minister; she did engage with Transport multiple times and didn't seem to have the courtesy of a response or the granting of a meeting with her residents. What do you say to that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Firstly, I thank the member for advocating for her community. I recognise she has certainly done that. She has written to me a number of times; she has received a number of responses, in my understanding. I've certainly signed off on a number of those but I'm happy to deal with any of the details of concerns about things that haven't been responded to.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It seems there were a number of letters that were not responded to. There was a series of letters following up and then finally a response.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, and I'm happy to respond to any of those specifics. But the member was concerned about getting access to information. She spoke to me directly, and as soon as that happened, of course, I agreed that we have a community meeting in her area.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You've now agreed to do that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I'm very open to that—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Will you commit Transport to doing so? She has sought a meeting repeatedly for months and months and months. She hasn't had a response until many follow-up letters and, let's face it, potentially this Committee putting a bit of pressure on—"Can we get a response, please?" But importantly the residents of her area would like to have a meeting with Transport. Is that something that you can commit to today?

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The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I'm certainly happy to commit to that occurring, with Transport coming in the way they have previously in a number of communities. I think that's important. I think it's important it's Transport advice and not political advice from the Government because this is—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: She just wants a meeting, Minister.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You have agreed to do that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, I think that's totally appropriate.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And Transport will be in touch with her about holding a community meeting? Yes? Anyone? Mr Issa?

STEVE ISSA: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That would be very helpful. You personally will be supporting that, Minister, and you will be organising that, Mr Issa?

STEVE ISSA: As per the Minister's—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Okay, great, that's very helpful. I know she and the residents would appreciate that. Residents are now advised that there's no easy fix to the problems created but that the new Western Harbour Tunnel will solve them. What data does Transport for NSW have to support that claim and to reassure residents?

JOSH MURRAY: Thank you for the question, Ms Ward. I might ask Mr Collins as the Coordinator General to talk about the corridor itself and some of the arrangements being made there.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Just what will solve the problems. They've been told that Western Harbour Tunnel will solve this in time. What evidence do you have of that and how do we support that?

HOWARD COLLINS: Thank you very much for the question. Opening the Western Harbour Tunnel won't solve all the issues because, as I think many people will understand, it will relieve some of the traffic which currently has to go over the Anzac Bridge and then through the centre of Sydney and over the Harbour Bridge. We have been working obviously to understand what that will be in the long term. In the meantime, as Mr Issa and Mr Knoetze have been saying, we have been working through what we can do to minimise the impacts and try to do two things. One is to encourage obviously people to use those alternatives, and I think, as described earlier, people have naturally done that over the six months. The other thing we have been doing is working through the public transport options because obviously we see individuals every day driving over the Anzac Bridge in five metre by 2½ metre boxes and we're very keen to see if we can get a few of those onto public transport.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sure. Mr Collins, I'm just going to redirect you.

HOWARD COLLINS: But as the residents have said, we need decent public transport and that's what we're working on now.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I appreciate you are working through that. That all is sensible and makes sense and I'm sure you're diligently doing that, but the question is specifically in relation to the claim to residents that the Western Harbour Tunnel will ease and solve some of these problems. What is the data that Transport for NSW has to support that claim?

HOWARD COLLINS: I could hand to my colleagues about the data but we do know, as described earlier, four lanes obviously from 10 or 14, or whatever the number is, having the capacity of a new tunnel to take those people, of which I understand is about 30 per cent of that traffic, in a new route—sadly not until 2028 but it is being built now—will help everybody in that area. But I don't think it's the solution.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sure, but do you have data? I understand, but is there something that it's based on?

HOWARD COLLINS: Some of my colleagues may have information which have the modelling on that area.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The assurance has been made to the community this will ease it. They want to understand what you base that on.

