

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

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

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE ROZELLE INTERCHANGE

CORRECTED

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney on Thursday 30 May 2024

The Committee met at 9:45 am

PRESENT

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg

The Hon. Bob Nanva

The Hon. Natalie Ward

PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Hon. Sam Farraway (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Welcome to the fourth and final hearing of the 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 PETER REGAN, Former Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Secretary, Finance and Investment, Transport for NSW; Former Senior Director, Commercial Finance, NSW Treasury; Former Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Motorway Corporation, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Regan, and thank you for making the time to give evidence. Would you like to start by making an opening statement?

PETER REGAN: Yes, I would. Good morning. I'm the chief executive of Sydney Metro, however, I understand you've requested my appearance here today not in that capacity, but rather in relation to previous roles I've held within New South Wales government in connection with the WestConnex program. A number of government organisations have had a role in the planning, delivery and financing of WestConnex, and there were changes in the roles and remits of those organisations through the development and the delivery of the program. However, at all times, governance structures were in place, planning and modelling was extensive and robust, and each project that formed WestConnex was required to comply with the Infrastructure NSW assurance framework in place at the time.

The ultimate decision-makers for WestConnex were appropriately, and at all times, the Cabinet and the Ministers of the government of the day. WestConnex, as you would be aware, comprised a series of stages which were intended to be delivered sequentially, with the original intent being that the financing raised against each stage would fund delivery of the next. The program was then accelerated when the Federal government of the day provided a concessional loan for stage two of WestConnex which enabled stages one and two, which are the M4 East and the new M5, as they were known, to proceed simultaneously. As development work on WestConnex continued, future links were also envisaged to the north and the south to create a comprehensive and integrated network strategy. Today, these are the Western Harbour Tunnel and M6 stage one projects.

I can briefly outline for the public record the positions I held with each of NSW Treasury, the WestConnex Delivery Authority, the Sydney Motorway Corporation and Transport for NSW. From about November 2012 to March 2014, I was the head of Infrastructure Finance at NSW Treasury. This role included the development of the financing strategy for WestConnex. From April to August in 2014, I was seconded from Treasury to the WestConnex Delivery Authority, WDA, as its chief financial officer. WDA was the agency initially established to manage the planning and delivery of WestConnex. In September 2014, the Government established the Sydney Motorway Corporation, SMC, to finance the construction, delivery and operations of WestConnex. I was appointed chief executive officer of Sydney Motorway Corporation at its establishment and remained in that role until around the middle of 2015.

In mid-2015, the government client functions of the WestConnex Delivery Authority were transferred to Roads and Maritime Services and the Sydney Motorway Corporation assumed the project procurement functions of the WestConnex Delivery Authority. The WDA CEO became the chief executive officer of the Sydney Motorway Corporation while I took on the role of chief financial officer and deputy CEO of the Sydney Motorway Corporation and held that position until I joined Transport for NSW as its deputy secretary of Finance and Investment and chief financial officer in December of that year—that is, December 2015. In that role I was involved in the management and governance of the sale process for the Government's sale of SMC.

In terms of planning for the Rozelle interchange, while specific details were subject to Cabinet deliberations, I would refer the Committee to the process outlined specifically in the publicly available WestConnex updated strategic business case of 2015, particularly at or about pages 138 and 139. This outlines the nature of the advice put to the Government about the alignment of WestConnex stage three and the evaluation of 16 options that informed the advice. The updated strategic business case also outlines the then Government's 10 tolling principles which the tolling assumptions of WestConnex were required to comply with. This included that untolled alternative arterial roads remain available for customers. This is reflected in the inclusion of the toll-free Iron Cove Link as part of stage three. I look forward to assisting the Committee.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Regan. You said you were with the Sydney Motorway Corporation from what date—September 2014?

PETER REGAN: Yes, it was established in September of 2014.

The CHAIR: Yes, and you got the CEO position.

PETER REGAN: Correct. I was in that role until the middle of 2015 and moved to Transport for NSW in December 2015.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: For the establishment of the SMC and for you to get the role of CEO, was there an open recruitment process or were you just put in the job after being chief financial officer for the WestConnex Delivery Authority? I think that was your former job.

PETER REGAN: I was seconded from Treasury to the WestConnex Delivery Authority and was also on the board of the WestConnex Delivery Authority at that time. The Government established the Sydney Motorway Corporation, a proprietary limited company, for the purposes of the financing, and I was appointed by the Government at that time into that role.

The CHAIR: So you were appointed. There was no open recruitment process, just to be clear.

PETER REGAN: No, I was appointed by the shareholders: the Treasurer and the roads Minister.

The CHAIR: What was your involvement? While at the WestConnex Delivery Authority, did you have anything to do with the establishment of the SMC? I assume you were heavily involved in that.

PETER REGAN: Yes, that's correct.

The CHAIR: What about your involvement in the Rozelle interchange design, broadly?

PETER REGAN: I think the time sequence is very important. My primary involvement from Treasury and WDA and then at the Sydney Motorway Corporation was in the overall financing structure and strategy for the WestConnex program and, in particular, the procurement and financing of stages one and two. The Rozelle interchange—there was some early work done which was included in the updated strategic business case for the WestConnex project. The Sydney Motorway Corporation, while I was there, assisted in the preparation of that for the WestConnex Delivery Authority and Roads and Maritime.

But that was not the final set of decisions, obviously. I think you've already heard evidence around the time frames of those decisions. The original alignment of WestConnex from its initial conception was further south and did not go to Rozelle, but the decisions were taken by government on a progressive basis, commencing in 2015 with that strategic business case, to add a northern connection to WestConnex to facilitate connection ultimately to the Western Harbour Tunnel as part of the network strategy of the western bypass of the CBD. At that point, the actual design of the interchanges and the on and off ramps was not completed. That was done at a later point.

The CHAIR: With the updated WestConnex business case in 2015, which had the design enhancements, as you've just suggested—who provided that direction? Did that come from within the Sydney Motorway Corporation, to suggest the Western Harbour Tunnel and the connections, as you've given evidence today? Was that from the Sydney Motorway Corporation, or did that direction come from the Minister or somewhere else?

PETER REGAN: Well, the work—at all times, there was more than one agency involved. There is a client-side agency and, ultimately, the delivery agency and the financing responsibilities were initially sitting in different agencies. The WestConnex Delivery Authority was created by the Government at the time to take on responsibility for the development of the project and its design and procurement, and the Sydney Motorway Corporation, originally, was effectively the financier of that and was set up to be the longer-term owner of the WestConnex assets but to facilitate the raising of finance and the subsequent sale of those stages to the private sector. So the design work, in the early stages, was done in the WestConnex Delivery Authority.

When the changes were made in 2015 to the structure of the agencies, the client-side functions were transferred from WDA back to Roads and Maritime, and the procurement function went over into SMC. So RMS, at that point, became the client agency and the work that was undertaken to support the Government in making those decisions and all those decisions, ultimately, on scope and on the financing were Cabinet decisions and taken to Cabinet by the relevant Ministers at the time, with the support of the relevant agency—so, in those cases, RMS and then via the roads Minister to Cabinet.

The CHAIR: Before I go on, is it possible for you to hand up your opening statement? No, you're reading it on your—

PETER REGAN: I'm happy to table it. I don't have it with me, but I'll hand up—I think I read it word for word, so I'm happy just to table that.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Regan, you have said that those design changes were a decision of Cabinet. My question was not who ultimately decided upon it, but where did the idea come from? Where was the genesis of the idea? Let us begin with the updated strategic business case in 2015, the decision to duplicate the City West Link and bring that road to Rozelle. Where was the genesis of that idea?

CORRECTED

PETER REGAN: Chair, from memory, there was a lot of work being done at the time around the motorway road network. And then the major road network, that original thinking was part of the work that Infrastructure NSW was undertaking in preparation for its initial State infrastructure strategies. That, from memory, was looking at the relative priorities of potentially extending the M4 or the M5, and the original concept of WestConnex of joining those together came from that process, from Infrastructure NSW. The WestConnex Delivery Authority, working with RMS and then, subsequently, also with Sydney Motorway Corporation, were all working on the overall strategy that was set out in that business case.

The business case, of course, as is normal, is then taken to government for decision by the relevant agency. There was a lot of work being done throughout those organisations to develop not only the potential options for government consideration on WestConnex, but it was recognised from work that was done during that time that there was also an opportunity to extend north and south, as I flagged in my statement, to create a broader network impact that would further enhance the objectives of the project, especially by creating a western bypass of the CBD.

The CHAIR: What involvement did you have in the design or the idea, the genesis, of the Rozelle interchange?

PETER REGAN: As I said, my focus was primarily on the financing and the procurement, particularly in the first two stages. There was some work done while I was still at Sydney Motorway Corporation, in the lead-up to the business case, that clearly looked at other options, and those northern and southern connections in particular, which did form part of a longer-term strategic process and a longer-term strategic plan for potential inclusion in the future of those extensions and the enhancement to the Sydney Gateway project, also to connect to the airport. But to be clear, Chair, I'm not a traffic engineer nor am I an engineer at all, so the actual design of the interchange is not something that I was a part of.

The CHAIR: But Sydney Motorway Corporation was responsible for making sure that what was ultimately sold was going to make the most money for the Government, wasn't it?

PETER REGAN: No, I think that's—if I could try to explain. At that point, up until 2015 when I left Sydney Motorway Corporation, the intent of the financing arrangements that were being put in place was to transfer the ownership of each of the stages separately—and I was only involved in that financing up to stage two—to the private sector at a point in the future. Decisions around the aggregated sale of stages one, two and three were made subsequently and, ultimately, the sale process, in 2017 and 2018, the decisions around that were made separately to and after the design changes had been implemented.

The CHAIR: Did Sydney Motorway Corporation put to the Government to build the Rozelle interchange?

PETER REGAN: No, that came from RMS.

The CHAIR: What role did Sydney Motorway Corporation have in the design process?

PETER REGAN: It was working with RMS. The process, as I was saying, is there is a client agency which has, ultimately, the reporting—directly through an agency—accountability to the relevant Minister and then through to Cabinet. They take the submissions to the Minister that then go to Cabinet. Sydney Motorway Corporation was supporting those client agencies in doing that work. In its initial configuration, Sydney Motorway Corporation only had five or six employees; it was not a large organisation. It was set up as a financing vehicle to receive the assets, and the drive was with WDA and then RMS.

My understanding is, after I left SMC, that SMC continued to work very closely with RMS to further the design. Each of the stages of WestConnex, at the time before construction contracts were let, were structured into quite detailed concession agreements, as they're called, which are the basis of PPP or public-private partnership structures. As each of those stages were progressively contracted, those concession agreements were entered into between RMS and the Sydney Motorway Corporation. They set out not only the long-run obligations of the owner, but they also include quite detailed specification of design.

The CHAIR: When we put this question to government witnesses at our last hearing, Camilla Drover said:

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.

When I asked her who ordered that, where did that come from, she said her understanding was it was done by Sydney Motorway Corporation. Was Camilla Drover telling lies to this Committee? Is your evidence right, that Sydney Motorway Corporation didn't have anything to do with it?

CORRECTED

PETER REGAN: No, I didn't say that, actually, to be clear, Chair. I said that Sydney Motorway Corporation was involved, working with RMS.

The CHAIR: So who ordered it? She said it was SMC.

PETER REGAN: SMC—it's not a matter of ordering. The decisions and the process that is followed is that the responsible agencies, and their chief executives or secretaries, are accountable to the relevant Minister. In the case of RMS, in the case of the WestConnex Delivery Authority, who commenced the work before its functions were merged with SMC—and that is important, that the functions did change in the middle of 2015—the responsible agencies were reporting to the roads Minister. Sydney Motorway Corporation had a different structure but was not making decisions on behalf of the Government. It was making decisions off the back of the mandate that it had and the concession agreements that were entered into with RMS, and it was accountable to its shareholders, who were, again, the roads Minister but also the Treasurer.

The CHAIR: I will move to questions from Government members. Mr Nanva?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Just to build on Ms Faehrmann's questions, during your time at Treasury—as you've stated—part of your responsibility was to oversee financing for the WestConnex project.

PETER REGAN: The original financing strategy, yes. That's correct.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Traffic forecasts are an important part of that work?

PETER REGAN: Traffic forecasts form part of the financing, but traffic forecasts are not undertaken by Treasury. Clearly, the financing arrangements are a product of how capital is raised and what sources of capital are accessed, and then how it is repaid. You could simply describe the repayment as the revenues less the costs. Clearly, the revenues of a toll road company are the traffic times the toll, less the costs, and then less the cost of servicing the financing. It is an important factor as to what the traffic levels will be in the financing strategy, but the financing strategy that was being adopted initially—if I could take a moment to explain the context. At that time, 2012/2013, the international and the global financial markets were still quite depressed following the global financial crisis.

But, relevant to toll roads, particularly in Australia—probably over the last 20 years, all of the toll roads in Australia had been done through public-private partnership structures. There was no appetite in the private sector market to take what is known as toll risk at that time. That's primarily driven by hangover from the GFC, but also the previous four toll roads—two in Sydney, two in Brisbane—had all gone into receivership, so the previously available financing strategies were not accessible. But, like most financing aspects, they go in cycles. The decision at the time—and the initial work on strategy for financing—was to accept that that market wasn't there at the time, but to set it up so it could be accessed when it was there in the future.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I'll come to that context in a moment, but for the purposes of your role with respect to financing, traffic forecasts were an important aspect of that work—not determinative, but important.

PETER REGAN: Very much an important input, because it goes to the revenue and the costs, but we did not do the traffic forecasting ourselves, no.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: It's the case, then, isn't it, that traffic modelling—the number of vehicles potentially tolled—would be important for the business case for WestConnex?

PETER REGAN: Absolutely.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: And, therefore, financing the project?

PETER REGAN: Ultimately, the financing is a follow-on from the original business case. The business case assists the Government to make the investment decision in the first place. But then the detail of the traffic, and the impact on the network and the like, is detailed in the environmental impact statement and goes through the process before planning approvals—which all happens before you get to financing.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: If I can be crude about it, then, the more vehicles tolled, the stronger the business case, and the more accessible the financing?

PETER REGAN: To be precise, if I may, clearly, the more vehicles—up to a point, that improves the business case, if there's a benefit to those vehicles. But, clearly, there's a point where a road can only have so much capacity. So, yes, more vehicles on a road designated as a toll road means that there is the potential for more revenue on that road.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Would it be fair to say that traffic forecasts and modelling can then have some influence or impact on design?

