

# **GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 4**

**Tuesday 20 September 2005**

**Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area**

## **ROADS**

**The Committee met at 8.00 p.m.**

### **MEMBERS**

The Hon. J. A. Gardiner (Chair)

The Hon. A. R. Fazio  
The Hon. D. T. Harwin  
The Hon. J. Jenkins  
The Hon. D. E. Oldfield

The Hon. P. T. Primrose  
Ms L. Rhiannon  
The Hon. I. W. West

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### **PRESENT**

**The Hon. J. G. Tripodi**, *Minister for Roads*

**Roads and Traffic Authority**  
**Mr P. Forward**, *Chief Executive*  
**Mr B. Skinner**, *Director, Finance*

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**CHAIR:** I declare this meeting open to the public. I welcome everyone to the public hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4, and personally wish to thank the Minister, the Hon. Joe Tripodi, and his departmental officers for attending this evening. At this meeting the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Roads.

Before questions commence, some procedural matters need to be dealt with. I point out that in accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for broadcast of proceedings, which are available from the Chamber support officers and committee clerks, only members of the Committee and witnesses may be filmed and recorded. The people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee, you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation you place on anything said before the Committee. With respect to delivery of messages, the usual provisions prevail. In terms of divisions, Minister, can you advise whether you will need to attend any divisions in the Assembly during the hearing?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is possible.

**CHAIR:** We will continue questioning your officers in your absence for divisions. I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination. Minister, do you wish to make a brief opening statement?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** No.

**CHAIR:** Despite having \$741.1 million on offer from the Federal Government this financial year, and \$2,488.7 million over the next five years, including \$1,946.5 million for construction and upgrade of New South Wales roads, can you explain why the New South Wales Government has not yet signed up to the AusLink agreement?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, as the State Minister, I would be quite keen to secure the best deal I can for New South Wales motorists and taxpayers. The Government is of the view that the current offer does not provide enough to New South Wales. It is consistent with the \$13 billion in GST that we pay to the Commonwealth and the \$10 billion that we get back. It is pretty much an application of that same policy. Between 1987 and 1999, State roads across the country received 21 per cent of excise income that was collected by the Commonwealth. Under the current proposal we are receiving only 12 per cent back in funding for State roads. So the New South Wales Government is of the view that the deal is extremely raw when it comes to funding roads in this State. As a consequence, the negotiations are still going on. Of course, there are other elements to the AusLink proposal, including industrial relations obligations. I, as a State Minister, do not know why on earth one would connect road funding to industrial relations conditions and impositions. Obviously, the New South Wales Government is not happy about that matter. So we are trying to seek concessions on that front also.

**CHAIR:** Would you not agree, given that the Roads budget obviously is a very large slice of the State budget, that is, taxpayers' money, that work practices and the like would be relevant to putting together budgets, in particular, for any particular road project?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** No. I think labour productivity is increased by keeping the State industrial relations system intact, and not having any of the Commonwealth arrangements imposed on New South Wales. The current State industrial relations system is well received by workers. It makes for a happy and safe work environment, and it prevents clashes between employers and employees. That is, the current arrangements in this State best suit productivity and the welfare of New South Wales workers.

**CHAIR:** Do you accept that involvement in the AusLink program will drive down road fatalities in New South Wales?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, more money would reduce the incidence of road accidents, and that is one of the primary reasons that I am continuing to negotiate with Federal counterparts to secure a better deal for New South Wales.

**CHAIR:** Does not the delay in signing up to AusLink reflect directly on projects like the upgrade at Bonville, where people's lives are being lost?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The tender process for the Bonville upgrade has begun. Its progress has not been held up by any funding matters. It is a matter of having to go through the tender process, and the successful tenderer completing the detail of the design for the road. That can proceed in a normal fashion. We expect the physical work to start next year.

**CHAIR:** What time next year is it meant to start?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That will depend on the private contractor who has been selected and how quickly the contractor can start on the project.

**CHAIR:** Is there any indication of mid-year?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It will depend on the private contractor and how quickly the contractor is able to apply itself to doing the design work and so on. I expect it would possibly be in the second half of 2006.