CAMILLA DROVER: The Western Harbour Tunnel EIS outlined the impact on the network with and without the project, Western Harbour Tunnel, and that shows the benefit of the project on the Rozelle interchange

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but, more specifically, on the Anzac Bridge, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sydney Harbour Tunnel and the Western Distributor. Those percentage improvements are all outlined in the EIS. There's about a 10 per cent improvement, which is material across the network for the AM peak.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That's very helpful and specific. In relation to percentages, specifically in relation to Victoria Road, do we have any data on what percentage presently traffic using Victoria Road through Drummoyne will divert to the new Harbour Tunnel and who in Transport is determining this?

STEVE ISSA: Sorry, the question is about who on Victoria Road will use Western Harbour Tunnel?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes. What percentage of traffic presently on Victoria Road is predicted to go through—in Drummoyne, will divert through the Harbour Tunnel, and who's working on it?

GRANT KNOETZE: In future?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That's the assurance that's been made to the community.

STEVE ISSA: We'll have to take the specific numbers of that. I think what Ms Drover's outlined is that a 10 per cent reduction in demand across the Anzac Bridge Western Distributor, the key main constraint for the whole corridor is the Anzac Bridge Western Distributor. Improving the performance of the Anzac Bridge and Western Distributor and moving that demand into the Western Harbour Tunnel from further afield will improve the way the Rozelle interchange and the Anzac Bridge performs. That will then in turn help manage journey times through the inner west, because we've actually reduced the overall demand.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can I ask you to take that specific one on notice? I am happy for you to come back on that percentage.

STEVE ISSA: Yes, no problems.

JOSH MURRAY: Ms Ward, can I suggest that we take that because, also, since the EIS there have been the changes to Beaches Link and other roads.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, sadly.

JOSH MURRAY: So we'd want to make sure that was the most modern.

The CHAIR: Just on Western Harbour Tunnel—and you just said it, Mr Murray, that there have been changes in terms of no Beaches Link now, as well as the metro stations—why isn't this now being completely reviewed in terms of the business case for Western Harbour Tunnel and the Warringah Freeway upgrades? Given there are substantial changes, why isn't it being reviewed, Minister?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have been briefed on some of the evidence this morning, so I'll make these couple of points. Firstly, we need the Western Harbour Tunnel to provide resilience for the traffic network when there are issues on the Harbour Bridge and Harbour Tunnel. It's actually very important, to keep the city moving, to have that crossing. It will make an improvement here. I accept Mr Collins' advice that this won't solve everything. Absolutely I think that's the lesson we've learnt here. That work is already underway for the Western Harbour Tunnel. What we are doing is the careful assessment of the traffic network to make sure that we learn the lessons of exactly what's happened at the Rozelle interchange. We've got some time to do that between now and 2028.

The CHAIR: I think some of the witnesses this morning—who were very senior former RTA officials, consultants and planners that were deeply involved in WestConnex, the original designs and traffic modelling—one of them, Mr Les Wielinga, said it was going to be "a bloody disaster". The Warringah upgrade and the Western Harbour Tunnel, when it opens is going to be a bloody disaster for the people of North Sydney. They gave evidence because of what they saw rolling out, because of the Rozelle interchange. What's happening to stop it being a bloody disaster?

JOSH MURRAY: Chair, can I just assure the Committee that having heard some of Mr Wielinga's evidence this morning, and his colleagues and former members of RMS, I would be very keen to ensure that our technical experts, our design teams for Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway upgrade, have a full view of the elements that Mr Wielinga has put forward. I commit us to meeting with him in the near future to really work through that and understand some of this comments so that we get all those views, as the Minister has said, the latest plans for north of the bridge, because they have changed over recent times. We also want to bake in what we've seen from Rozelle into that plan.

The CHAIR: On that note, we heard from the mayor of North Sydney Council, who also put a submission into this inquiry. She told this inquiry:

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To this day, we have not yet had any practical discussions with Transport for NSW about what they expect to do and what could be practically done now to avert the sorts of things that we have seen at Rozelle.

That community is extremely concerned. Everything we're seeing does indicate that exactly the same thing is going to happen. Firstly, why is North Sydney Council so disappointed in the consultation that Transport for NSW is doing with them?