CORRECTED

PETER REGAN: Certainly the design of any piece of infrastructure, be it toll road or not, is clearly impacted by—a key factor in that design is the level of forecast traffic. If you put a toll on a piece of road, it would have less traffic than if you didn't have a toll, so there is a key relationship there that the forecast of traffic on an untolled basis is different to the forecast of traffic on a tolled basis: The tolled traffic is less.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Could I come to the context that you referred to a bit earlier where, unlike other motorway projects where governments take on the procurement and planning process, WestConnex was a little different in that the Government took on the traffic, construction and financial risk attached to the project?

PETER REGAN: Initially, yes, with the intent to transfer that to the private sector through subsequent transactions when the market was available.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: But Treasury would have been motivated at the time, would it not, to minimise the risk and recover its costs?

PETER REGAN: At the initial stage, the level of financing—yes, there was an intent behind the financing to recover part of the costs of the project, but it was not an objective of that financing to recover the full cost of the project. It was simply to raise the level of debt initially and then ultimately sell at a level that would allow a recovery of that cost when the market was more available. But it was not in that initial strategy design in a way that would recover the full cost. But, certainly, the objective was initially to, effectively, recycle capital from the first stage to fund the second stage and then the third stage thereafter, to create sort of a rolling pipeline of financing to deliver the stages. That changed as things progressed. As I mentioned, the Federal Government also provided some additional financing which allowed that to accelerate. But they were decisions that the Government was making on the way through with advice, yes, from Treasury, with advice from Sydney Motorway Corporation to its shareholders, and working very closely with the road agencies, WDA and RMS.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: But there would have been an incentive to minimise risk and recover costs? I wouldn't have known of a Treasury official that didn't have that motivation.

PETER REGAN: Of course the point of the financing—first of all, the initial challenge was actually getting people to buy into it at all, because of what I have described. To protect the taxpayers from not having underwritten private financing, one of the interesting features of the way it was set up is that the debt that was raised by the Sydney Motorway Corporation was unguaranteed by the State. The lenders and the financiers were having to take their own view on the level of revenue that would come and when it would come.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: To follow up a few of those questions from the Chair, between 2014 and 2015, during the period of your involvement with WestConnex, there were changes to the strategic objectives of stage three and then the design of stage three of the project. That ostensibly had the effect of moving more traffic towards Anzac Bridge and the conceptualisation of the Rozelle interchange, against advice from Transport for NSW, Infrastructure NSW, the WestConnex expert reference group, and Evans and Peck, who were consultants at the time, as I understand it. That's correct, isn't it?

PETER REGAN: I don't recall of that, no. To be clear, the decision—

The Hon. BOB NANVA: You had no visibility on any of that?

PETER REGAN: I'm happy to answer the question. The strategic business case that the Government adopted, and was published in 2015, set out a whole series of options that were considered around moving the alignment and creating the potential for a future northern extension. It did not make final decisions around where the ramps and the interchanges were, nor the design of those interchanges. The decision, I think, that you're referring to around the changes to the actual design of the interchange itself is a decision that was made in 2017.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: This Committee's previously received or heard evidence that numerous expert reference group reviews into the design recommended against the Rozelle interchange and funnelling traffic towards the Anzac Bridge. Those reviews included, on several occasions, the involvement of the RMS. Your evidence this morning is that, fundamentally, the decision or the catalyst to rework the design came from the RMS. Is that correct?

PETER REGAN: My evidence is that the decisions around the changes were, as is appropriate, ultimately made by government, by the relevant Minister on advice from the agencies. The function of WDA in the original design was transferred in part to RMS and in part to the Sydney Motorway Corporation, while it was still in government's ownership. Therefore, there was advice from Sydney Motorway Corporation to its shareholders, the Treasurer and the roads Minister, and there was advice from the relevant roads agency, RMS.

CORRECTED

The Hon. BOB NANVA: In any of your roles were you ever privy to any discussions or information with respect to the strategic objectives and the design of stage three and the rationales for those objectives and designs?

PETER REGAN: There's extensive detail on that in the strategic business case in 2015.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: Were you privy to any discussions regarding potential changes to the design and objectives?

PETER REGAN: As I said, it's in the strategic business case that was prepared with the input of Sydney Motorway Corporation.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: So what was the fundamental rationale behind the reworking of the design as it was originally conceived to what it finally ended up as?

PETER REGAN: It's set out in the strategic business case. There were 16 options looked at. They all had pros and cons, and ultimately the government of the day made the decision around whichever of those options—I don't know the number—to look at moving the alignment further to the north. There was then further work undertaken around the detail of that design, which didn't get finalised until the procurement of stage three commenced sometime later. So there were a series of decisions that related to the attempt to ensure maximum flexibility for future connectivity.

The CHAIR: Why then did the Auditor-General report of 2021 state that Transport for NSW did not publish the rationale for the design change? The Auditor-General was very frustrated, in fact, with this and tried to get information from agencies, I think, including Transport for NSW and SMC. But they've stated that the rationale for the design change hasn't been published. That, I think, is what we have also uncovered in this inquiry.

PETER REGAN: Chair, to be fair, you would need to ask the Auditor-General as to the Auditor-General's opinion. My recollection—and I may be wrong on this because I wasn't involved. In 2021 I'd moved to Sydney Metro, as I mentioned. I do recall that—of course, you've had a series of changes in agencies that then assume the responsibilities, rights and obligations of the previous agency. So WDA was created. When it was dissolved, what was WDA? It became RMS. RMS subsequently became Transport for NSW and I think the Auditor-General's report that you refer to is referring to Transport for NSW as it was at the time, but that actually the actions that it was looking at were not entirely Transport for NSW but picked up the predecessor agencies, RMS and the like. I can't comment on the specific report, but I know that Transport for NSW, as with all Auditor-General reports, would have had to respond to Parliament once that was published, so the response will be there.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Mr Regan, for coming along today and for your extensive involvement. In the little bit of time left, I want to go back to a couple of things that you raised in relation to the strategic business case. Transport for NSW, or as it was at that time RMS or whatever iteration it was, would have had, would it not, significant input into the strategic business case?

PETER REGAN: Absolutely.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can you elaborate on that and the options and how that would have evolved? It wouldn't, would it be, the case that they would say, "This is the option that we propose", and ERC or Cabinet sits around and says, "No, we want to do this"? It's a process, isn't it, and a very comprehensive strategic business case?

PETER REGAN: It is a process. My understanding is the strategic business case sets out a lot of detail on the options that were considered. Each of those options would have had input and advice from experts within agencies, from external experts, and they get narrowed down and ultimately recommendations are made or decisions are taken. But it was a pretty extensive exercise with a lot of input from a lot of people. Whether decisions in hindsight were right or wrong, the process was very robust in terms of the decision-making and the level of detail that went into it, and it went up ultimately to government for decision.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Consideration of traffic flows and impact ultimately, it seems from your evidence, was driven in the end, the final decision, by the idea that it would link up ultimately with this sort of alignment to the north. Is that your understanding?

PETER REGAN: Very much so. The connections to the north and the south—so in the south with the M6 and the Sydney Gateway and the Western Harbour Tunnel—were a key part of the thinking. You can see in the Rozelle interchange the additional lanes that peel off towards the Western Harbour Tunnel. So the flows and when the work is done to look at that, it's done on a network basis. The traffic models look at the network and they look at the tolled network and the untolled network and take all of that into account. So certainly, although

CORRECTED

I wasn't involved, as I said, in those final design decisions, the rationale was about a long-term strategy to connect to that western bypass via the Western Harbour Tunnel.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So while there may be some issues, quite clearly, around Rozelle interchange, the fact is it's not complete. That's right, isn't it?

PETER REGAN: Well, the tunnels are there to connect to the Western Harbour Tunnel. Obviously the Western Harbour Tunnel then connects to the Warringah Freeway, which is being upgraded to accept that connection. At the time, there was potential consideration of a further extension towards the northern beaches.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I know that well.

PETER REGAN: So it was being thought of in the context of a longer term strategy, and the timing of when each of those might have been done was still fluid but it certainly was providing for those future connections to be delivered when appropriate.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: To put it roughly, the cake is not baked yet. That's right, isn't it? To put it very bluntly. There are parts to link up to and to be completed.

PETER REGAN: I'm not involved in it now, and I haven't had that visibility of what the current thinking is, but certainly the decisions that were made and the advice—you can see it in the 2015 business case—definitely contemplated those other extensions north and south as part of a broader network solution that took pressure off the Harbour Bridge, the Anzac Bridge, the Eastern Distributor, created a greater resilience in the network on a north-south basis and then connected to those east-west arterials so that you've effectively got the M2, the M4 and the M5 forming that east-west role and the Eastern Distributor and what then became known as the M8 as the north-south. That kind of grid-type structure was very much part of the overall strategic thinking, but the detail on all of that was being progressively designed.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If I can put it crudely, it's not like a Minister sits there with a box of crayons and says, "I want it to go that way." This is a comprehensive process designed over time to link into, ultimately—can I summarise perhaps—the motivation to take that pressure, as you say, off the Harbour Bridge and the tunnel.

PETER REGAN: There were lots of other options considered as well, including different alignments both north and south. I'm not privy to all the details as to why one was chosen over the other, but it was an extensive analysis of lots of different options, different angles, different directions, different connection points.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And a very large addition to have a third harbour crossing.

PETER REGAN: Absolutely. I think the Western Harbour Tunnel project was always then regarded, although it has a different name, as effectively a fourth stage of the WestConnex project in the same way that the extensions to the south, the gateway project and the M6 were added to that. It was being looked at as a network, but what was unclear at the time was when it would all be built, and so it was designed for the future.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I have two other topics to touch on. You referred to the 10 tolling principles. Are you able to table that for the Committee? I think you referred to one of those: that untolled roads remain available. If you're able to provide that to the Committee at the end or on notice, that's fine.

PETER REGAN: The tolling principles are in the 2015 updated strategic business case, I think around page 192.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That's excellent, thank you very much. Was it the case that those principles had to be complied with? They formed part of the intent of the design.

PETER REGAN: Yes, those principles and the detail around how they were put together, they also were a Cabinet decision, so obviously Cabinet in confidence as to some of the thinking. But the tolling principles—and it sets it out in the publicly available document—were used across the design of the tolling for WestConnex, NorthConnex, the M6, considerations around future extensions, and they were very much how the decisions at the time were being considered and evaluated to try and achieve a degree of consistency of approach.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Parts of those are free, are they not, when we get into tolling and the Iron Cove—

PETER REGAN: That's right. The Iron Cove link itself, perhaps to answer the previous question a little further, it was untolled. It was a deliberate decision that the Government made to have that untolled to provide that continued free connection through to the Anzac Bridge from Victoria Road.

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If you were seeking to maximise the revenue from this infrastructure, you wouldn't include a freebie, as a Treasury guy, would you?

PETER REGAN: I think from a traffic times toll calculation point of view, there would have been more revenue available if that had been tolled. That is correct.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Could this project have been built without this financing model, given the context that you gave about it being post-global financial crisis, given the lack of appetite for taking on this risk, given the background of—as I think Mr Nanva referred to—other motorway projects and given the history of the Cross City Tunnel which was, in fact, insolvent, not once but twice? In that history, knowing that precedent in the context of the global financial crisis and the market's appetite, is that what gave rise to this financing model, or were there other alternatives for the Government to take on risk?

PETER REGAN: There was no capacity for private sector financing of toll roads in Australia at the time, and even globally there was very little capacity. The model was different in its front end, but with the objective of trying to tap the private capital as the long-run owner in the future. Clearly, it was a decision of the government of the day. The alternative would have been that the Government pay for it directly.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Could that have been done?

PETER REGAN: There's a question mark as to what priorities were made at the time. But certainly there was a strong focus on protecting the credit rating and the position of the Government. So the objective of the financing strategy was to look at ways to access conventional private capital when that capital was available. Elsewhere in Australia, other models had to be used. In Victoria there was a major road done, which would have been a toll road but ended up with the Government paying directly for it—the Peninsula Link motorway. This model was different and was to quarantine the asset aside until the private sector was in a position to be able to take it, when it was further developed. Certainly that and the combination of the additional financing that was put in place allowed it to be accelerated.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: With your Treasury experience in place, that is not just for the fun of selling it off. As you said, it is for, is it not, the context of the rest of the priorities of the budget?

PETER REGAN: The objective of the strategy was to allow it to be built more quickly, correct.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: More quickly and to take that risk out.

PETER REGAN: And it was to free up capital for other infrastructure.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So it could have been built exclusively by the Government, taking all of the risk, but to the exclusion of other projects in the NSW Infrastructure pipeline.

PETER REGAN: That's correct. They were trade-off decisions made at the time, but certainly this freed up capital for other purposes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And that was informed by Infrastructure NSW, which is the body set up to have that direction?

PETER REGAN: Infrastructure NSW provided the initial idea and thinking on the design. The work on the financing strategy was done by Treasury at the time. But all of that was brought together, and you can see in the creation of the different entities—the WestConnex Delivery Authority to run forward with the procurement and delivery, and the SMC to set up the financing—that that was the product of that thinking.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Just to be absolutely clear, was it the intent to maximise the tolling funnelled through this project?

PETER REGAN: No. One of the key experiences and one of the key objectives of the way that the roads were being considered at that time was very much on a principle that there would be no funnelling of traffic into toll roads.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Given that the previous precedent was to have a tunnel funnel in the Cross City Tunnel, which didn't seem to work.

PETER REGAN: The experiences on previous projects in Sydney—the Cross City Tunnel and the Lane Cove Tunnel to an extent—and in Brisbane, where arrangements were considered potentially along those lines, have not been successful, and those projects have all gone into receivership. The intent here was, as I said, to always ensure that there were alternative free routes available. The financing arrangement was to be able to access private finance in the future when it was available. In the interim, the Government was paying, but it was paying with the intent that it would recycle that capital.

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: This is my last question. Do you have any experience of anyone from Penrith complaining about WestConnex?

PETER REGAN: I wouldn't in my current role, no.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: All right. But there are clearly some issues around Rozelle, and the way forward is to—

The CHAIR: We will see if we can get one or two more questions in. Mr Regan, are you aware of what people were saying back in 2015 in relation to the Rozelle interchange option and that they were calling it the Regan option?