**CHAIR:** Can you tell the Committee where the money that was allocated in budget papers since 1988 for the Bonville deviation has gone, and to which part of the Government's budget it has been allocated?

**Mr FORWARD:** It is false to claim that money has been included in the budget papers for Bonville but moved elsewhere. If you go back and look at the budget papers—and I have done that recently—they illustrate that about \$12 million has been allocated for Bonville and has been spent on Bonville. It has been spent on property acquisition, project management, geotechnical work and design of the project. So the money that was in the budget papers has been spent on Bonville.

**CHAIR:** In which budget year was that spent?

**Mr FORWARD:** It has been in a number of budget papers over the last two years and has been spent to acquire property and to do design work and geotechnical work for the road. Any money that has been in the budget paper has been spent on this project and has not been re-allocated elsewhere.

**CHAIR:** When the tender is finalised, can construction get under way straight away?

**Mr FORWARD:** The contractor will have to establish on site. The contractor will then start to go through a detailed design process, and then will need to clear the site. It goes through a normal process, but at this point in time the work is under way to achieve the time frame that the Minister has just outlined.

**CHAIR:** Minister, in one comment to the media you said that it would start in July 2006. Are you happy to stand by that commencement date?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That is consistent with the answer I provided earlier, which is in the second half of 2006.

**CHAIR:** Yes, but that could be December.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That is right. It could be July, or August, but in the second half of the year. July would be the preferred date. Obviously, the earlier the better. The RTA will do all it can to facilitate the progress of the private contractor.

**CHAIR:** Once the tender has been let and the work commenced, what is the estimated completion time?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I believe it is about two years.

**CHAIR:** With the additional money that is being reaped by the State due to record fuel prices, will the New South Wales Government allocate more of the GST windfall it got from the Federal Government back into road funding?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, the extra GST money that will be collected by the Commonwealth will have to be sent through to the States through the funding formula. As you are aware, New South Wales is receiving only \$10 billion back of the \$13 billion we are paying. How much money will flow back to the State of New South Wales, as opposed to other States, will depend on the funding formula.

**CHAIR:** I guess the answer is "No"?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It will depend on the Commonwealth Government.

**CHAIR:** Why did the Government underspend by \$7 million the allocation in last year's budget for the Alstonville bypass? According to the budget papers \$19.6 million was allocated and spending was only \$6.4 million.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The Government recognises the development of the east-west routes in the North Coast region as a high priority, and we support the construction of the Alstonville bypass. Detailed design work, property acquisition and other preconstruction activities have been completed for the project. However, the start of construction works has been delayed as a direct result of the Federal Government's 2004 decision to reduce funding to New South Wales by \$1.5 billion over five years following changes to the Commonwealth Grants Commission funding formula.

**CHAIR:** You are going to blame the State Government's underfunding on the Federal Government?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** When it comes to works on the Pacific Highway the State Government has been showing leadership. It has been investing \$160 million per annum as opposed to the Federal Government's \$60 million per annum.

**CHAIR:** Which is a top-up really. It is a State road.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** All the roads in New South Wales are State roads.

**CHAIR:** What happened to the \$7 million you underspent on the Alstonville bypass? Where did that go?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The start of the major project works has been delayed as a direct result of the Federal Government's 2004 decision to reduce funding to New South Wales by \$1.5 billion over five years.

**CHAIR:** Is it correct that the finish date for the Alstonville bypass date has now blown out to 2008?

**Mr FORWARD:** The finishing date for the Alstonville bypass depends on when it is started and when the contractor is able to do the work.

**CHAIR:** It is a piece of string really. You do not know. Why has the Ballina bypass been delayed for four years until 2008? In 1997 the annual report of the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] said that the expected completion date was 2004.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The property acquisitions, design and detailed investigation for the Ballina bypass are being advanced following planning approval. In April 2004 the Government announced that this work would be pushed back by 12 months in response to funding cuts from the Federal Government. The 2005-06 budget allocation for the Ballina bypass is \$5 million to allow preconstruction activities, including property acquisition of critical properties and preliminary earthworks on some embankments for necessary preloading over soft soils. The commencement date

for construction has not been fixed as yet and is subject to negotiations between the Federal and State governments.