JOSH MURRAY: I'd have to take that on notice in terms of terms of the specific concerns of North Sydney. But I am aware that we've received representations and have held meetings with North Sydney.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Just on the differences, though, I think there is one key difference. What you're coming up against in Rozelle is the limits of what a motorway network can deliver to the city. It's having a positive impact on the road network. Ultimately, we need to invest in public transport to move large numbers of people. That's the Government's plan in the medium term.

The CHAIR: I agree. In terms of the public transport—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: North Sydney, the fact there is very significant public transport right there, about to have an impact in this time frame, will be one of the things that will make a difference here.

The CHAIR: Even, for example, there are upgrades of North Sydney station but the impacts of Metro West, in terms of that getting people onto the Metro West, hasn't been factored in to any of this modelling has it? Why can't it be?

CAMILLA DROVER: As the Minister said, the deletion of Beaches Link was confirmed late last year. When that occurred, we are obviously now looking at what the impact of that is. We're also updating the analysis that was done for the Western Harbour EIS for today's current network situation. When the Western Harbour Tunnel EIS was done, for example, some of the other motorway projects—and also the timing of Metro West—we are updating that for current network currency.

The CHAIR: What does that mean, though, "updating"? What hasn't happened with WestConnex and the Rozelle interchange is to look at ways in which the Government should be investing in other projects and how that will take cars off the road. In fact, I think the traffic modelling was called a "predict and provide" modelling instead of the one where you're supposed to actually get rid of demand and put more public transport in place. What does that mean when you say the Government is reviewing the impact of Metro West? Does that mean a complete reconsideration of the necessity for Western Harbour Tunnel based on what should be, ideally, fewer people driving in their cars?

CAMILLA DROVER: No. What I said was we're just updating the impact of the deletion of Beaches Link. Although it was considered in the EIS for Western Harbour Tunnel in the first place, we're looking at what that means today in the context of what's happening around the network, including all the other public transport projects that are, as the Minister said, about to be delivered or are in delivery.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: From a Government point of view, as we were elected, that decision had been made, that investment decision about the Western Harbour Tunnel. We have fulfilled our election commitment to not build the Beaches link, the extra toll road for which the investment decision had not been made. We should work and learn the lessons out of Rozelle interchange before the Western Harbour Tunnel opens. It is needed, but I'm certain that building that additional toll road would not have assisted here.

The CHAIR: Minister, I think the lessons of Rozelle interchange is that it was a complete disaster and shouldn't have been designed and opened in the first place. You're the Government now. You can actually make a decision in relation to the Western Harbour Tunnel and the impact that opening is going to have on North Sydney. Are you going to do anything to alleviate Rozelle interchange 2.0 being imposed on North Sydney residents?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I expect Transport to learn the lessons. I expect public transport will make a difference here. I expect this to be a better result. But that work is already underway. We are building the Western Harbour Tunnel at the moment. It is needed to have that additional harbour crossing. We won't be stopping the construction, at great cost to public taxpayers.

The CHAIR: Is it in a contract, I assume, that the work can't stop? The Government would have to, I assume, compensate Transurban for a hell of a lot of money if they did.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It wouldn't be Transurban but, of course, yes, if we were to stop a contract like that midway—governments can always make those decisions—it will have serious implications for the State and financial impacts for taxpayers—and they will be at a large level—to stop this work that's already underway. You're correct.

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The CHAIR: There are a lot of questions to ask about a lot of different things. The Victoria Road revitalisation—why hasn't that occurred? Why doesn't the community know when that is going to commence? That's what they were promised as part of this entire project, and they're very disappointed. They just don't know what is happening with Victoria Road. Similarly—we'll stick with Victoria Road.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Chair, as you might acknowledge, I've been focusing here on solutions to make this worst as best it can. I've been trying not to point the finger at former decisions. However, it is a total mystery to me how Ministers in the former Government were telling the public that traffic was going to drop significantly on Victoria Road and that we would be able to make these improvements that have been floated publicly, including in the weeks before the election. That was never the briefing to me. When I was briefed it was clear there would be significant impacts on Victoria Road. I was public about that as soon as I could be. In August last year I was clear about that.