PETER REGAN: No, I don't recall that. As I said, there were lots of people who were involved in SMC and WDA. There may have been a particular curve, I think, that was referred to, jokingly, as the Regan curve. But it was not the interchange itself.

The CHAIR: Before, you said Infrastructure NSW provided the design. Just to be clear, is your evidence here today that Infrastructure NSW provided the design and pushed for the Rozelle interchange?

PETER REGAN: No, that's not my evidence. My evidence is that Infrastructure NSW did the original work back in 2012.

The CHAIR: Right. My question to you before was about the Rozelle interchange design. You said Infrastructure NSW. Where did that design come from in terms of pushing that?

PETER REGAN: I'm sorry, Chair. The original work was done by INSW back in 2012, and that's what I said. The work in 2014—and evidence has been tabled—to lead to the work of the strategic business case in 2015 was done and taken to Government by RMS, but with significant involvement of Sydney Motorway Corporation and, previously, the WestConnex Delivery Authority. There were then further decisions in 2017 made and taken to Government by RMS, again, in conjunction with work of the Sydney Motorway Corporation around subsequent changes, Camperdown ramps and north-south links. But that was all being done and taken up through the respective agencies and with multiple options considered for all of those. I am not surprised as, on every major infrastructure, different experts will have different opinions. Certainly the concept—

The CHAIR: Was your opinion that Rozelle interchange should be built?

PETER REGAN: I'm not a traffic engineer.

The CHAIR: This is my last question. Sorry, we're out of time. When you were heading up Sydney Motorway Corporation, was it your opinion that Rozelle interchange should be built?

PETER REGAN: That decision was made after I left.

The CHAIR: Thank you. That is, unfortunately, the end of our time today. We can, of course, put in supplementary questions. If you've taken anything on notice, please note that answers to any questions on notice and supplementary questions will be due seven days from when you receive the transcript rather than the usual 21 days because of the time line of this Committee. Thank you so much, Mr Regan.

(The witness withdrew.)

CORRECTED

Councillor ANDREW FERGUSON, Councillor, City of Canada Bay Council, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome to our next witness.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I don't appear as a representative of council but as an individual elected by the community to represent the interests of residents and also as a resident of the council area.

The CHAIR: Councillor Ferguson, do you have a short opening statement for the Committee?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I might say a few things, if I could. I say at the start that I left home at 6.02 a.m. I drove west to North Strathfield and Strathfield, entered the tunnel and arrived at Barangaroo where I parked at 6.22 a.m. So it was a pretty good run for me. But I do want to say most residents in the City of Canada Bay Council don't have that opportunity because of the cost of the tunnel. Certainly, people that suffer social and economic disadvantage have no such opportunity and most residents suffering from the cost of living don't have the opportunity to simply go backwards, go west and catch the tunnel. They're forced to drive through the suburbs of Canada Bay council area and onto the gridlock of Victoria Road.

I'm not suggesting that WestConnex has failed Sydney. I think there'd be compelling arguments that there certainly are net gains for many residents in terms of commuting to our great city centre and going home of an evening. But I do say that it has failed miserably the constituents of the State electorate of Drummoyne. I also say very clearly that it has failed miserably the ratepayers and residents of the City of Canada Bay. I'm particularly concerned at the impact on not just Drummoyne residents but residents more broadly in my council area—residents in Five Dock, Wareemba and Abbotsford—who all suffer the consequences of the gridlock and the failure in terms of the Rozelle interchange on our local community. I'm happy to elaborate on any issues. I don't have all the answers, but I'm very pleased to be a spokesperson for the community and to make sure that the voices of Drummoyne residents are heard very clearly at this inquiry.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much. We'll go to questions from Government members first for this one.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Councillor, thank you for appearing. We've got a problem, obviously, which has been manifested by the residents. You're here representing their views in your role as councillor and being a local resident yourself. Could you outline the crux of the problem, to what degree you think it is fixable and how? I'm trying to get a sense of the history. We've heard a lot of evidence to date about the structural flaws and the incentives for designing this road in a certain way, given that there was revenue to be made by the private operators. I want to get your sense of what the residents feel about how that structural design came about, whether or not it could've been done in a better way and what we can do now.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I listen to residents. I also read emails that I receive. I also monitor local social media, which is a real opportunity for a representative to get a feel for how residents think and feel about issues. I would think most residents would be of the opinion that the Government and Transport for NSW failed in design. There was probably a net gain for people in Sydney but not for our local area. I'm sure that's the opinion. That opinion is reinforced by the fact that they suffer the consequences. I avoid Victoria Road in the morning. I travel early and go in a different direction to avoid the gridlock. They suffer the consequences: the gridlock, the rat-running, the frustration and the delays in commuting to the city. I think it has failed in terms of their needs. I don't think it was deliberate but, pretty clearly, the last Government failed in terms of some design issues that led to an unintended consequence for an important part of the Sydney community.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Do you think there was any conscious awareness of—you characterised it as a "net gain". In other words, we've got to do this, it has got to stack up financially for the private operator and there's a net gain to the vast majority of Sydneysiders, so Drummoyne, Abbotsford and surrounding suburbs will have to suck it up. How much do you think that pervaded the thinking?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: I don't want to interrupt the flow at all. I understand what you're getting at, but I'm not sure that this witness has the capacity to be able to talk about the decision-makers. He can talk about the residents in the area, absolutely.

The CHAIR: I think the witness is entitled to speak about whatever the witness wants to speak about. There is no point of order.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I think the question was directed to the decision-makers and the design.

The CHAIR: There's no point of order. Members are entitled to ask whatever questions they like, as long as they're within scope. This was well within scope. The witness can respond if the witness is able to. Of course, if the witness is unable to answer the question, he does not need to answer the question. He can take the question on notice. Please proceed.

CORRECTED

ANDREW FERGUSON: I'm not in the opinion to comment on it. I'm not a transport expert or a well-paid consultant. I'm a layperson on the issue, like a lot of people in the community. The net gain is always important, but there's not just a net gain for Sydney; there's a considerable disadvantage for the constituents of the electorate of Drummoyne and the ratepayers of Canada Bay. They have got the right to be outraged. They have got the right to make sure their voices are heard in this inquiry.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can you tell us about this public meeting on 18 March that has caused quite a bit of attention? You were instrumental in organising that, weren't you?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I had been inundated with representations from local residents concerned about all sorts of traffic issues—in particular Victoria Road, which is a State Government road—following the opening of the Rozelle interchange. I dutifully referred all of those inquiries to the State member of Parliament because, very clearly, it's a State-based issue, even though I have an interest in the issue. Eventually, those residents came back to me. They didn't feel their voice was being heard, and they asked me to do more. I listened very carefully and hesitated on the issue, but I finally took the opportunity to organise a public meeting, which was held in mid-March.

I, in fact, printed, at my own expense, 2,000 leaflets. In my own time, in the evening after work, I distributed 2,000 leaflets to the residents of Drummoyne east. I was adamant that the residents were going to have a voice and that their voice was going to be heard by government. It was a very successful meeting on very short notice in a Craig Laundry hotel on Victoria Road. More than 150 residents turned up. Probably the most important thing was not those residents just identifying their concerns but, in fact, starting to organise themselves. I think they felt government was failing them—the State Government and Transport for NSW. Their voice wasn't being heard locally and the local council wasn't speaking up, so they formed a local resident committee to make sure that it wasn't just a public meeting of grievances but a public meeting of action. The formation of that committee, I believe, is an important part of the solution here for Drummoyne, which, at some point, I'd like to elaborate on if there's an opportunity.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So, overall, that meeting, despite some of the criticism that it has come under from various perspectives, served as an effective clearing house for the whole community? I understand it was attended by all sides of politics and all sectors of the community. Would you say it served its purpose?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I might say at the outset that I'm not aware of any controversy. I've never heard one resident or ratepayer raise any criticism. There's nothing but endorsement for taking the initiative of organising a public meeting to make sure the voices of residents were heard and to make sure a representative committee was formed. In fact, it was very well attended by members of Parliament, prospective members of Parliament, the mayor, the general manager of council and a very broad cross-section of the community. There's certainly no Labor-Liberal issue here. It was very well received by everyone.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Coming out of that meeting and the subsequent public discourse that has happened since, in your view what are now the biggest things that the State Government could do to ameliorate what is, in effect, a structural issue that has been inherited?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I think the word "mitigate" is the best word that we can choose. I don't think we can solve this crisis. Government rightfully listens to transport experts, traffic manager experts and engineers, but I think the real experts are people who live and breathe the problem 24/7. Ordinary people—they're not all tertiary qualified, and they don't have degrees in engineering—have invaluable knowledge about issues. I've seen the evidence of that in many of the submissions that have been brought to the inquiry here. I know a number of residents are also speaking here today. They were elected by the people, and I think government needs to listen more to the community. I might say, as a councillor, I sometimes glaze over whenever I get anyone from Transport for NSW go to a council meeting. I think the exercise is really ticking the box and going through the motions. I don't think people are listening.

Listening is not hearing words; it's understanding the words. It's understanding what's being said, understanding the feelings and the passion of people about the problem, and following up. Government failed miserably. The most important thing is giving the residents a voice and Transport for NSW ensuring that the Drummoyne residents' committee is not just at the table but listened to, and that there are site visits with them to follow up the detail of their issues and make sure they have the proper input forum: what I regard as my definition of "experts", the ordinary people that live and breathe this problem. Secondly, I just want to say that funding of initiatives by the City of Canada Bay Council to identify the issues and problems that will help mitigate the consequences of the opening of the Rozelle Interchange—most significantly, funding those initiatives to make sure we mitigate as best we can for the constituents of Drummoyne and Canada Bay.

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Councillor Ferguson, for coming along and for your submission, and sorry for the heartache that the community has experienced in this process. Can I ask you about your engagement with Transport and the meeting that you did obtain? Are you aware that the local member, Stephanie Di Pasqua—the State member for Drummoyne—wrote to the Minister and requested meetings repeatedly? I think there were some eight or nine letters seeking a meeting, and she wasn't able to secure such a meeting. And yet, miraculously, you got a meeting on a Monday night with Transport for NSW. Did you invite local members or did you work with others to do that? How did that come about?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I am aware that the local member, on 1 December, wrote an email—a letter—to the Minister, and there was a response in March. I'm not aware of all the details of the follow-up. But I might say that, in terms of my ability to contact the Government, Mark Buttigieg is the duty MLC for Drummoyne. I didn't write one email to Mark. I wrote him many emails, not over four months but over four days. I texted him. I emailed him. I rang him. I was persistent. I was going to ensure, one way or another, that there was a meeting with Transport for NSW to front up and deal with the concerns of local residents, and I don't apologise for that.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: No, I'm not asking you to. But you are a Labor-aligned councillor. That's correct, isn't it?

ANDREW FERGUSON: That's most definitely the case. I'm a life member of the party.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, so you were able to secure a meeting through some texts and phone calls to a member. The local member, who had written politely—repeatedly—to the Minister, wasn't getting a response. But you were able to secure a meeting quickly on a Monday night, which I don't think she was even invited to. She found out from a member of the public. That's not really being collaborative, is it? When you're talking about everyone coming along and everyone attending, this really should be across all levels of politics to try to get everybody involved in this. That's correct, isn't it?

ANDREW FERGUSON: In fact, I did that, and I've got a copy of a text exchange with Stephanie Di Pasqua, who is the State member of Parliament. I also arranged reserved seating for the State member of Parliament at the front of the meeting and gave Stephanie Di Pasqua the opportunity to speak.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That is very kind of you.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I have also had reserved seating for the Liberal Mayor of the City of Canada Bay Council and guaranteed that he would also speak at the meeting. I also spoke to residents who I knew had spoken to Stephanie because I received a text message, and the main point of the text message was that she would like to jointly convene the meeting with me. But, in fact, it was my initiative. I know many members of Parliament organise public meetings. They're not always jointly convened with another party, so I think I proceeded the best I could to make sure the voice of residents was heard.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, but you got a fast track, didn't you, to a meeting, and took credit for that when perhaps a collaborative approach amongst all community might have been more optimal and might have happened sooner? Nonetheless, I'll move on.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I might say, I didn't take credit for it. I did my job as a local representative. I was persistent. I didn't give up, and I never do.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So you called your mate Mark Buttigieg. You said, "Mate, I need a meeting on this," and got the meeting, and then Transport wasn't going to engage with the local member. But you did get a meeting on a Monday night upstairs in a pub. That's not really conducive to being inclusive and accessible, is it? Really, a community meeting, perhaps at the council chambers, might have been more accessible to the public with notice and letting everybody know that it's not just yours and a Labor mate's meeting. It's actually a community meeting with the local member focused on solutions. Wouldn't that be the better approach? Would you encourage that in the future?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I'll just say respectfully that I'm not convinced the hotel was not a good venue. I, in fact, consulted residents about the best possible venue in the area, and I was advised—I don't know the area that well. I live in a different part of the LGA. The advice from local residents was that the hotel was the most central location. In fact, it's at the epicentre of the problem, on the corner of Lyons Road and Victoria Road. I, in fact, rang the former Federal Liberal member of Parliament, Craig Laundry, who immediately said—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Former.

ANDREW FERGUSON: —"Great idea, Andrew. The hotel will be available for your public meeting."

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Good on you.

CORRECTED

ANDREW FERGUSON: And the residents found it the best possible location.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Good, thank you. I'm going to move on—

ANDREW FERGUSON: The council chambers is not appropriate because it's not large enough for 150 people.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Upstairs wasn't perhaps ideal for access to people, but I'll move on.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I didn't solve every problem and I apologise. I did the best I can. I don't have any staff. I just took the initiative after consulting local residents.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's just curious. It's a curious matter. But, nonetheless, Labor mates get a fast track, clearly.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I don't accept that Mark's a mate.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Point of order—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Alright. I'll move on to constructive—

ANDREW FERGUSON: Mark Buttigieg is the duty MLC.

The CHAIR: A point of order has been taken by Mr Buttigieg.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Chair, we have very, very specific questions, which the witness is answering very surgically and precisely—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's my time.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: —and then we have this political commentary on top of it.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Well, it's the case. It's the fact.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Are you asking questions or is this a sitting of the upper House?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The local member writes eight letters and can't get a meeting, and your mate emails you and gets a meeting.

The CHAIR: There is no point of order. We'll continue.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Alright. I'll be constructive.