**Mr FORWARD:** Can I just add to that answer? Ballina is, perhaps, one of the most complicated pieces of engineering works on the Pacific Highway. The point the Minister made about soft soils needs to be understood by the Committee. What we mean by "soft soils" is soils that compact when they are loaded with construction activity— asphalt and concrete. I am not talking about a matter of centimetres, I am talking about metres potentially. The compacting of the soil in Ballina is estimated to fall as much as six metres. That means that if you were to load up that soil by an extra six metres when you come back in a couple of years' time it would be at ground level. It is a huge construction task, and we are now trying to understand the weight that needs to be put on that soil to ensure that it is a stable area to be constructed on.

**CHAIR:** Can you tell us what the New South Wales Government's contribution will be to the F3 to Branxton link project?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that that is part of the national highway network and, therefore, should be the responsibility of the Federal Government. The F3 to Braxton project is estimated to cost \$765 million in today's dollars. This figure has been revised since the initial estimate, as the RTA now has a more accurate estimate of the cost of purchasing the affected properties, better information on the cost of adjusting affected utilities and a more precise understanding of the earthworks and bridge works required. This figure also reflects prevailing industry costs, current market prices for steel and fuel, and difficulties in obtaining skilled tradespeople. Under the Federal Government's proposed AusLink agreement the Federal Government will provide 80 per cent of the cost of building the link. Therefore, it is up to it to decide the timing of the project.

**CHAIR:** You are not going to allocate State funds to the project?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The allocation of State funds would occur once the Commonwealth comes to the party. At the moment it still has not come to the party on that.

**CHAIR:** The Commonwealth has not committed any funds to the project?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Has it?

**CHAIR:** Has it?

**Mr FORWARD:** There are funds in the forward projections for that project.

**CHAIR:** In the Commonwealth's forward projections?

**Mr FORWARD:** Correct.

**CHAIR:** Would that not come under the description of coming to the party?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** No.

**CHAIR:** It just hangs out there?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** When we receive the money, then obviously we will be able to make a decision.

**CHAIR:** You have to have the money in the bank?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Given the nature of the relationship between the Commonwealth and State governments, I think commitments of this nature are necessary for progress.

**CHAIR:** It has given you that commitment in relation to Bonville—it is prepared to give the bank funds—to make sure that it gets under way as soon as possible.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The offer for Bonville is to take money from other parts of the Pacific Highway and to apply it to Bonville. Obviously, we have concerns about the whole of the Pacific Highway. It is not extra money. The offer of that money is not relevant because the matter is progressing as quickly as possible. We are confident that we will be able to fund that project.

**CHAIR:** Fund it out of State funds?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Out of our current funding, yes.

**CHAIR:** The whole Bonville project?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Yes. Money is not the issue there. Some \$127 million has been allocated for the Bonville deviation.

**Mr FORWARD:** What the Minister has pointed out is that currently Bonville is not a money problem. Money is set aside in future programs for Bonville. We are going through a process, and we must go through a proper process, to determine the best contractor to build the project and build it in such a way that satisfies environmental conditions that have been laid down for the project.

**CHAIR:** Why has it taken so long to get to this point?

**Mr FORWARD:** You might recall with Bonville that the local community had considerably strong views about the project and where the route should go. The RTA came up with an agreed route. The community strongly objected to that route. We then went back and did another environmental impact statement on that route. It was only in December of last year, 2004, that we received planning approval for the project.

Like a lot of these projects, they are complex. They are going through sensitive areas. It is an area on which we must consult with the community and work with the community to find the best possible route for that particular project. We have done that on Bonville and we now believe that we have a project that the community is happy with; but if we had gone through the previous route, there would have been a lot of opposition from the community. So we are reflecting the community standards and the needs of the community and we are trying to meet them as best we can.