The CHAIR: What about the designs that said it would be like a boulevard? Where did those designs come from?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It's not possible to have a boulevard on Victoria Road at the moment, given the traffic numbers that are there where people are slowing down. I'm open to any improvements we can make in the corridor—I'd like to get on to do them—but the modelling that has been presented to me just doesn't show that the former promises can be met in the very short term. We need to deliver on them in the medium term.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Ms Drover, you may wish to take this one on notice too. In 2021 the Audit Office prepared a report titled *WestConnex: changes since 2014*, those changes being the Camperdown interchange and the conception of the Rozelle interchange. It stated that Transport for NSW, "documented, but did not publish, the rationale for the design changes". Can you provide the Committee with any guidance on what the rationale was or might have been?

CAMILLA DROVER: I cannot, but I'm happy to take away and see what we can bring back. I think the use of Transport probably may have been misleading as well, because at the time of the design change it would have been Sydney Motorway Corporation.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Minister, looking forward, can you advise the Committee of what is being prepared to try to keep improving things from here?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We've been as specific as we can be about what the performance is at the moment, but I accept we should continue to make the best of this that we can and further improvements where we can. The first of those is that Drummoyne study, that important work. I want that done by June so that we can tackle that problem that is an issue: rat running in Drummoyne. There are still some further changes that are happening around the network. The advice to me is that these will have a positive impact. Briefly, they're the Western Distributor Smart Motorway. That system that's worked really well on the M4, we're applying to the Western Distributor. There are changes at the Harris Street and Allen Street intersection. They're of some concern to the local community but they will have an impact on this in a positive way, and also the Pyrmont Bridge Road intersection. There is further work that should lead to some improvements.

There are also some things that we won't do that have been part of the public discussion. One of those is this question about slowing drivers down as they come in from Parramatta or Liverpool and getting them to slow down. There are two issues with that. One is it's inherently unpredictable when they'll arrive at the other end and whether that will actually make any difference, but also there's potentially a safety issue, is the briefing to me, about asking people to queue in the tunnels where possible. That isn't something that's being recommended to me. Secondly, the idea of asking people to slow down altogether. I will make it clear that the Government will not be asking motorists coming in from Penrith or from Liverpool to be driving at a slower rate through the tunnels. I was very surprised to see the Opposition spokesperson agreeing to this proposition on radio, that we might ask these drivers to travel at 50 kilometres per hour.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Don't verbal me in here, John. This is your problem to fix and you need to think about solutions.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is not something that the Government will be considering.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That's desperate.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr Issa, I want to come back to you. From the 2018 EIS you knew that there would be an impact on Drummoyne. You knew it would be bad. Now you're saying it's not as bad as you anticipated. Is that a fair summation of the position? The impact of the opening has settled down. You've

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had an ability to tweak the system. The journey times, you're saying, between the Gladesville Bridge and the Rozelle tunnel are better than you anticipated. That's a fair summation of what you're saying?

STEVE ISSA: I might hand to my colleague Mr Knoetze, but, to be clear, we still have challenges with rat running in Drummoyne, which we are going to work through. But, at a more broad network, I might hand to Mr Knoetze to talk through journey times and travel times.

GRANT KNOETZE: This is part of our submission. On the travel times for Victoria Road between Gladesville Bridge and Anzac Bridge, we have seen a settling down, if you like, where travel time is sitting around 28 minutes for that period. The 28 minutes was February and March data in the morning peak. The updated data I've now got, which is for the whole month of March, is down to 25 minutes. I think that talks to the fact that the network is a living, breathing network and there are different travel times across different periods.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you explain to what extent those better travel times have been achieved as a result of changing the signal scheduling on the north-south intersections on Victoria Road?

GRANT KNOETZE: These times that I'm referring to are along the Victoria Road corridor specifically. They are obviously done on a daily basis to manage the peaks.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My question was to what extent were the improved times achieved by adjustments to the interval times for the traffic signals along the Victoria Road corridor?