The CHAIR: I remind the member, for Hansard, to try not to speak over witnesses when they're giving their evidence.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you. Can I move on to something positive? I think we all want to be constructive here, and what we do agree on is that we need solutions. Can I turn to your solution? You have helpfully, at the end, put a sentence in about Parramatta ferry services. Can you speak to that and whether you had any success engaging with Transport for NSW about expanding the Parramatta River ferry services to provide that better option for commuter access?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I think that is one of a suite of many options available for government, and I think enhancing public transport, be it buses or ferries, is an important part of it. That's about increasing the number of ferry services along the route.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Just to be specific, you've called for additional services?

ANDREW FERGUSON: Yes, expanding the number of ferry services—that's additional services—and also looking at Birkenhead Point, where ferry services were curtailed many years ago, and whether or not the Government or the private sector can provide some services to encourage people to use public transport rather than driving to and from work in the city or beyond.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So you would be calling on the Government to put in additional services? You've said specifically from Drummoyne, Abbotsford, Chiswick, Cabarita and Birkenhead. Specifically, you're calling on those additional services to be implemented as part of the solution to this?

ANDREW FERGUSON: Most definitely. That's what I put in my submission and I've reaffirmed that today.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Have you engaged with Transport for NSW about that?

CORRECTED

ANDREW FERGUSON: I have written to the State Government on the issue. I haven't had any meetings, and I haven't asked the duty MLC to arrange that as well. I know the Federal Labor member of Parliament, Sally Sitou, has also made representations. I knew I would have the opportunity here today to say very clearly that we need increased ferry services and we need additional services from ferry stations that no longer have ferries stop at their ferry station.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I think the local member, the State member for Drummoyne, has also called for additional ferry services. I think that's something you very clearly agree on, and she has been emphatic about that as well. That's correct, isn't it?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I can assume it, and I've got no doubt that the State member is doing her job. So she should.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Those additional services, as they say, would take some of the traffic off Victoria Road. Do you propose, going forward, to engage further with Transport to seek to progress those proposals in your capacity as a councillor?

ANDREW FERGUSON: As I said at the outset—and I'm actually convinced that you know this to be true—I'm very persistent and I intend to take up the issues for the constituents of Drummoyne and the residents of the Canada Bay council area.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You might ring your duty MLC and get him on it.

ANDREW FERGUSON: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Councillor, is it your view, based on speaking to residents, that quite a few have started changing their behaviour—the times at which they go to work; I think you yourself talked about leaving very early—based on the inconveniences that Rozelle interchange has caused them since its opening? Are you witnessing that within your local area?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I've never had feedback from a resident saying they're specifically looking at going west to go east, but that opportunity is only available to those who live closer to the Strathfield area rather than the Drummoyne area. I think it's cost prohibitive for many people—certainly people, as I said earlier, that suffer social and economic disadvantage. It's certainly not an option for those who are suffering from the cost of living, let alone paying an extra \$60 or \$80 a week on toll fees. I haven't witnessed that change in behaviour.

The CHAIR: There are other changes in behaviour, of course, such as—those who can—working from home or trying to avoid those hours that are particularly bad. They're not necessarily changing the route to go in but changing the time of travel or, indeed, travelling less. Have you heard any of that?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I specifically haven't heard that, but I am hopeful that is the case and that helps to mitigate some of the consequences.

The CHAIR: What have you heard, say, over the last month, in relation to the impacts on local streets and rat-running? This inquiry has been going for several months now. Has it eased? Are things getting better? What are people saying? Give us an example from, say, the last few weeks.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I also haven't had specific feedback on that. I am very pleased that Claudia Campbell and Simon Gatward, who live in this area, are giving evidence today. In fact, I did speak to Claudia this morning. She took some video evidence at 8.15 or 8.30 verifying her concerns about rat-running. I have had no feedback from residents that the situation is ameliorating in the area.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I note that you have said, "I don't venture solutions for the gridlock delays and traffic chaos." You have no proposals as a councillor or as a resident for traffic proposals. But, if I might get to the proposal that you do make, it is in relation to those ferry services. Will you be calling on and contacting the transport Minister, Jo Haylen, to ask for those additional services?

ANDREW FERGUSON: I might deal with the first part of your question. I certainly am not a traffic expert, but I've read all the submissions specifically from Drummoyne, and I endorse all of them because they have come from people that observe and feel the issues. I know some when they're tested may fail, but overwhelmingly there have been so many propositions put forward here about one-way streets and directing traffic and traffic signalling and so on. They're all good options that I endorse, subject to the testing process. I certainly do say that the most important thing, from my point of view, is the traffic study funded by the State Government. It's the funding of the mitigation solutions that arise from that. And I say, most significantly, listening to the local residents—not pretending to listen, but to sit down with them and make sure that they have the best possible voice at the table. I have been—as you are aware—and will continue to be a strong advocate. I specifically raised the issues with the duty MLC for Drummoyne.

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Why wouldn't you write to the transport Minister?

ANDREW FERGUSON: It's his responsibility—Mark Buttigieg. But I can also supplement that by sending an email to the Minister as well. I am very happy to do that, and I have in the past and will continue to do that.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I would have thought that would be the appropriate mechanism, given she is responsible for it. She is the transport Minister. You have advocated for additional services. That would be the faster opportunity to seek the constructive outcome that you are seeking here, wouldn't it?

ANDREW FERGUSON: Like you, in all your life's experiences—you know that you wouldn't just do one thing when you can potentially do five things. We've got a duty MLC, which is Mark Buttigieg.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: But I've asked specifically about Jo Haylen.

ANDREW FERGUSON: Sorry—he's my point of contact. As I said very clearly, I will continue to liaise with the duty MLC for Drummoyne. In addition to that, I have in the past, and I will in the future, also make direct representations to the relevant Ministers.

The CHAIR: Let's now go to—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Would you provide a copy of that letter to the Committee?

The CHAIR: —questions from the Government.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sorry, I just want to ask if he would provide a copy of that representation to us to assist.

ANDREW FERGUSON: Sorry, I couldn't hear you.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Would you provide a copy of that once you do your representation to Jo Haylen? Are you able to provide that to the Committee?

ANDREW FERGUSON: If the Chair thinks it is of some value, I am happy to do that.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That would be great. Thank you.

ANDREW FERGUSON: I'll be guided by the Chair.

The CHAIR: Well, the member has asked for it. Thank you.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: To follow up on that line of questioning, it's somewhat unremarkable, isn't it, that—as you've mentioned, you're a life member of the party. You are a Labor councillor. Everyone knows that you are on council under the Labor branding. It would be highly unremarkable that you use your knowledge and contacts and the fact that I'm the duty MLC to get your representation from the community through to the Government. I mean, this wouldn't be fast-breaking news, would it, that this is one of the things you do?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You don't include the local member.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: You use the contacts available to you.

ANDREW FERGUSON: It would be bizarre—in fact, it would be absurd. I'm elected by the local community to do the best I can, and I'll make representations to a Liberal government or a Labor government, to a member of Parliament I know, or to a Minister. I might say, with all due respect, that I made representations to the last Liberal Government. I didn't always get a timely response, but I was persistent, and I will continue to be persistent.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Councillor Ferguson. That is the end of your time here. If you have agreed to take anything on notice, or if the Committee has any further supplementary questions, they will be due seven days from when you receive the transcript rather than the usual 21 days. The secretariat will be in touch with you about that.

ANDREW FERGUSON: Thank you very much for the opportunity to present today. All the very best for your deliberations.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

CORRECTED

Dr CHRISTOPHER STANDEN, Research Fellow, School of Population Health, UNSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: We will continue with our next witness. Do you have a short opening statement for the Committee?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I do. I've been working in the planning and transport sector for 20 years—initially in government and for the last 11 years in academia. My areas of expertise include transport economics, travel behaviour and transport modelling. I do own small shareholdings in Transurban and Tesla through my superannuation fund. I have no other conflicts of interest to declare. I've been following the WestConnex scheme since its announcement, and from the early days I and other independent transport experts warned that the promised benefits would not be realised. It gives me no pleasure to say we've been proved absolutely right.

For example, the business case promised reduced congestion, but WestConnex has induced traffic growth and more congestion, as has every urban road expansion project that has come before it. The business case promised the renewal of Parramatta Road, but the traffic volume today is about the same as it was before WestConnex opened, thwarting plans for a tree-lined liveability corridor. The business case promised less traffic on suburban roads, but the new toll concessions on the old M4 and M5 motorways, which were given to WestConnex as a deal-sweetener, have forced thousands of cars and trucks onto suburban roads such as Forest and Stoney Creek roads in Bexley. At the same time, the new interchanges have generated additional traffic in their surrounding neighbourhoods and on the broader surface road network.

The business case promised economic benefits. However, the Government sold WestConnex at a multibillion-dollar loss. It spent \$4 billion on the Rozelle interchange before handing it over to WestConnex-Transurban. The Government is spending a further \$10 billion on the airport link and the Western Harbour Tunnel. In addition, motorists and businesses will pay an estimated \$65 billion in WestConnex tolls over the next 37 years, much of which will be paid by taxpayers through toll subsidies. WestConnex construction has contributed to a skilled labour shortage, which has pushed up the costs of much-needed rail projects and housing construction, which in turn has put upward pressure on inflation and interest rates.

My written submission to this inquiry primarily addressed the traffic modelling undertaken for WestConnex and the Rozelle interchange. I want to begin by saying that city transport and land use systems are extremely complex. You have millions of people and households making billions of decisions about how often to travel, what time to travel, where to travel, how to travel, which route to take—and then where to live, where to work, where to send their children to school and so forth. And you have thousands of businesses making decisions about where to locate, what areas to service and how to move their goods around. All these decisions are influenced by dozens of variables, including road congestion levels.

Basically, no computer model can possibly predict how a major change to the transport network would affect these billions of decisions and variables—not when it opens, and certainly not 37 years into the future, as the WestConnex traffic modellers claimed to be able to. That's why traffic forecasts for all past major road projects have all been out by a large margin. The modelling methodology used for WestConnex was not fully described in the publicly available reports. But, from the few details that were provided, I would say it was far from best practice. It didn't consider most of the household and business travel and location decisions I've just mentioned, and it ignored some important feedback effects.

Universities must take some of the blame for this. We continue to teach these unvalidated modelling methods and to pass them off as an exact science, knowing they have a long history of providing unreliable forecasts. But, as well as using flawed methods, the WestConnex traffic modellers also made a huge error in their assumptions. They assumed Parramatta Road would be narrowed from six to four general traffic lanes after WestConnex opened. This capacity reduction was never part of the proposal and has obviously not happened. Because of this error, the model predicted Parramatta Road traffic volume would fall by about a third, which clearly hasn't happened either. The consequences of this are that the model also predicted less traffic approaching the Rozelle interchange and Anzac Bridge via the Parramatta Road-City West Link corridor. This would partly explain the long traffic queues observed on the City West Link after the interchange opened.

Because the forecast economic, environmental, climate and health impacts and the environmental impact statement were all based on fudged traffic forecasts, these were all wrong as well. This error was pointed out in many submissions during the public consultation, including mine and the City of Sydney's, but it was never fixed. I suspect this error was made intentionally, so that it could be claimed in the business case that WestConnex would reduce traffic volumes on Parramatta Road and facilitate its renewal. I suspect this deception was sanctioned at a

CORRECTED

high level. And I suspect that the Department of Planning, Transport for NSW, the Sydney Motorways Corporation and the traffic modelling consultants may have colluded on this deception.

Basically, the Government spent millions on a business case and an environmental impact statement that were a fraudulent fantasy. I would like to see this inquiry investigate the systemic failures that allowed a fraudulent business case and an unlawful environmental impact assessment to be produced and approved, and expert submissions to be ignored. For future multibillion-dollar mega projects, decision-makers and the public need to be given honest information about the possible costs and impacts, as well as warnings about the limitations of the forecasting methods used. Though ideally we should plan cities the other way around, not propose random individual projects then try to predict how they will affect the future using unvalidated methods that can be easily manipulated to produce the answers you want. Rather, start by deciding what kind of future we want, then work out the projects and policies that will get us there in the most cost-effective way. I would like to table an illustration of Parramatta Road, what was modelled and proposed, and what was built.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Are you able to table your opening statement at the same time?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes, I have a copy of that.

The CHAIR: It would be great if members could get a copy of that for this session. Thanks, Dr Standen. We had former RTA officials present at the last hearing, as well as infrastructure consultants from Evans and Peck who did the modelling—one of whom I understand was one of the best traffic modellers, according to the witnesses. They said that 15 different options were developed for the northern section and all had traffic modelling undertaken for them. Their assertion was that WestConnex has had more traffic modelling undertaken than any other road project in Sydney. Your evidence here today is that the modelling was slightly undercooked?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes, it didn't follow best practice, best methods—though I mentioned that no modelling is perfect. It's fundamentally flawed. But, yes, it was also fudged to produce answers that they wanted.

The CHAIR: Are you specifically referring to the modelling that was used to justify the Rozelle interchange or are you referring broadly to the WestConnex modelling, as I've just indicated?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes, I'm referring to the modelling that was included in the publicly available reports, because that's all I have access to—the modelling results and methods that were presented in the business case and the various environmental impact statements.

The CHAIR: Could you explain to the Committee a little bit more about the modelling? When you say that it wasn't really undertaken according to best practice, is this traffic modelling that is, and would have been at the time, generally used across the Government or was it different for WestConnex from what is normally undertaken?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I can't say because the methods weren't fully and transparently described.

The CHAIR: So it's not transparent in terms of how they did it?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: No.

The CHAIR: You're saying it's not transparent, but you know enough to be highly critical of it. What did it not do?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: For example, it didn't consider some feedback effects. It didn't consider how building a new high-speed transport link would affect people's home and work location decisions. If you're presented with a faster link to get into the city, you might take the opportunity to move to a lower-cost suburb further out, which means your travel time doesn't reduce but your travel distance does.