**CHAIR:** When did the close of tenders go out?

**Mr FORWARD:** They have gone out recently.

**CHAIR:** Why has there been a gap between last year and recently? You got planning approval?

**Mr FORWARD:** We then go through a shortlist with the contractors. Can I say that in New South Wales at the moment there is a construction boom going on. We are finding that contractors are finding it difficult to provide project managers for some of these projects. They are not able to start at the drop of a hat and they are not able to bring in skilled resources, skilled equipment and high-tech equipment to carry out these projects on short-term notice. It takes them a lot of time. Most of the equipment is currently being utilised. You have to wait for other jobs to be finished before they can actually allocate them to projects like this. There is a construction boom happening in Australia at the moment. Engineering companies that I talk to—and I talked to them recently—are going to New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and now they are even going to central Europe seeking engineers. They cannot get enough engineers in Australia at the moment.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Minister, prior to March 2003, Minister Scully allocated funds for preliminary investigations on the widening of the Spit Bridge. What funds were allocated during this initial phase of the proposal to widen the Spit Bridge?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Are you asking me what moneys were allocated back then?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Yes.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The Government has announced a major upgrade of the Spit Bridge to add two lanes to the western side with a footway for pedestrians and cyclists, providing a total of six lanes. The bridge carries approximately 68,000 vehicles per day. Development applications for the proposal were lodged with Mosman and Manly councils in 2003. Agreed conditions of consent were issued by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources to Mosman and Manly councils in July 2005, instructing the councils to approve the development applications. I understand that the councils did not act to approve the project, so consent was deemed on 2 August. The development application has also been considered by the Maritime Authority. Subject to planning and approval, construction could commence in 2006. A contract for detailed design of the project was awarded to Connell Wagner in May this year.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** How much money in total has been allocated to the widening of the Spit Bridge so far?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** At the moment?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Yes.

**Mr FORWARD:** I do not have the exact figure, but as the Minister has already outlined, it has to go through a proper planning process. There are two councils involved. The councils have some views in terms of approval and so too has the Minister for Planning.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I understand. I wonder, though, if you could take on notice a question about how much in the 2005-06 budget has been allocated for the widening of the Spit Bridge project. Thank you.

**The Hon. JON JENKINS:** I have two very quick questions. Minister, could you clarify since you have taken over the Roads portfolio recently whether there will be any changes in fees or requirements for registering larger vehicles, including four wheel drives?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Have there been any changes?

**The Hon. JON JENKINS:** Have there been, or will there be?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Well, I have not had any. Just four wheel drives?

**The Hon. JON JENKINS:** Larger vehicles. I mean, it is very hard to classify what a four wheel drive is.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The number of four wheel drives registered in New South Wales has significantly increased in recent years, leading to considerable public concerns over their safety. Safety risks of four wheel drives that include rollover risk, visibility while reversing, increased pedestrian injury and incompatibility with other vehicles. In terms of proposals to increase fees, my understanding is that the National Transport Commission is currently involved in the process and submissions have been put into that. I have not received any papers following the process asking for submissions, so I have not been presented with any proposals at this stage to consider any fee.

**The Hon. JON JENKINS:** And the same question applies to licences with regard to driving larger vehicles and perhaps also towing caravans, horse floats and heavy trailers. Do you have any proposals to change the licensing requirements or licence fees for vehicles that are towing other vehicles?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Once again, I have not received any proposals. I have not received any proposals. None has come across my desk involving fee increases or licences.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Just back on what the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner was speaking about at Branxton. I understand that that is a long way off, but is there any expectation as to a date when that might be completed?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously it would depend on when it starts.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Is there any understanding of what the length of time for construction is, then?

**Mr FORWARD:** It really depends on how the project is funded. The amount of money that the Commonwealth has put in is not adequate to fund even 80 per cent of the project, so it really depends on discussion with the Commonwealth in terms of the overall funding of this project. At the eastern end, where it goes through some very rugged country, there are some very challenging engineering matters that need to be overcome before a start date can be given to that project.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** And we probably need to send overseas for engineers because of all the construction that is going on in New South Wales.