GRANT KNOETZE: There are some instances where we haven't touched the signals. I would need to go through and get some specific details and take that on notice about specific intersections.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that one of the strategies that you used to improve the travel times?

GRANT KNOETZE: No. Sometimes in some intersections we wouldn't have made changes; in some we would've adjusted the signals.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: My question was: Was that one of the strategies that you've used?

GRANT KNOETZE: It's one of the strategies we use for managing any busy corridor, so it's not unusual to do that. When we visited the Transport Management Centre we were able to demonstrate where we played with the timing of traffic signals. When I say "play", I don't mean had fun with it. It's very much around how do we maximise and optimise the movements at every one of those intersections so we can balance the network? In the Victoria Road corridor, obviously we're looking at balancing through traffic and cross-regional traffic, as well as those local trips. And, as we've discussed today at length, the Drummoyne local traffic issues is something that is—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: And that will all be picked up in the traffic study. Is that your expectation?

GRANT KNOETZE: Absolutely. Exactly right, yes.

STEVE ISSA: But, to be clear, we haven't done anything with the traffic signals in Drummoyne that substantially changes egress from the local community onto Victoria Road. It's not at the expense of access to and from those local side streets.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: There have been no changes, is that what you're saying, between the opening of the—

STEVE ISSA: No, mate. There's been tweaking. There have been changes to the way that the corridor performs and the way that the traffic signals on the corridor work for the main thoroughfare, but no significant change in the egress from side streets in that Drummoyne community post-opening. The optimisation work we've been doing is about how to balance the flows from different approaches—Victoria Road and the City West Link—onto the limited capacity of the Anzac Bridge and Western Distributor and how we manage that flow to optimise the performance of the whole network. But it's not been to the detriment of local access in Drummoyne.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That's not the perception of the residents, is it? They are saying that the north-south egress has been significantly diminished. Why do they have that perception if there have been no changes to the signals?

STEVE ISSA: I think that goes back to the rat running. What we are seeing through AI is—and we need to understand the quantum of this rat running and whether it's different on different days—more people getting off the main corridor because they feel it's quicker to use the side street to get to the head of the queue and get back onto the main corridor. Traditionally, rat running would be that you live in an area and you use the side streets to get to the main arterial, but you bypass a section of the main arterial—not that you travel on the main

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arterial—turn left, turn right, turn right and then turn left again to get back onto the main arterial. What we are seeing is some localised rat running through trip planners that are getting people to use local roads in the Drummoyne area. As I outlined, if 100 people do that in two hours, and at five-metre vehicle length, that's an additional 500 metres of queuing in those local roads. If that occurs and those traffic lights aren't designed to accommodate that demand, it will lock up that local area. We acknowledge that that's what they are experiencing. That is what we want to work through and understand in trying to design with them and council how we address that concern and how we minimise that occurring without impacting local access.

JOSH MURRAY: Mr D'Adam, could I add that this is the unique element that we are now dealing with, six months in. The sophistication of travel mapping that is available to almost every motorist is not uniform to what we would do in the transport management centre, and it's different to what has been seen in any other motorway opening where it has not had that level of intervention from technology that is now taking effect. Our hierarchy, if you like, has been to keep that entire corridor moving because once we get to the Anzac Bridge, we have a capacity of 6,000 vehicles an hour, and that has to be sacred to keep the whole of the city moving, including Victoria Road and Drummoyne. The element that is the unique part here is that the rat running is occurring on a peninsula, as you are aware. As a result, there is no other outpost, whereas rat running for other motorways that has gone off into suburbs has not then been contained by those suburbs.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I have one last question to Mr Issa. The previous Government promised 50 per cent reduction of traffic on Victoria Road. Was that your advice that they relied on to make that assertion?

STEVE ISSA: Sorry, in Rozelle?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: On Victoria Road. Has there been a 50 per cent reduction, then?