The CHAIR: Your evidence today calls the business case "fraudulent". That's a big call. To be clear, why are you saying it's fraudulent?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Mostly based on the assumptions around Parramatta Road. In the business case and environmental impact statements, all the modelling was based on a proposal where Parramatta Road is reduced from six to four traffic lanes. That was never part of the proposal, so all the modelling is essentially based on a proposal that's different from what was proposed and approved. Let me give you an analogy. A developer wants to build an apartment block. They want to build a 10-storey apartment block, but in their development application they do all the modelling, the solar access and things for a five-storey apartment block. All their modelling is based on a five-storey apartment block. That then gets approved. They then go ahead and build the 10-storey apartment block. A similar thing has happened here.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: I understand that the traffic modelling and EIS for the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway upgrade was essentially undertaken with the Beaches Link also being built. Have you looked into that and whether it is going to be the same situation there?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Sorry, I haven't looked into it, but I could.

The CHAIR: But you can? I have plenty of questions but I just want—Ms Ward?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You're the Chair, you go ahead.

The CHAIR: You're talking about the promised revitalisation of Parramatta Road. The reduction of Parramatta Road from six lane to four lanes was partly used to sell WestConnex at the time, correct?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes, although it never actually formed part of the proposal.

The CHAIR: What you're saying is the traffic modelling which was used to justify the business case, which was used to justify the sale, was never adjusted when the Parramatta Road revitalisation was essentially taken out of WestConnex?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Well, it was never in WestConnex. The proposal never said anything about reducing the capacity of Parramatta Road.

The CHAIR: Say that again.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: It was only the modelling that made that assumption and the modelling outputs.

The CHAIR: Why was that done, do you think? In your opening statement you said that you'd like to see this inquiry investigate "the systemic and governance failures that allowed a fraudulent business case and an unlawful environmental impact assessment to be produced and approved". Why do you think that was the case, that this all took place?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I can only speculate, but I suspect it was done to make the business case look better, to be able to claim a reduction of traffic on Parramatta Road.

The CHAIR: Do you have any view about the 2017 decision to remove the Camperdown off ramp from the Rozelle interchange design in terms of traffic modelling? The evidence we heard about that was that decision was made to increase the sale price.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I didn't see the modelling for the scenario with the Camperdown interchange. I have only looked at the modelling for the scenario with the Rozelle interchange.

The CHAIR: But the Camperdown off ramp did impact the Rozelle interchange. Obviously the Camperdown off ramp impacted the ability for cars to come off the interchange, and that was the whole point. We've been told that off ramp was removed to increase the flow of traffic and the number of cars that eventually flow onto Anzac Bridge.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I'm sorry, I haven't looked at that particular modelling.

The CHAIR: That's okay. I'll go to questions from Government members. Mr Mark Buttigieg?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Thank you, Chair. Dr Standen, you seem to have vast experience in this area, and you say in your submission you've been following this from day one. Can you outline why it was so obvious that this would be an "abject failure", as I think you put it in your submission? You say it gives you no pleasure to have been proven right, but why was it so obvious?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Just based on evidence and experience. I've cited an article in my written submission, Duranton and Turner, which talks about the fundamental law of highway congestion. Basically, if you increase urban road capacity, traffic and congestion increases in proportion.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Clearly the government of the day would have made a calculation. We heard in evidence earlier today that there was perhaps some sort of view of the net benefit to the greater good, if you like. What is your view on that? Was there any worthwhile trade off in terms of, "Yes, it is going to cause congestion in spots A, B and C but, overall, people will be able to move across the city a lot more quickly and efficiently. Therefore, we're going to do it. Someone will always whinge, but the Government's job is to get things done"? What is your view of that?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Let's look at that ability of some people to be able to move across the city more quickly. A three-lane motorway can transport maybe 6,000 people an hour under optimum conditions. Railway can transport maybe 60,000 people over the same time. This is in a city of over five million people.

CORRECTED

You're giving the ability to 6,000 of them to travel during the peak hour, at high speed, a long distance across the city. To get to and from that infrastructure, they have to battle through traffic around the interchanges, and they also have to pay for that privilege. In welfare economics terms, someone might be willing to pay \$25 to do that journey a bit quicker, or they pay \$24 in tolls. They're getting a net benefit of \$1 from that. The toll road operator's getting a benefit of \$24 from that.

The other thing I should mention in terms of reducing travel times is, before WestConnex was built, our train system already offered travel times that were better than WestConnex is providing for some people today. The other thing to consider is: Do we really want to give more people the ability to live further from work? I'm talking about urban sprawl. Urban sprawl is associated with increased transportation costs, infrastructure costs, environmental impacts, climate impacts. It's not good for the health of our population to be all spread out and far from services, maybe isolated and lonely in low-density suburbs. So, yes, while it has given a very small number of people the ability to travel across the city at high speed, I'd question if that really is in the overall public good, especially considering the \$30 billion, whatever, cost.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: If you accept the Government's parameters at the time that it, or some sort of freeway or motorway, had to be built—notwithstanding your reservations on that that you've outlined now—how could it have been done in a better way that would have avoided the fallout that we are seeing now? If so, why was that not obvious to the Government at the time?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I can't speak for the Government. All I remember is that in the strategic transport master plan, the initial one that was published, WestConnex was never a part of it. It was shoehorned in at a later date, and seemed to go against all the objectives and aims of that strategy and various other Government objectives. So, yes, I can't answer for the Government, but my question is: What problem were they trying to solve, exactly?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can I pick up on that point? Thank you for your assistance today and your submission. When you say it was shoehorned in, do you have an evidence base for that, given that we've heard the involvement of Infrastructure NSW, the strategic business case, the comprehensive planning—years of expertise have gone into designing and delivering WestConnex. What evidence base do you have for it being, as you say in your words, shoehorned in when you've got Infrastructure NSW looking at the overall priorities for New South Wales?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: The original draft of the long-term transport master plan didn't include WestConnex, and then the final version did.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Sure, but shoehorned is quite a different thing from being based on recommendations from Infrastructure NSW and experts about a long-term vision, is it not?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Sorry, which experts?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Infrastructure NSW, whose task it is to set out the priorities for infrastructure across the whole of New South Wales. That's hardly an afterthought, as it seems.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I question their expertise.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Alright. You talked about racing across the network, and I'm trying to understand the social concerns you may have about that. Can we turn our minds to, perhaps, a tradie in a ute. You said that there's an alternative to use a train. But a tradie who may have an interest in getting between jobs quickly and efficiently, and then getting home to their family at night, may have an interest in using a road quickly. That's correct, isn't it?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And a tradie in their ute probably can't use a train. That's correct, isn't it?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Some do but, if you have to carry a lot of tools then, yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Probably a bit challenging. When you say high speed, the high speed is within the speed limit allocated to that motorway. That's correct, isn't it?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: When you say WestConnex has contributed to a skilled labour shortage, that's not the only cause of a skilled labour shortage in Australia, is it?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Correct. I said "contributed to".

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And, when you say it's pushed up the costs of much-needed—and I agree with you—rail projects and housing construction, how do you say that that's pushed up the cost of housing construction?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Because labour is a big part of the cost of housing construction. So, if the labour costs increase, the construction costs increase.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: WestConnex is not the sole cause, though, is it?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I said it's contributed to it.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If there was a better way to have designed this, what do you say that that would be?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: It depends on what the aim is. What are you trying to achieve?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What do you say a better design might have been? You clearly don't agree that the current design is working, so what do you say the alternative or better design might have been?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: It depends what—better design for what? What would you want to achieve?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You tell us. Your submission is that it's not working. It's an abject failure. It hasn't worked and it hasn't realised the promised benefits. What do you say would have achieved that?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: What would have achieved which benefits?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You tell us what you think the alternative might be.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: It depends on what problem you're trying to solve. If you're trying to solve road congestion, there are proven ways of doing that—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What are they?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: —through road pricing, for example. If you're trying to improve people's access to jobs, services—improve tradespeople's access to work, then there are more evidence-based ways of doing that as well.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can you outline and elaborate what those might be, in your opinion?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes. Improving people's access to education, employment and so forth, could be building more affordable and social homes close to where people work.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Rather than WestConnex. Is that what you are saying?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: It's not just one solution. There are multiple things you can do to improve people's access to work, education, social, recreational opportunities.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You specifically called out Parramatta Road, so what would have been a better way to have gone about WestConnex to improve Parramatta Road?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Do what was modelled: Reduce the capacity and provide high-capacity bus rapid transit instead on those two lanes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: But, again, a tradie can't use a bus or a train. So how do you propose—what's the alternative? I guess I'm trying to get to something constructive; if this doesn't work, what do you say would have?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: We have five million-plus people in the city. Not every one of them is a trades person.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I understand.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: There is more than enough road capacity at the moment to handle all the essential traffic, including tradespeople driving to and from jobs.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So not building WestConnex would have resulted in less congestion by putting in, I think you mentioned, buses and utilising rail. Is that your submission to this Committee?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: It's a bit more complex than that.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Okay, explain it to me, then.

CORRECTED

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Again, I'm just trying to understand what it is you're trying to achieve.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'm asking what your alternative is. You've said that this hasn't worked. I'm trying to explore options and I'd appreciate your assistance for what might be the alternative.

The CHAIR: Order! I will take a point of order at this point. The witness has made a submission in relation to traffic modelling. At this point I think you're almost about to badger the witness. They have to be treated with respect. He's not here to offer a solution and alternative. I think you're well aware of that. If you could redirect your question, or, in fact, I might ask a question in the last two minutes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's not my intention to badger anyone. I'm just trying to get solutions. From your submission, which I'm grateful for, I can't see what you would say the alternative would be, but that's fine.

The CHAIR: Order! I think I just said to not direct that question to the witness.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: I'm happy to answer it, but in order to have a solution, you have to have a question.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I have a question: "What is the solution?"

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: That isn't a question.

The CHAIR: Maybe this was the issue when the Coalition was in government for 10 years, that they were asking the wrong questions. Dr Standen, you say, which I find extraordinary, that the modelled road network—this is in your submission—did not include local residential streets, so therefore the traffic model that was used was unable to predict the traffic impacts on the streets. In other words all of the rat-running and everything, the traffic modelling didn't pick that up?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: No, because those—

The CHAIR: I do find that extraordinary.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: Yes. The traffic model didn't include those local streets and that's quite normal for a strategic level model. They could have done more targeted modelling on those streets but neither the State Government nor the local governments did, as far as I'm aware.

The CHAIR: Given what has happened now and the outcry and inconvenience that the Rozelle interchange has caused so many residents of Drummoyne, Rozelle and Balmain, shouldn't traffic modelling be a bit more extensive and shouldn't we be looking at that for future projects? Not that I think there should be any other project like WestConnex built ever, but the predicted impacts such as rat-running, if they're not brought forward by traffic modelling and understood by traffic modelling, how are they understood?

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: They could have been foreseen.

The CHAIR: Foreseen is different to traffic modelling.

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN: They could have done more modelling of the local street network but that would have been taking inputs from the strategic modelling, which as we know is flawed as well. It might have given us a bit of a picture of what would happen on local streets but it wouldn't have told the whole story.

The CHAIR: We are actually at the end of our time. Thank you very much for your comprehensive submission and the work you do. If we have any questions or you've taken anything on notice, the secretariat will be in touch with you and you will have seven days after you receive the transcript as opposed to the usual 21 days because of the tight time frame of this Committee. The Committee will now break for morning tea and will be back at 11.45 a.m.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

CORRECTED

Dr JOSEPH CORDARO, General Practitioner, Drummoyne Medical Centre; Councillor, City of Canada Bay Council, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome back. We will now welcome our next witness. Do you have an opening statement for the Committee, Dr Cordaro?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Perhaps briefly, Madam Chair. I'm not sure how much information the Committee has about me and my profile. I'm a long-term resident of Drummoyne of 32 years. I live in that precinct to the north of Victoria Road, which has been heavily impacted by the Rozelle interchange. I'm a practising general practitioner in Drummoyne. I also own a private practice on Victoria Road in the precinct that is affected by the Rozelle interchange. I have a postgraduate qualification in clinical epidemiology, health economics and public health. I'm a fellow of the college of GPs and I'm a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. I have been serving as deputy mayor on the local council for the past 12 months.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have an opening statement as well?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I think what I can bring to the Committee is my personal lived experience over the past five or six months since the interchange opened, as a resident, as a father with a family, as a business owner on Victoria Road and as a councillor of the council in receiving people's feedback, which there has been no shortage of in our local government area.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Dr Cordaro, for coming along today to assist the Committee. I'm sorry for the interruption and what you've experienced in this process. Can you talk to the Committee about what impact there has been on your business? We'll get to the council issue as well but, from your business perspective, what has the impact been and what engagement have you had with Transport for NSW to try to work through some solutions?

JOSEPH CORDARO: In terms of my business as a general practice, as you're probably aware, general practices in Australia are currently well attended.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes.

JOSEPH CORDARO: We don't follow the traditional rules of business models. It would be a far stretch from the truth to say that my bottom line or the business has been affected financially. I certainly saw the effect through the hundreds of patients that I see every week in the anxiety, stress and distress they were suffering, especially going back to the original opening, with delays, being caught in gridlock traffic and particularly not being able to cross Victoria Road as residents of Drummoyne. The suburb of Drummoyne has 11,000 people in it. About half of them live on the northern or eastern side of Victoria Road and the other half on the other side. So we're saddled across Victoria Road. As part of our everyday livability experience, we need to cross that road for many, many activities. I'm sure you've heard from other invitees to this Committee.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, we've heard evidence that some residents aren't even able to back out of their driveways into their local roads because of the volume of traffic in rat runs.

JOSEPH CORDARO: Absolutely.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: As you say, that contributes to anxiety and stress. It seems that the combination is quite elegant of you being a resident, business owner and councillor, bringing together your perspective—if I can pick this part of it—as a local person. It is not just the whole of WestConnex and the Rozelle interchange but the effect on your local area, as locals expect to be able to get across Victoria Road and interact locally, as you say—not just getting on and off WestConnex. In terms of solutions or engagement, how has your experience been with engaging with Transport through council, as a local resident or as a business owner? What opportunities have you had to convey that to them, and what has the response been like?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I'll give you one example. My engagement with Transport for NSW has mainly been through the council. Obviously, there's much more opportunity to realistically or significantly engage through my councillor hat. As a council and a councillor, we have approached Transport for NSW over the past 18 months, foreseeing that there would have been increased congestion through Victoria Road, Drummoyne, as a result of the Iron Cove Link emptying its traffic onto the eastern side of the Iron Cove Bridge. Three or four lanes coming from the old highway through Rozelle and two lanes from the Iron Cove Link were suddenly going to be merged into three lanes coming through Drummoyne.