**Mr FORWARD:** It is a matter of getting the cue, I think.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Has there been any noticeable decrease in the number of cars on the road since the fuel cost increases occurred in recent times?

**Mr FORWARD:** That is a hard question to answer because the traffic in Sydney normally goes through a bit of a cycle. As you would be aware, certainly during school holidays, there is a lot less traffic on the roads. In fact, the peak period for traffic on our roads is usually March-April, when the universities and all the schools have returned and most people have actually returned from their summer holidays. Throughout the year, traffic tends to marginally drop off as it gets towards the end of the year as people start to have holidays, so it is a difficult question to answer in terms of what is happening. But the view of our transport management centre is that, although there is no evidence of this, there has possibly been a marginal reduction in traffic.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Is the Government considering, given the increases in the price of fuel and environmental concerns, subsidies for gas conversions for ordinary motorists?

**Mr FORWARD:** That is not an area for the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA].

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** You are not concerned with what is on the roads?

**Mr FORWARD:** Fuel standards are improving and have improved dramatically in Australia. It is a national issue in terms of national standards for fuel. Throughout Australia at the moment the fuel companies are engaged in extensive research into cleaner fuels. There are some higher European standards in terms of motor vehicles, which means that emissions will improve over time, and have improved over time to date.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Has the Government essentially seen itself as opting out of road construction, or are we likely to see more road construction by Government expenditure rather than the private sector?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The State Government has no intention of reducing expenditure on publicly funded roads. Obviously, we are also open to the possibility of privately financed roads to become an integral part of procurement in New South Wales.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** I just want to know what has happened to the filtration trial.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that the appropriate process of preparing for that trial still is under way.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Why has it taken over 12 months to find a successful manufacturer—to announce who that successful manufacturer will be?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The selection process for the filtration technology pilot commenced in April 2004 with local and international advertising inviting submissions for a registration of interest for the design, manufacture, installation and commissioning of a pilot filtration



plant for a Sydney road tunnel, as you are aware. Preliminary proposals were received from short-listed companies late last year and are being evaluated by the RTA and specialist advisers. Information provided with the preliminary proposals will be used to recommend a way forward for the next stage of the project.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** When will that announcement be made?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** At the moment, the process has not quite been completed, so I cannot give you a date as to when that announcement will be made.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** When can you make the announcement? When do you foresee that you will be able to make that announcement?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I do not have enough information at this stage to be able to give you a definite date.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Considering that the advertising has been undertaken, what tunnel have you decided to undertake this filtration trial in?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** As I say, there has been no decision on which tunnel the filtration pilot will be applied to. As you probably would be aware, some of the reasons why it has taken such a long time is the complexity of the technologies involved. It is quite sophisticated. As a consequence, it takes the RTA a substantial amount of time to consider the proposals and to weigh their value and compare them.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** On what basis do you make a selection?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, I will be advised by the experts.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Can you provide any further information on that now, please?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** On when I will be advised?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** On the selection basis—the criteria used for the selection.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, that is something for the experts to formulate and they will come to me with the arguments for and against each of the technologies or each of the proposals.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Are you actually committed to the filtration trial, or will it just drag on with no public announcement?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The process is still under way and I am committed to that process.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** How much public money has been spent on it to date?

**Mr FORWARD:** I do not have the exact figure with me at the moment.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** We will take that on notice.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Just listening to your answers, I am just wondering if you and the RTA are in fact reneging on promises by the previous Premier and the previous Minister that such a filtration will be trialled, and, if successful, installed.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I am very committed to the process. Obviously, given the complexity of the technology under consideration and, I would imagine, the substantial possible costs involved, the RTA would need to be very careful in formulating an opinion and advice before they progress that to the Government.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** So you said you are committed to the process. If the trial is successful, are you committed to its being installed?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** If the trial is successful?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Yes.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I do not know what would happen at that stage. I am not obviously—

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** That is an interesting answer.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Well, it is a hypothetical question.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** No, it is not. You have made a decision to follow through on the commitment given by the previous Minister and previous Premier to undertake a trial. My question was simply whether you will implement it, if the trial is successful.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** On my understanding, it is a hypothetical question. You are asking me to answer a question about something that could possibly happen in the future. I do not know how successful it will be. I do not know what the costs will be. There is a whole range of variables that I do not know enough about to be able to give you a sincere answer, so obviously it will be a decision that I will make at the time, following the receipt of the results.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Why did the RTA's chief executive officer advise a budget estimates hearing last February that there were no ill effects for anyone using the M5 East tunnel when in fact NSW Health had determined otherwise, based on its study?