STEVE ISSA: In Rozelle. I think Mr Knoetze—

GRANT KNOETZE: In the Rozelle component, we know motorists are using the Iron Cove Link tunnel. There is a reduction of surface traffic by 50 per cent.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Minister, when were you first briefed on the Western Distributor network improvement plan?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I'd have to take on notice the exact date, but I was certainly briefed about the impact of this project on the Western Distributor.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Early in your term? Recently? Prior to the opening?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Certainly prior to the opening. It would have been in the middle of last year, but I'd have to take on notice the specific dates.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Midyear? June?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I'd have to take on notice the specific dates.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The Western Distributor network improvement plan went to community consultation with a start of works for Q2 in 2023. That was the plan. Why in Q3 2024 has work not started, and what is the total budget for those works?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I'll refer to the agency on some of these detailed questions, but there certainly are some of those integration works taking place. When I was briefed, it was clear that there had been significant plans in the past that hadn't proceeded, which, if they had, may have mitigated some of these.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Work hasn't started. When will it start? What's the budget?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will hand to Ms Drover on those.

CAMILLA DROVER: I can talk to the status and then I might hand to my colleague Mr Issa for the funding. The three components that we're currently looking at are the intersection of Allen Street and Harris Street. We're waiting on the relocation of the utilities. That is proceeding. The major civil works we are preparing to commence later this year, subject to those utility relocations. As we said earlier, for the works to Pyrmont Bridge Road, we are going to wait until the fish markets are complete and open. That was always the plan. We're still looking at the design for the Fig Street weave ramp.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Why is it so late, though? Or is it being delayed?

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CAMILLA DROVER: It hasn't been delayed. As I said, the Pymont Bridge Road was always to be done when the fish markets were open. For Allen Street we had to determine the REF, and you'll be aware there was significant community feedback to the REF. That was determined last year.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It was slated for Q2 2023. Are you saying it was delayed or it has changed since that time—the program of works has changed since 2022?

CAMILLA DROVER: The scope of the Allen Street intersection hasn't changed, but we are waiting on those utility relocations, and we have been doing some further work on that Fig Street weave ramp.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: When you say further work, does that mean design change?

CAMILLA DROVER: We did commence the property acquisition some time ago. I can't remember exactly when. We're looking at the safety and ensuring there are no safety concerns about that Fig Street ramp. What we are also doing is getting on with the Western Sydney smart motorways program. It's fully funded. That should be complete by the end of this year.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What's the budget for it?

CAMILLA DROVER: For the smart motorways?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The Western Distributor network improvement plan—or you can give us both.

CAMILLA DROVER: I'd have to turn to my colleague.

STEVE ISSA: I would have to take it on notice. I don't have the figure, but we'll take it on notice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: For both projects.

STEVE ISSA: Yes, but to be clear, we did deliver works at Allen Street. We did what we could without the major civil works.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: But the plan was Q2. It's now well over a year after that. I am wondering what has changed. Has it been delayed? Are there budget constraints? I understand the utilities issues but the balance of it.

STEVE ISSA: It's just general progress.

CAMILLA DROVER: It is funded. I can't recollect the exact number, but those three initiatives are funded.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You'll take that on notice for both. In terms of Victoria Road, Transport measures and publishes transit times along Victoria Road from Gladesville Bridge to Anzac Bridge. Does Transport presently, or in the future, plan to measure the time it takes local residents to get onto Victoria Road from those local roads—for example, from Lyons Road to Victoria Road? Will it be measuring that as part of this traffic plan or does it presently do that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will let you answer first, Secretary, and then I'll make a comment.

JOSH MURRAY: Ms Ward, the publication of those statistics was an initiative that was brought in recognising the substantial community concern about some of the travel times. We wanted to ensure that people could track those in real time and, along with us, see the benefit of some of the changes. In regard to the work that—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I understand all of that, but is it being tracked specifically in relation to the time it takes local residents to get onto Victoria Road?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can I answer, Ms Ward, to say that releasing that data is really important for the public. If the Committee wanted to recommend that that's something we should continue to do in the way you're suggesting, I think Transport would endeavour to make that possible as part of the work that is being done in Drummoyne.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, but my question is, to be clear—and you can take it on notice—is that presently being done or is it planned to be done? We can make recommendations but that's months away.