Victoria Road, Drummoyne, has, for decades—since I've been there—been an increasingly busy road. It has noise pollution, air pollution and congestion and is a decreasingly livable and pleasant precinct for residents to utilise. As such, there have been numerous committees set up by council over the past 20 years, a number of

CORRECTED

which I have sat on. I have assisted at a local level to try to revitalise the Victoria Road precinct and get the Drummoyne Business Chamber to breathe life into the numerous empty commercial premises that have laid derelict and abandoned, because business is not viable for other businesses along there, apart from health, which is what I do. We foresaw that this was really going to be the nail in the coffin—having five or six lanes of traffic emptying onto Victoria Road.

In our engagement, we asked Transport NSW executives to come and speak to us about that. There have been numerous contacts, but it's wishy-washy responses that we've had. I've got the transcript of one meeting that we had in August 2023 in council chambers, where the mayor, a number of councillors and a number of executives from Transport for NSW came to answer our questions regarding our concern that the Rozelle interchange was going to increase traffic congestion. The responses were, "It will take 12 months for a settling-in period for Rozelle interchange, which will allow a network review to take place in Drummoyne. We envisage that will be in the next 12 months and then a five-year review. There will be a push towards public transport, looking to create a behavioural shift using the B-Line model as a model. A business case will review the full Parramatta to city corridor, with a focus on active transport, public transport and pedestrian links to encourage mode shifts. Transport for NSW is seeking funding and will advise the group of this progress and timing. There is no current time line for this proposal."

What a joke. We spend \$20 billion on a WestConnex tunnel system, and we'll think about when we're going to fund a review of the effect on one of the town centres through which increased traffic is going to go. We're confronted with that, and we pushed those people at that informal council meeting. When I say "informal", I mean not a public meeting or private meeting. There was nothing more forthcoming. There have been budget cuts. The western Sydney Harbour crossing has been axed—delayed, sorry. Part of it was axed; the rest was delayed until 2028. The response was, "We've got no money, guys, to do any further studies."

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So the responses were a bit of cold comfort, if I can perhaps assume.

JOSEPH CORDARO: That's an understatement.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Their response has been that people need to adjust their driving behaviour. I think we've heard some evidence that Waze is to blame or traffic guidance systems that are sending people into back roads are to blame. There might be a review in 12 months; there might be one in five years. None of that seems to be listening to the community or council, which is putting forward solutions. It's probably not your job to provide solutions. It's probably your job to engage with them and for them to provide solutions other than just saying, "Sit back and wait and it will all be okay. Don't worry your pretty head about it," which is cold comfort for your residents and you as a business owner. Do you get any sense from Transport that they are prepared to listen to those concrete proposals or that they're responding comprehensively to those proposals? We've heard, for example, about traffic light sequencing or alternatives trying to help you. Or is it just that same response of, "Wait and see"?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I think they respond to a threshold of pressure. If you don't apply enough pressure, there's no response. It's almost as if we're thrown into this social experiment. Let's clog up Victoria Road and see how much will be tolerated by the residents of Drummoyne. As they scream and squeal, we'll do something about it. We'll tinker with a few traffic lights; we'll see how that goes. We will wait a couple of weeks. We don't know what's going on. Council aren't informed of traffic light changes that are made or sequencing changes that are made. We weren't even informed of the change of a 300-metre stretch of lane previously open to traffic on Lyons Road coming onto Victoria Road. It was changed into a bus lane without notice. On Monday morning, after a weekend of work by Transport for NSW contractors, suddenly we get bombarded as a council from residents ringing up saying, "What has happened? There's a bus lane now. I can't get in that lane." We know nothing about it. It completely undermines trust in two levels of government.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I think we've heard that the solution at one point was that Transport said, "Well, council should go off and do its own traffic study at its own expense."

JOSEPH CORDARO: That's right.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: During the course of the inquiry, we've had an assurance from the Minister to fund that traffic study. Has it been conveyed to you, as a councillor, that Transport will now pay for that traffic study? Has there been any progress on that?

JOSEPH CORDARO: That has not been conveyed to me, as a councillor. It doesn't mean that it hasn't happened, but I'm not aware of it. In any case, we do a traffic study now after the whole thing is up and running. What about a traffic study previously to predict, as the previous invitee expressed his sentiments about doing those studies before?

CORRECTED

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What would you like to see happen?

JOSEPH CORDARO: At the risk of posing the same question to you as the last invitee did, I would really like to know what Transport for NSW wants to achieve with the Rozelle interchange and WestConnex. I actually am a believer in roads. Contrary to the previous speaker, I think that an efficient road system is very important for a large metropolis like Sydney. Something needs to happen to discourage people from using Victoria Road as a transport route to the city from the north-western sector of Sydney. If they're going to use it as another transport route, it needs to be tolled like the others so that we're all on an equal footing and our sat navs, Google Maps or maps, when we type in from North Ryde, "How to get to the city fastest," it will offer us a toll both ways so that we don't get people diverting away from the Lane Cove Tunnel or WestConnex to save \$6 or \$8. It's not "just" \$6 or \$8; that's quite a substantial cost. That's why they divert. All you have to do is take yourself to Gladesville, North Ryde or Eastwood and put into Google Maps, "Quickest way to get to Sussex Street," and you'll be taken along Victoria Road.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I might finish on this, unless there's more time. One solution that has been suggested is additional ferry services at some of the points, accepting that that's not suitable for everybody but may potentially assist with reducing some congestion. Do you support that? Do you have a view about why it would need additional services, not just the existing services?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I could never understand why ferry services are so limited from Drummoyne. We have got such a huge exposure to the water, and there are two existing terminals at Birkenhead and Wolseley Street that would be much better utilised if services were more frequent and had greater capacity. I've experienced that many times. All my constituents say the same thing.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We've heard from the local member that sometimes ferries are full to capacity before they even arrive at those wharves, so additional services might be an option, or starting those services in your area might assist with reducing that congestion. Is that something you think the Government and the transport Minister should consider?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Absolutely. It hasn't been just once that I've had to call an Uber from Wolseley Street ferry wharf because the full ferry has zoomed by.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'm happy to keep going or come back.

The CHAIR: Dr Cordaro, were you encouraged by the initial designs of WestConnex and Rozelle interchange? I understand that part of selling it to the community was that there's a better urban environment for some local residents, particularly this kind of boulevard that Victoria Road was going to become. I assume you were very much across that at the time.

JOSEPH CORDARO: It's a good question, Madam Chair. There's a vision that Transport for NSW published for Victoria Road. The latest revisions were in August and November of this year.

The CHAIR: Do you mean last year?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Last year. It talks about revitalising Victoria Road—"better connected and vibrant town centres, safe and more sustainable travel modes for people of all ages and abilities between different town centres and increased liveability of Victoria Road to provide access to different modes of transport while supporting local economies".

The CHAIR: Just to be clear, where are those documents from? I'll get you table them if you're able to.

JOSEPH CORDARO: Sure.

The CHAIR: Where did you—

JOSEPH CORDARO: The Transport for NSW government website. I was just going to say that those lovely planning and social objective statements were very similar to what was published by Transport for NSW for the Parramatta Road urban revitalisation corridor, which I've been intimately involved with over the past three years with Canada Bay council. It is coming to fruition. It's very slow. You can see the progress is slow, but it's all about to happen. I think it will actually be good. But there's one big difference: There's a six-lane tunnel under Parramatta Road called the M4 tunnel. There is no tunnel from Gladesville Bridge to Iron Cove Bridge. As a number of people who may have made submissions have said, we can't understand why that tunnel wasn't extended that extra two kilometres to Gladesville Bridge. It would've allowed for a true transformation of the Drummoyne and Victoria Road, Balmain and Rozelle precincts.

The CHAIR: Can you see the revitalisation of Victoria Road—particularly in terms of getting a lot of that traffic off, reducing the lanes, putting the cycleway there, the trees and everything else that has been talked

CORRECTED

about—on the horizon? Are you aware that that is going to happen? Or has it been forgotten about and chucked in the bin?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I'm sure it has been chucked in the bin. Victoria Road is a very limited width. It's barely six lanes. Where does the bicycle lane go? I'm not quite sure, unless you take another lane of traffic out for cars. If you thought the screaming and protests about it being already restricted were loud, if you take another lane away, I don't think that the public of the suburbs west of Drummoyne will accept that. It is still being seen as a route to get into the city from outer suburbs.

The CHAIR: What happens then? Clearly, it's now just a lot more roads to generate a lot more traffic. The community was promised more open space. They were promised this boulevard, if you like, and lots more cycleways. We've had quite a few witnesses talk to us about how disappointed they are that the cycleways haven't really been realised. What is the solution, from your point of view, for the community to get some of what they've been promised instead of what they have now, which is much more congestion and much more road space?

JOSEPH CORDARO: It just comes down to reducing the number of cars using Victoria Road from Gladesville Bridge to Balmain. How one achieves that social objective and behavioural retraining varies. One can toll it and make it financially unattractive. One can just start narrowing it and make it so painful that people just don't want to use it with a car anymore and decide to buy an electric bike. Cyclists are always very happy to push the agenda of using cycling and active transport, but the truth of the matter is—coming from a GP's perspective, and with an ageing population—that a large proportion of the population will never be able to use a bicycle for transport. It's a leisure activity. Luckily, with the advent of electrification and electric bikes, that could be a possibility. Obviously, more bus services would be a big plus. Reducing the cars along Victoria Road, to answer your question succinctly, is the key to the revitalisation of that corridor.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Mr Cordaro, thank you for appearing. How long have you been on council?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Three years.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So since 2021?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Since the election—short of three years, yes.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: To what extent was that council conscious of the likely fallout, given the design and the way that this was going? It has been in the pipeline for quite a long time. Would you be able to describe your awareness, as a council, as to the likely impacts? We have heard on evidence several times now that a lot of this fallout was eminently foreseeable.

JOSEPH CORDARO: The two main impacts were the increased number of cars that were likely to use Victoria Road through Drummoyne and the rat-running. We didn't predict the rat-running. It was overlooked. It wasn't really thought about, whereas the increased number of cars using Victoria Road was thought about. There was a suggestion to the State government of the day to extend the tunnel, as part of the system, to Gladesville Bridge. There is written correspondence between the mayoral office—prior to my time—and Transport for NSW or the relevant Minister to consider extending the tunnel. There was a mayoral minute tabled. That was envisaged. We thought that a number of lanes—six or seven lanes, or whatever it is—ending up at three lanes at the eastern side of Iron Cove Bridge, naturally, was going to create increased congestion and slow traffic down. It's a bottleneck. That was foreseen.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So the increased congestion on Victoria Road—and this is in juxtaposition to the supposed rehabilitation and revitalisation—was definitely foreseen and council made representations, but the rat-running was just overlooked, was it?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Yes, I think so. I think we underestimated the—I didn't; I wasn't part of the council. But the council, in general, underestimated how much people are driven by Google Maps and maps every day. When I get out onto Victoria Road, I put in my destination and go by its guidance. If it means going through back streets, well, that's what I'm going to do if I'm an average consumer.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What was the response from the Government at the time to those concerns about the increased congestion on Victoria Road?

JOSEPH CORDARO: We envisage—if you read the 750-page environmental effect statement of the WestConnex, you will find that we're predicting, with the use of multimodal transport, "there might be a reduction in traffic along Victoria Road".

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So the Government's position was—notwithstanding the council's concerns—that it would be fine?

CORRECTED

JOSEPH CORDARO: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Did you attend the public meeting in March?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Yes, I did.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What was your impression of the meeting?

JOSEPH CORDARO: First of all, I was surprised by how well attended it was. I think everyone was reading off the same page and singing from the same songbook in their frustrations. I was disappointed in the lack of response or answers that the representatives of Transport for NSW had. I think that they were just relying on the group to do their work for them and tell them what was wrong with the place. I thought, "Why haven't they done their homework? And why haven't they, instead of wasting time getting 250 people here and listening to everyone's grievances, almost to let them vent—why not just get on with trying to do something and offer something?"

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That process of venting, of hearing people's concerns—that didn't add any utility to the community's concerns?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Venting always has the utility of making people feel better, somewhat.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What about since then, Councillor? What's your impression of the way forward now? It appears as though there's a general consensus that, given the structural defect of the design, we've kind of—it is what it is, now. We've got it. Going forward, how could we ameliorate some of this?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I will air one aspect of sympathy for Transport for NSW, and I guess they're subject to government policy. I think the difference will happen with the western harbour crossing. That western harbour crossing from Iron Cove up to Naremburn, or the North Shore—that was, if I'm not mistaken, projected to open a year or so after the Rozelle interchange. It has been pushed back to 2028. Now we've got four years of waiting to see what the true vision of the designers of the WestConnex and the Rozelle interchange—how it transpires and whether it will take traffic off the load coming from the west and the south that went across the harbour and take them off the Anzac Bridge. If you take traffic off the Anzac Bridge, it will allow traffic along Victoria Road to flow better and put more cars on the ground. I don't think that one should be planning to fix this problem until that western harbour crossing is finished. I think the one thing that could be done is to bring forward, not take back, the finishing of that link, because that was part of the whole idea.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In terms of the ongoing communication and the opportunity to deal locally with the issue—we understand Transport is dealing with Rozelle and dealing with all the other big issues that you might choose to deal with. But what has been the response and the ongoing engagement with Transport about those local issues and about those local roads? How are they purporting to come back to you after that meeting? Will there be another meeting? Have they said, "We'll look at specific solutions"? They've had a meeting. They've ticked the box. Everyone has vented, but that doesn't result in any changes unless they do something. What has been your impression, going forward?

JOSEPH CORDARO: The latest report that I have is that a traffic study ought to be conducted of all the local roads in Drummoyne that are leading to rat-running, and that—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Have they given you a time line on that? Have they said, "We'll start it next week. Obviously it's urgent. We'd love to get going on it"?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I'm not sure they've even given a commitment that they're going to do it or pay for it. I mean, we have the resources in council to do it, but it will cost a couple of hundred thousand dollars. I'm not sure. Maybe I haven't caught up on my council business matters in the last seven days.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I think it was only an assurance in this Committee—and it's a good one. We welcome it.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I think the Minister, on record, said he would.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, he did. I'm acknowledging that, Mark.

JOSEPH CORDARO: In the last seven days?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: But I wanted to understand, from your perspective—that's fine to say it to this Committee, but it might perhaps be more constructive to say to the council, "We'd like to get going on that." Do you have any communication, ignoring the last seven days—but it's not your impression that it's saying, okay, we're kicking off next week or next month or in the next six months?