**Mr FORWARD:** I totally disagree with the premise of your question.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Are you disagreeing with the NSW Health determination, or that it had made that statement?

**Mr FORWARD:** I am disagreeing with your interpretation of that report. The report actually said that we met World Health Organisation standards within that tunnel. It went on to say that any acute health risks were not in the tunnel. In terms of external air quality, they felt that there was no link between the ventilation system and people's health.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Surely you must acknowledge that NSW Health made a recommendation that drivers should be warned before they go into the M5 East tunnel?

**Mr FORWARD:** NSW Health has suggested to us that we should provide information to motorists about the tunnels, and we have done that.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** How have you done that? Are you referring to that little bit of paper that came out at the time the cross-city tunnel opened?

**Mr FORWARD:** We put out a very expansive brochure that has been mailed out to motorists.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** I understood that NSW Health had recommended that signage be put up at the entrance to the tunnel about winding up windows, so people knew that they should wind up windows and close the vents before entering the tunnel. Is that the case?

**Mr FORWARD:** That was one suggested option. They were more interested in dissemination of information to people, and we have done that.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Could you answer the question about signage? Why did you decide not to put up signs?

**Mr FORWARD:** We do not believe signage is necessary. Where do you draw the line? Are we to have signs in Pitt Street and George Street for motorists?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** No, I am talking about entering tunnels.

**Mr FORWARD:** The tunnels are no different.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** There could be signs at the entrances and exits of tunnels.

**Mr FORWARD:** No, I do not agree with that. Clearly, motorists are sensible. Motorists have been given advice. When I drive around the city I have my windows up, as do most motorists.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Do you believe that most people entering tunnels are aware that they should have their windows up? Do you think that knowledge is already out there?

**Mr FORWARD:** It is a choice for motorists. We meet all the standards for the tunnel. It is the motorists' choice as to how they operate their vehicles.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** How did you make the decision to go with the leaflet and not signage? On what basis?

**Mr FORWARD:** We believe that a leaflet mailed out to motorists is far more informative than a very narrow sign. The brochure we have put out provides a lot of detailed information for motorists in terms of safety in tunnels; more broadly than what you are articulating. It was a far more informative brochure. You cannot do that in a sign that motorists will drive past at fairly fast speeds and in most cases are unlikely to take it in. A brochure is far more considered and a far more constructive communication to people.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** What guarantee do you have that people will read it? Have you done a survey to see how many people actually read that material? You are contradicting yourself: You are saying they are not going to read a sign that they drive past but they are going to read a leaflet that they come across.

**Mr FORWARD:** If they are interested they will read the leaflet. If they are interested and believe they need the information, they will read the leaflet.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** What decisions have resulted from the inter-agency working party into tunnel management and regulation?

**Mr FORWARD:** We meet with a number of agencies from time to time. Those discussions often get incorporated into the conditions of approval for various RTA projects.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** What is the time frame for any decisions that are made?

**Mr FORWARD:** There is no set protocol. It depends on what the decision is, whether the parties are in agreement to it, what it is likely to cost, whether it affects government policy, whether it sets a precedent for other projects. I cannot give you a standard response to that because it depends on the issue under discussion.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Do you think the interagency committee is providing useful work? Or is it something you feel obliged to do because of pressure that the RTA has come under over the controversy around the tunnel?

**Mr FORWARD:** I do not accept that point. These committees can be worthwhile, as long as they have something positive to contribute. In terms of raising discussion about some of those issues, they have provided a useful forum. It is not something that ought to meet on a weekly or monthly basis.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** How often do you meet?