STEVE ISSA: We'll take it on notice.

The CHAIR: Minister, is it your understanding that, back in 2016, once Rozelle interchange was designed, and we've heard today amended to ensure that more vehicles—and more tolls—would use it, increasing

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the sale price of WestConnex, that once it was sold there was nothing anybody could do to stop Rozelle interchange?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: As an incoming Minister, I know the Committee has heard evidence that this was the wrong decision—the wrong design. I can't go and redesign this road. What I can do is try to make these improvements, and we're committed to doing that.

The CHAIR: But what I'm asking about, in terms of what happened at the time, is that it was put in a contract, I understand. Is it your understanding as well that the Rozelle interchange was put into a contract with the Government in terms of the sale of that, and therefore Rozelle interchange was done and dusted?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: As we came to government, those decisions had been made. There were contracts in place, as you're observing. Those contractual arrangements are obviously complex but there's no way to revisit the design now. There was no way to revisit the design back as we came into government.

The CHAIR: So back in 2015/2016, Rozelle interchange, the design happened, the Government essentially sold WestConnex. In that contract was that Rozelle interchange needs to be built or there will be massive compensation needing to be paid to Transurban. Is that your understanding?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might ask Transport to answer on the contracting details. I know there have been some questions about the compensation arrangements, including the Committee asking to see some of those deeds.

The CHAIR: Yes, because that's what we have: four pages of redaction. That's the compensation arrangements. We don't know what they are.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, and I saw the Committee questioning on that and I'm happy to table the unredacted copy, which the Committee would be in a position to make public, of those deeds. To my understanding, that is as it was characterised in the earlier Committee hearings but I accept that it's in the public interest to be able to see that.

The CHAIR: I have only under three minutes so I won't go to the departmental officials. I will get onto another issue. We've heard a lot from active transport advocates about what they have said is a pretty disastrous outcome in terms of cycleways and active transport provisions. We've had two overpasses that were good for foot traffic as well as cycling removed. We have evidence about the active transport routes being unsafe, currently 102 poles in the cycleway in the 1.2 kilometres from the Iron Cove Bridge to the City West Link. Cyclists are saying it is a complete disaster. What is happening to improve this? The evidence before this Committee is that the conditions of consent have not been met when it comes to the provision of active transport infrastructure. They're very clear on that and we have evidence about that. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that this is fixed and it's fixed very quickly?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Those cycling groups have written to me and I was concerned to see their evidence to the Committee. Obviously there have been big disruptions to the cycling network during the construction, but I was concerned to see how they feel about this going forward. I am committed to meeting with them and working through the issues, but I might have to ask Transport to comment on the conditions of consent.

JOSH MURRAY: Mr Issa, can you address that?

STEVE ISSA: I think from a project perspective about what the project was required to deliver and what community expectations are, we have delivered 14 kilometres of new and improved active transport links through the Rozelle Parklands, new underpasses and connections to the City West Link and Victoria Road and the Anzac Bridge. We've actually removed the divide of the City West Link.

The CHAIR: Can I just check, is the work complete?

STEVE ISSA: From Rozelle 3B there are some finishing touches. We have some work to do along—the question is around conditions of approval.

The CHAIR: I might get it on notice in terms of everything that you've done. Minister, are you aware that the Biennale of Sydney had to make the decision to not promote getting to the Biennale by bicycle due to safety concerns?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I've had extensive discussions with the Biennale around their transport planning for that event. I think you're referring to one of their events at the White Bay Power Station. There has been a range of complex transport issues, including some issues with cycling.