CORRECTED

JOSEPH CORDARO: It's not. I guess something is better late than never, but it certainly is at the late stage. I guess, for those who have commented to this inquiry from the public, they're aware that the options for solutions are very limited.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are there any further community meetings proposed by Transport for NSW that you've heard of?

JOSEPH CORDARO: No, I haven't heard of them.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: In the context of my colleague's questions, has the council made representations on the follow-up to the traffic study to the Minister?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I can't answer that. I don't know.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Would you be able to find out for us?

JOSEPH CORDARO: Sure.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You're not going to say no, are you—"No, we don't want one"?

JOSEPH CORDARO: No, I'm not.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Just closing out on this, putting people at the centre of what we do—I believe that's what we all have in common, and it's something that I'm sure is motivating to you to serve on council and certainly in your general practice. What is the feedback from your patients and your constituents about how they're feeling? Obviously, you're absorbing not only the clinical practitioner side of their stress and concern, but also on council. Is that something that is being alleviated by any of these steps, or are you seeing that playing out still with people? What's your feel for how people are feeling in the area of Drummoyne?

JOSEPH CORDARO: I'm very conversant with a lot of my patients, having been there for 30 years. We discuss a lot of things of local interest. They're, I guess, cynical about what solutions are going to be able to be offered. Unfortunately, as I've mentioned previously, it's led to increased distrust of government and good governance because they all have a varied opinion about what has gone wrong, ranging from "it should never have been built at all" to "nobody really cares about people in Drummoyne".

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Dr Cordaro, for appearing today. That is the end of this session. The Committee secretariat will be in touch with anything you have agreed to take on notice plus supplementary questions, and you will have seven days after receiving the transcript to get them back to the Committee, as opposed to the usual 21 days, because of a tight time frame for this Committee.

(The witness withdrew.)

CORRECTED

Mr SIMON GATWARD, Co-chair, Drummoyne Residents' Traffic Committee, affirmed and examined

Ms CLAUDIA CAMPBELL, Co-chair, Drummoyne Residents' Traffic Committee, affirmed and examined

Mr ROGER COLMAN, Drummoyne resident, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome. Would any of you like to provide a short opening statement to the Committee?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence today on the impact of the Rozelle interchange on the residents of Drummoyne. As co-chairs of the Drummoyne Residents' Traffic Committee, Simon and I welcome the opportunity to represent the voice of the Drummoyne community. Our Residents' Traffic Committee was formed post the community town hall that was held in a pub on 24 March. That was following statements that were made by residents as suggestions and noted by the representatives of Transport for NSW who attended, and it was to hold them accountable to the commitment to come back to the community with feedback on those suggestions. Since our formation of our traffic committee, we've advocated for the community and had good engagement with both council, committee members and Transport for NSW. Simon will go into a little bit about what we've done so far.

SIMON GATWARD: Just to add to that, I think, in terms of what we've done with the committee, we've had a good response from everybody who we've worked with. We've put forward a number of recommendations, both formally and informally. Following on from the previous witness, Transport has now come to the table. We had a meeting with them, with council and with us, three weeks ago. I know, following some communication I had with the roads Minister, that they are now funding the traffic review and that's underway now. They gave us a commitment that they would come back by the end of June with a report. However, just a couple of additional comments to that—and, I think, echoing some points that have been made—there remains a high degree of cynicism as to what that report is going to produce, and I think from two perspectives.

Part of the feedback that we'd like to provide to this Committee is that through this whole process—and hopefully we can attempt to change that—the Drummoyne community has been done to. I think the Committee has heard a lot of evidence about the ramifications and consequences, and what the lived experience of the residents is, but that's all been done really without our knowledge, without consultation and without communication. You wake up one day and something's changed. One of the things that we strongly advocated for, and also in meeting with Transport three or four weeks ago, was the study is going to produce a very two-dimensional set of data. What we've asked for is that, through their study process, Transport actually engage with residents to get the local colour, to get the lived experience and add to what otherwise might be a spreadsheet of averages. As we know, averages kill the truth. So on any one given day it might be clear, but the next day it might be awful. So our plea, in addition to the specific changes that we've already identified—and we may go through some of them today—is that Transport continues to engage in a transparent but, more importantly, a consultative way with the residents of Drummoyne.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. What are your key recommendations to the Government? You said you've pulled together some recommendations from the committee. I assume you're going through them in these meetings with Transport for NSW. Maybe if we can start with the recommendations that you're making, if you can do that?

SIMON GATWARD: Sure, I can pick up a couple and I know that there are some more here. There is a whole list, frankly. I think we supplied those in a previous document, but two major ones I can probably pick out; one is the new bus lane on Gladesville Bridge. We believe that's the major cause of the rat-running through East Drummoyne, and the reason for that is it's just not policed. If you know the area, traffic that is stuck in three lanes across Gladesville Bridge now uses the inside lane to bypass that traffic, but in doing so is forced to turn left into Lyons Road. You kind of go, "Why would you do that?" Well, the reason is you can get across Gladesville Bridge quicker, and it's just not policed. I'm guilty of having done it myself. There is no traffic camera. There is no policeman standing on the corner. So there is no point in having a bus lane that is meant to be clear for buses if there is nobody policing it. Further—and we told Transport this—there are three different signs for that bus lane, all giving different information. One says it's 6.00 until 7.00 daily, one says it's 24-hour and one says it's only in the afternoons. So that's one example.

The other example, and I know it's been spoken of, is the very silly bus lane in the second lane across the other side of Iron Cove Bridge. We've heard lots of debate about that. In fact, we debated it with Transport three or four weeks ago. Their response is it's a well considered and thought out safety process to have a bus travelling in the second lane, but then immediately told us that they've told the bus drivers that they don't have to use the bus lane; they can use the left lane, because they're constantly going in and out. That being the case, why have the bus lane in the second lane if you've told the bus drivers not to bother using it? It makes no sense, because you

CORRECTED

end up with only a single lane going across to the other side of Iron Cove Bridge. There are other examples around individual parking areas, and I think the other major one that we reference constantly—and perhaps Claudia can give an example from this morning—is the changed phasing of the traffic lights. Transport told us that they are doing nothing to hold traffic back, whereas all evidence suggests that they are, and I think an example from this morning shows that.

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: I regularly travel to Gladesville in the mornings for training, and then head back around 7.00 or 8.00 in the morning. This morning is a prime example of what happens. Traffic was banked up in the bus lane to turn left into Lyons Road, back to Seymour Street; it's around 200 or 250 metres. Being a resident who lives just on the other side of that, I turned left into Seymour Street because there is no point in me sitting there. But what I also observed and videoed was the westbound traffic from that intersection given a green light while the city-bound traffic is held at a red traffic light, when we're being told that nothing has been changed with the timing of traffic signalling. It is a good 30 seconds of video that I have that shows exactly the opposite. Any time you screenshot what is happening with the traffic on Google Maps, it clearly shows that traffic can be at a standstill, all the way back to the Gladesville Bridge, right up until the last set of traffic lights just before the Iron Cove Bridge, and the Iron Cove Bridge itself will be free and clear. By free and clear, I mean there is next to zero traffic on the Iron Cove Bridge, while traffic is backed up for the whole stretch of Drummoyne right back to the Gladesville Bridge.

The CHAIR: Can I ask for clarification around the traffic light changes that you videoed? Explain to the Committee what the rationale would be, then, with that 30-second difference.

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: It's simply holding traffic back and keeping the balance of traffic clear from the Iron Cove Bridge forward. So the stretch of Victoria Road that is north of the Iron Cove Bridge has very little traffic, but it is congested for the whole stretch of Drummoyne, all the way back to the Gladesville Bridge.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Colman, I think you've suggested you might have other recommendations as well from the committee.

ROGER COLMAN: One thing I've learnt about this is we have to rely on Transport for NSW, because a lot of this is data analytics. It's way beyond the scope of most councils to even comprehend and understand, especially in this inner-city area where you're dealing with such dispersed traffic patterns. Even looking at it, we've got a four-page document from Drummoyne council, we've got 36 pages from the Inner West Council, and really, most people are out of their depth. We delegate to Transport for NSW to put these things through. There is a talent bank deficiency in Transport for NSW in both dealing with people like Transurban and dealing with these sorts of complex matters where there is going to be ricocheted effects all the way through.

Just addressing the key problems I've noticed, I've been in Drummoyne since 1977, for 30 years in total. I've had gaps in between to St Georges Crescent. Running through it quite simply, Anzac Bridge is a choke point that has to be addressed before we clean up everything else. Number two is how do we treat Victoria Road? Is it going to remain an artery or not? If it remains an artery, it should remain virtually seven days a week, 12 hours a day, 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., which ran perfectly well in the 2000 Olympics when we had, essentially, a 24-hour clearway there. It's never going to go back to having green trees around there; it's too valuable an artery to do so. None of the traffic dispersion was correctly modelled. I have relatives and my family living in the south side of WestConnex, around Annandale, Forest Lodge and Glebe, working at the RPA and going to university—my son did there. None of the traffic dispersion could accurately have been modelled because of WestConnex until after the event. The rapidity of the Transport for NSW response to what it knew or should have known was going to be a bit of a mess should happen—did happen.

Probably the last thing relates to the way Transurban gets a benefit, relatively speaking, compared with the free road system that we're trying to maintain and keep off the State Government budget. We've got four pedestrian crossings in Victoria Road in Drummoyne. Two of them are one sided only. Two of them are two side. Because of the nature of how people walk across pedestrian crossings with their mobile, ambling slowly, we should make all four crossings north or south side only. At least we could turn left or right into Victoria Road heading south or north if that was to happen.

We're getting back to what we discussed: lane cameras. In 1977 at Birkenhead Point, police would be standing on the other side of Terry Street, Balmain, catching people crossing Iron Cove Bridge. We don't have the police anymore. The lane cameras are essentially—I think they're still cameras. They should be movie cameras. If somebody doesn't turn left, book them. Probably the most important thing for where we all live on the east side—it's been hemispherically cut off. There are only three main north-south streets, as Simon did in his diagrams. We need to stop people using it. We need to have no left turns at all at Seymour Street, Lyons Road and probably Edwin Street to stop all rat-running in the centre of our living space. It's pretty tight already.

CORRECTED

There are no real public transport solutions for this. The bus services are excellent already; it's just a question of getting them moving. Ferries simply do not have the catchment. They're normally pointed at a point at the end, with a few houses able to walk safely to it—or less of an inconvenience. So, really, clearing Victoria Road and making it work rapidly is probably necessary right through, all the way through to Anzac Bridge. And something has to be done about making Anzac Bridge five-three instead of four-four, like we do with the Harbour Bridge and like we do in Drummoyne when we convert Victoria Road from three-three to four-two lanes. A few of those things are very simple. Transport for NSW should jump into action. If they don't have people who can jump into action, we have to replace those people or have State Government put in the data analytic capability across all State Government if that level of depth is required to do these things properly and make sure they're instituted properly. That's it from me on this bit.

The CHAIR: Thank you. What has the response been from Transport for NSW—you said you met with them a few weeks ago—to these recommendations? Are they looking at picking up and adopting any of the recommendations?

SIMON GATWARD: "Not yet" would, I think, be a fair answer. On the positive side, they met with us and council. It did take a bit of effort to get them there, but they met with us. The major question from them was "Have you seen any improvement?" and "We're going to do a study." In terms of the recommendations, I don't think any of us are qualified to comment as to whether they're good or bad recommendations, but they seem pretty obvious to most. I think those are going to be thrown into the mix. Those that we did discuss—again I use the example of putting a traffic camera on the bus lane—seem to take more effort than I would believe it should.

The CHAIR: May I ask who you met with? Either provide it on notice, or you could tell us now in terms of the transport officials, I'm assuming.

SIMON GATWARD: Sure. I'll provide it on notice because I can't remember.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I'll go to questions by the Opposition. Ms Ward?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Chair. Thank you all for taking the time to come along today. I know this is voluntary, and you're obviously concerned enough to spend time forming this committee and putting forward solutions. Thank you for your submission to this Committee and also for your work with the community. You've put forward some very practical recommendations and I accept what you say—that you're not traffic experts. But, equally, you are residents. You are people that observe every day, as you've indicated, what the problems seem to be and put forward what seem to be some very sensible recommendations. Have each of those recommendations been responded to by Transport? Have they said, "We'll get back to you on that" or, "We just can't do that for these reasons"? Has there been a response to each of those?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: Not individually to the recommendations. What they committed to at the meeting that we held with them about three or four weeks ago with Canada Bay council was that once the traffic study was completed, they would be coming back to the table with us, whether that be to council directly and then to us as the resident traffic committee or as a three-way again. But the individual recommendations that we've provided have not been responded to.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Did they provide any response, or is there any opportunity to have those formally considered? The traffic study is one thing; obviously I welcome that. That's great. But that may or may not deal with these specific recommendations. That's right, isn't it?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: Correct.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: They seem very practical—signage, a bus lane. Either you can do it and you go ahead and do it, or you can't—let us know why. But it doesn't seem like a traffic study is going to actually deal with those direct recommendations.

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: As an example, one of the recommendations that we provided in terms of moving the bus lane back to the left lane—it seemed, from the feedback that Transport for NSW represented in that meeting, that they weren't intending to move it back.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Did they say why?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: Different reasons were given. The thinking was that keeping the left lane as a left turn only would allow left-turning traffic to access Balmain. But beyond Terry Street and Darling Street intersections, it's virtually an empty lane because not many people use it post those two intersections. The second reason given was in terms of pedestrian safety for traffic turning left. I can't see how that adds to pedestrian safety, keeping the bus lane in the middle. If anything, we consider that to be more risky. Having been a resident to a Wolseley Street intersection entrance, where traffic enters Victoria Road on Wolseley Street at my end of

CORRECTED

Drummoyne—a bus basically crushed a car into the bus stop because it didn't see a car turning. I see that as the real risk of keeping the bus lane in the middle along Victoria Road, because it's only a matter of time before that happens again.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Colman, did you have anything to add to this?

ROGER COLMAN: All I can say is that it's an expertise issue between us—the public—and what the data analytics have required and the way you measure it. It is really a difficult field. We're way out of our depth compared with the data that they've got available. We rely on their good talent to be able to do this. I think what the Committee needs to do is examine what talent is sitting inside there and see if it's up to scratch on world-class responses and planning on these sorts of issues. That's all I'd like to say on that.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you. Do you have anything to add, Mr Gatward?