The CHAIR: They said "the designated bike paths are not secure, with substantial risks involved". That's the announcement that they put out to the community. Again, we've just heard shocking evidence about the

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state of those bike paths. Everybody is saying we need to get people out of cars, but riding a bike now around Balmain is not a safe thing to do.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am concerned about the evidence before the Committee in relation to some of these areas, including for cyclists but also including for pedestrian safety around that area, including Robert Street. So I have taken those issues seriously that have been raised.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Minister, just on that previous line of questioning where I think you started to touch on the Victoria Road issue, the input decisions to the previous Minister regarding the 50 per cent reduction on Victoria Road traffic, where do you suppose he got the intel for that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I think you've heard some of the Transport evidence there that a very short section of Victoria Road—and it is a very short section as people are going into the Iron Cove Tunnel—has seen traffic drop potentially to that amount. The issue was that the community expectation—and, I have to say, as a close observer, my expectation based on the former comments—was that Victoria Road itself would see these 50 per cent reductions in traffic, and that is just not what has happened. That was the community view. The community is now rightly saying, "We expected a boulevard, we expected these improvement because the traffic was going to disappear. Instead, it has been slower over these six months to get to work." So I understand their disappointment. I never saw modelling which suggested it was going to be, as had been suggested, much, much better right along Victoria Road. I hope there will be a chance to do that and I believe there will be a second go at this as the Western Harbour Tunnel opens, but we need to get that right so that the community can have what they were promised.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: As the incoming Minister, if there was modelling that showed there was supposed to be a 50 per cent reduction, you would have been briefed about that, wouldn't you?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: When I was briefed, the briefing was, as I've described in public in the middle of last year, that this will be slower. We're expecting significant traffic delays because there are more cars on Victoria Road. That was the advice to me and I was immediately public with it because it was the opposite of what I had understood from some of the Ministers, and I think not the Minister who is here now. But I didn't understand why those comments had been made, given what I was shown.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: And the evidence we heard this morning from the former CEO of the RTA regarding the fact that way back in 2015 they were aware that the Anzac Bridge was already overloaded, notwithstanding that plough ahead, what do you make of that?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It's very concerning evidence but it doesn't help the public. My focus is on solutions here. We can continue to improve this but we need to.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I want to ask Mr Issa, touching on the issues raised by my colleague around community perception, there was an understanding that the traffic delays on Victoria Road in Drummoyne would increase. The community seemed to be surprised by that. What consultation was undertaken in anticipation of those impacts with the community in Drummoyne? I suppose my follow-on question would be what lessons can be learnt? What can we do different in terms of approaches to community consultation in the future?

STEVE ISSA: I think from a network broader community perspective—in reality what we're seeing today is those issues are not what we predicted. The rat running and the AI and people actually getting off Victoria Road to use a local road only to get back on that same road again a couple of hundred metres down the road is not what we forecast. What we expected was some heavier traffic on Victoria Road which would impact access from the side streets somewhat but not significantly, and in Transport we didn't do anything that would have significantly changed their access from those side streets.

The specific engagement was around engaging with the broader community, and we ran a pretty comprehensive engagement at a network level. The Minister, the secretary and the coordinator general were out from August talking about disruption, the six months to settle in. On top of that, we ran an advertising campaign throughout November, December, January and February, and we had millions of views. We had reaches across Greater Sydney more broadly, and in October we launched video animation, driver animations to help people learn and educate their trip. So we built a campaign to help inform people of what to expect, and we think that worked more broadly. But what we're hearing and what we're seeing is that those specific local issues in Drummoyne were not identified.

In hindsight, AI is now a challenge. We have to think about how we address that and what that will be, and we have to now deep dive into what that means for future projects and what are some of the things we have to now forecast based on this mapping in vehicles that will tell people in real time whether they save two minutes by ducking down a side street, zooming down that side street and trying to get back on the main road again at the

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next set of traffic lights. That's something we have to take away and think about how we address for future motorway project openings or any infrastructure opening and how can we engage with communities about that.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately, we are out of time—fortunately for you, unfortunately for us. That's also the end of our hearing today. Thank you very much for appearing; we really do appreciate it, Minister, and the public servants. The Committee will be in touch with any questions you've taken on notice as well as any supplementary questions that Committee members may have. Thank you again.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 12:00.