SIMON GATWARD: The only point is that in the original list we put together there were probably 20-odd recommendations. In our initial correspondence to Transport we said, "Any one of these you can tick off as being not meaningful or not relevant but, when looked at collectively, they are meaningful." I think part of the challenge is that you can look at any one and say, "No, can't do that, can't do that, can't do that," and justify them individually. To all of the comments, we're not traffic experts, but there's a list of things that we think are worthy of consideration. If the answer is no, then fine. Give us a different option, then.

They're also very small things. In reflecting on some of the other evidence and going back to the data study, I think it was probably two weeks ago that there was a crash on the M8, and it completely clogged up the system. In some parts of east Drummoyne, you only need an extra six cars—not 60 but six cars—at one junction and the place gets gridlocked. There's an example where the removal of two car park spaces would actually solve part of that problem. It kind of goes back to the point you've made about the data study. When we hear data around Victoria Road of 80,000 car movements a day—when you have an issue of two cars, it doesn't even make the decimal point. It's easy to dismiss any one of those but, when looked at as a total package, we're looking at kind of major improvement from a series of small things. It is a complex issue and it's probably a series of small things are going to help fix it.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: And you don't have to be an expert to observe as a local resident what you can see every day and what perhaps might alleviate that.

SIMON GATWARD: Correct. I don't want to go through the list but some of them you kind of look at them and there is not a pub in Australia in which they would pass the test.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In your submission, Mr Gatward helpfully suggested that a formal structure be established to engage with the community in responding to these points and ongoing. Is that something that Transport has indicated they would be supportive of?

SIMON GATWARD: No.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Have you had any response to that or is it, "We'll get back to you after the traffic study in June"?

SIMON GATWARD: It would be fair to say I think we've confused them. The hierarchy is Transport deals with council, and residents get involved "as and when we choose that they shall be". In the three-way meeting we had with them three weeks ago, I think there is now some confusion as to whether Transport should deal with council, Transport should deal with us, council should deal with us. Who is dealing with who? I think that's probably a fair question to ask. I think our point is—and probably the reason we existed in the first place is—residents didn't see council stepping up. That may or may not be a fair accusation, but they weren't.

My observation is that there is a huge power imbalance between Transport and council, both in terms of understanding—in terms of myriad things. And I've always advocated that we shouldn't exist if council were doing their job. That's not a criticism of council other than it's just a reality. Somewhere in this mix, whether it be Transport directly or whether it be through council, what I don't want to see happen is that the voice of the residents disappears—and that's a voice with faces, not a voice through a website or a voice through a survey. It's real people with the real lived experience.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In fact, it may not be something to be afraid of. It might be something that's very welcome and it might be very constructive. It might actually help resolution of the issue.

SIMON GATWARD: Our view is: We are not experts, but we are not dumb.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Just to finish on that then, if this Committee were to consider making a recommendation that a formal structure be put in place between the residents committee, council and Transport

CORRECTED

for NSW with a point person that could really progress this and say, "Right, we've got a time line, we've got a June traffic study, we'd like to look at the specific options and go through them," this potentially is something that could be very constructive and get the thing dealt with. It might not be perfect but it's a very good step and better than what may or may not be in place. Is that something that you would agree with and support?

SIMON GATWARD: Absolutely.

ROGER COLMAN: They should be on the ground. Pretty well as soon as the thing opened—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: They've got you.

ROGER COLMAN: —they should have been on the ground in East Drummoyne. They should have been on the ground in Rozelle. They should have had 10 to 20 people out there looking at stuff and actually talking to people or drivers in the lanes waiting to get onto Victoria Road. That's what should have been done. I just want to repeat back the most important thing. They took eight to nine lanes of traffic into a four-lane Anzac Bridge a.m., reverse on the p.m. The other side of Anzac Bridge splits into seven roads just after the Harris Street turn-off. There is a concrete barrier 20 centimetres tall on Anzac Bridge. There has obviously got to be an extra lane put in on the left-hand side all the way to the Harris Street first exit, but eight to nine into four and then an exit, three into Bathurst Street, two into Cross City Tunnel, two to the Harbour Bridge.

You can add it up. That's the thing that could be most easily solved. There will be a construction component; it may be 10 million or 20 million bucks compared with the billions we did spend. The other thing is—and this is more important—the imbalance between Transurban, which is a perpetual organisation compared with politicians who are here for a term or two, the talent difference, the preference to Transurban to keep no traffic backed up inside the tunnel but bank us up in Drummoyne is what half the problem is. That's what Claudia mentioned outright: this 30-second delay to make sure there's no back-up in the tunnel.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I want to tease out some of this interesting thing which has come out, this kind of disconnect between council and yourselves, because we heard on evidence earlier today there seemed to be some ambiguity or doubt about this traffic study, which we've now just heard on evidence that it's actually underway. Not only has it been funded; it's underway, as opposed to the vagueness of the evidence before, which was not sure. So councillors haven't been liaising with you as a group at all on what's going on? You're not talking to each other?

SIMON GATWARD: We met with the mayor and the general manager of Canada Bay council. I can't speak for other councillors, but we're working directly with the mayor and the general manager. That's the current status.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I found it a bit strange that the previous councillor who gave evidence didn't know about the traffic study, so obviously the communication's breaking down.

SIMON GATWARD: Ask council. Don't know.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Basically, from what I've heard from your evidence, we've got this traffic study. As you, I think, Mr Colman, have stated on a number of occasions, the data will be quite sophisticated and high level, but there needs to be some practical bent on it, if you like—the meshing of the two together. You would be happy, I'm presuming, if your input was given into—has there been any dialogue on the parameters of the study and how it would work, what are the inputs at a higher level, just so you get some comfort around it? Or is it just, "Let us go off and do the study"? At one level you can understand Transport for NSW saying there has to be an objective, data-driven analysis on what the problem is before you can come up with the solution. They can't really recommend recommendations until they have the data. But has there been any dialogue on the parameters of that study and how it would work?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: No. What Transport for NSW presented to us were the data collection points in and around Drummoyne, including the local roads that are impacted by rat-running. That was the extent of information that we were provided in the meeting that was held with them and council a few weeks ago and the commitment to have that study completed by the end of June.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: It would help if you had some input into that process.

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: What we represented to council and Transport for NSW at that meeting was the imperative to include the lived experience and not to simply rely on two-dimensional data to make decisions and recommendations.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: This "two-dimensional data" phrase has been used a couple of times. Can we just articulate on what we mean by that?

CORRECTED

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: It's time and volume that they're measuring—time, speed. It doesn't include the real experience. You're talking about averages. It might be an average of 20 minutes across a 24-hour period, but if you look at the peak periods, which is not limited to Monday to Friday a.m. peak—increasingly it's evening and weekends as well now.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So these experiential nuances won't be picked up?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: No. Correct.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I understand the concern. And also just this reconciliation between councillors, your elected representatives, Transport for NSW and you as the voice of the residents, if you like, so you say you're meeting with—are there regular meetings to update you on the dialogue? What is happening with that? Are there more meetings to come? Is it that you're waiting for the traffic study, and then, sometime in the future, council and you may coalesce around—I don't understand the process.

ROGER COLMAN: I just make it quite clear, there should have been a letterbox poll. In politics and business, they don't walk the dirt. My businesses, we always used to walk the dirt. Where are all these people working for Transport for NSW walking around at 7.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. in the morning making their observations? They're relying on our observations. How do we make observations appear directly in front of them? They should be polling. They should be doing this progressively every four weeks, just like you do before a major election campaign, right? You do the polling. You keep collecting all the information you can. You get all the recommendations together and filter them. They should be doing this. As I say, I don't have the time to go into data analytics. I don't know who in our local suburbs has that skill base. My brother was a town planner for the Victorian State Government. It's very complex stuff just to work out where to build a high school.

SIMON GATWARD: To answer your question, it is unclear as to what's going to happen next. I think the answer is we have to wait for the traffic study. It's clear and evident that nothing is going to happen until that study has been done. In terms of regular meetings with the council or Transport, no, there isn't. It has been an awful lot of lobbying on our part to have got that meeting to happen.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: To get in the door, yes.

SIMON GATWARD: That's okay. That's what we existed for, right? In terms of formalising the next steps and any structure thereafter, there is no agreed format. We are in a bit of an abeyance until that study has been done. In answer to one of the questions earlier, we're not confused. We're an advocacy group and we'll continue to advocate and be annoying to get stuff happening. Transport aren't clear who they should deal with.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay, that's good evidence. Chair, when's our reporting date?

The CHAIR: It is 15 July.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: One of the problems is we missed the boat with the traffic study because, ideally, what you want is a tripartite forum with council, you and Transport for NSW to have some sort of nuanced input into the traffic study, prior to June. That would be ideal.

The CHAIR: Prior to June? That's two days.

SIMON GATWARD: There are two steps. One is the lived experience piece, which adds colour—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sorry, was it the end of June that they were going to do it?

SIMON GATWARD: They said they would report back by the end of June. Let me be clear: The end of June is when the study will be complete.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So in an ideal world, in the next month, it would be good if you and council, as a collective, had input into it?

SIMON GATWARD: At the broader community—not just four people.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Picking up that constructive point, you've agreed that would be useful, but would it also be useful—in your submission you talked about having ongoing engagement in a formal sense, with a formalised group that says, "Yes, we'll have that input in June. We'll get the report back and then we'd like to keep working with you, constructively."

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: Correct.

The CHAIR: Can I ask about the congestion and impacts from day one, when the Rozelle interchange opened? Then there was a change in terms of pushing some of the impacts back further to Drummoyne. What is

CORRECTED

the situation like now, over the past few weeks? Is it just as bad? Are people changing their behaviour a bit? Is it still as frustrating as it was in terms of being stuck in those local roads? What's it like now?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: I think the shortest answer is you never know what you're going to get. It's quite random. There is the general a.m. peak. There is very often now also an evening peak and on the weekends. You never know how long it's going to take you to get out of the suburb. Then, once you're out, you don't know what it's going to be like when you get back, to get back in.

ROGER COLMAN: Could I add to that? The Committee should understand that it's also a Saturday and Sunday problem. We are jam-packed on some days. Around 12 noon is a disaster. I'd also like to bring Birkenhead Point into this. Nobody in their right mind would allow a shopping centre to be built with only one access road to it. On public holidays and most weekends, either Transport for NSW or the local council has got to do something about getting rid of the traffic congestion there. Particularly Saturdays and Sundays can only be solved by a seven-days, 12-hour clearway in Victoria Road, because it's a disaster there. Most shopkeepers have made parking already available in their backsides. Very few commercial premises will be damaged by going 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., seven days a week.

The CHAIR: I wanted to ask about the public transport options. Mr Colman, you said that you didn't think there was too much there in terms of solutions, because buses seem to run well and there is probably not much to do with ferries. We wanted to get others' views on that. Ms Campbell, what do you think in terms of public transport improvements that could be made?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: Ferry services in terms of numbers have improved, but a number of people seeking to get the ferry are often left stranded. I catch it from Drummoyne. I wasn't aware that ferries have capacity limits. They very often aren't able to stop to pick up any more passengers. Even now that ferry services have increased in number, you still often have the circumstance where they're simply too full. One of the feedback points that we have seen come from the community is to implement services that start further down Parramatta River so that, once you get to suburbs along Canada Bay, there's still capacity to be able to accept more passengers.

Buses are the other option. That's the other way I generally travel into town. What you find is that since buses have been privatised, and since COVID, the number of bus services has reduced and has not returned to pre-COVID service levels. In addition, they are frequently cancelled or simply run late. The feedback at the meeting from Transport for NSW on bus services is that they measure on-time running separately to cancellations. I suggested that should be a combined metric because, as a bus passenger, I'm not measuring on-time running separately to cancellations. I need to get where I need to go.

The CHAIR: Thank you. That's really useful. I'll come to you in a second, Mr Gatward. With the ferries and the situation of there being too many passengers and the ferries being full to capacity, did that increase markedly once the interchange opened or was that a situation that was building? How much did you notice post-opening of the interchange?

CLAUDIA CAMPBELL: I can't comment too much on that—only that my observation is that there are still the instances, particularly around weekends, which tend to be busier for ferry traffic. But I think the ferry schedule is reduced at the weekends. You find yourself stranded at the wharf.

The CHAIR: Mr Gatward, you had something as well?

SIMON GATWARD: The only point I was going to make was there's a very large focus on getting into the city and out again, which is probably right. That's demonstrated by Transport telling us 100 times that it's only two minutes longer now to get from the base of Gladesville Bridge to Anzac Bridge. A lot of our residents aren't going to the city; they're trying to move across the suburb. There is no bus that takes you two kilometres, but that two-kilometre journey to drop the kids at school, take an elderly patient to the doctor or get to the shops has gone from a five-minute journey to a 20-minute journey. That's where the major pain points are. A lot of our recommendations, and certainly community feedback, are not just about how long it takes to get to the city and out again. It's how quickly I can get my kids to school.

Maybe if I can add to that, it is then the safety issue of getting my kids—they're not my kids; I don't have any—or getting the kids to school. Rat-running is not an everyday occurrence but when it happens—and I think this is a point we've made in our submission—people who are rat-running are not reasonable and rational drivers. They are already frustrated because they've been in traffic for a long period of time. They're using our local streets, which are not built for large volumes of traffic, and are not overly welcoming or overly well engaged with the road rules. So people walking their kids to school and trying to get across Victoria Road are now dealing with frustrated commuters trying to get to their meeting or tradies trying to get to a job. It's not just the volume of the traffic. It's also now the speed of the traffic and the impact on the safety of pedestrians, who are now, if you will,

CORRECTED

forced to walk—and probably to their health benefit—but it's now unsafe in many of the junctions for them to do that.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for appearing before the Committee today and for your work for your community for this Committee. I'm sure you've spent many hours looking into this project now. We really appreciate it. That's the end of today's hearing. The Committee will be in touch with you if you did agree to take any questions on notice. Be mindful that you will need to respond seven days after you receive the transcript as opposed to 21 days because of the Committee's tight time frame.

SIMON GATWARD: Sure.

ROGER COLMAN: We would like to thank you very much for listening to us.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you very much for your time and your efforts.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 13:00.