**Mr FORWARD:** I cannot give you a response to that; it meets on a needs basis.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** That sounds like not very often. Are you saying that you cannot release the information or that you will take it on notice?

**Mr FORWARD:** No, I am saying that the committee meets as required and when it has an agenda to discuss. It consists of the chief executives of various agencies, and they all have a lot to do with their time. When there is an important issue we will meet.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** In the past two years, how often would you have met?

**Mr FORWARD:** I cannot remember.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Seriously?

**Mr FORWARD:** Do you know how many meetings I go to every day? Would you like a detailed analysis of the meetings I have been to over the past two years?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** If you like. It would be very interesting to see how you spend your time.

**Mr FORWARD:** I think that would be rather pointless.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Would you like to take that question on notice?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Mr Forward has answered the question. Essentially it meets on a needs basis. They progressively evolve the advice that is created from that working party.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Do you feel that your meetings result in better safety and air quality outcomes for drivers and residents affected by the existing and planned tunnels?

**Mr FORWARD:** In New South Wales we meet the standards determined by the Department of Planning. Most standards are based on World Health Organisation conditions. They are set to meet some of the most stringent tunnel standards in the world. So do we meet them? Yes, we do.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** How much money has been spent on this committee to date?

**Mr FORWARD:** It is rather impossible to answer that question.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Do you mean for the people at the meeting?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Maybe there is no money involved, except for biscuits and a cup of tea, if the people are already being paid. I am not asking about their wages, I am just trying to get an idea of how much money is put into it. It is hard to get a sense of what this committee does and how it works. I am just asking a budgetary question.

**Mr FORWARD:** In an indirect way the committee influences standards. Our standards are based on World Health Organisation standards and they are based on the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses [PIARC] standards, which has probably more than 100 members world wide.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Do those standards apply inside the M5 East tunnel?

**Mr FORWARD:** They do.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** When there is all that dirty air that one can barely see through, is that under the standards?

**Mr FORWARD:** I think your comment is very subjective. They certainly meet the PIARC standards of visibility. They are within the standards.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** You are satisfied that the M5 East always meets the standards?

**Mr FORWARD:** They are within the PIARC standards of visibility, they meet the carbon monoxide standards. They meet all the standards.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** What are the factors that are slowing down the installation of the 40-kilometres-an-hour flashing lights in school zones?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that the trial is still progressing. They are at the stage where the data has been collected and currently an evaluation is being conducted by the RTA on the data that has been collected.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Are there any records that show trends in revenue raising since the implementation of 40-kilometres-an-hour zones?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That would be a matter for Treasury to answer. I am not familiar with the amount of fine income coming into the State.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Are there any records that show trends in accidents, and injuries, or deaths in relation to school zones, upwards or downwards?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** In relation to flashing lights?

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** No, in relation to the school zones in general, since the 40 kilometre school zone introduction?

**Mr FORWARD:** School zones are some of the safest parts of our road network. It is recognised that children can be vulnerable at school sites, but the treatment around school sites now results in a very safe area.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Is there specific information to prove that these zones are working as one would hope?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is not just the zones, it is other facilities that are there including the school-crossing supervisors, some engineering treatment that has been put in, and reversing the entrance to the schools to the back of the schools away from busy roads. There is a variety of treatments. It is a bit difficult to say that one particular treatment is better than another. It is all about the treatment that best meets the needs at a particular school.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** What measures are you putting in place to reduce, if not eliminate, negative impact on drivers in relation to the cross-city tunnel? I am asking about those drivers who are not using the tunnel.

**Mr FORWARD:** It is very early days of the cross-city tunnel. All these large projects go through a ramp-up that extends over possibly 18 months. So, we have been very closely monitoring traffic in the city through our transport management centre. We have a skilled group of people who have access to closed-circuit television and they monitor the traffic on local roads. In the office we have members of the NSW Police Force and also representative of the State Transit Authority with regard to buses. We have been making minor changes to free up the traffic. Over the past almost three weeks, or 2½ weeks that it has been operating, traffic is moving quite well.

**The Hon. DAVID OLDFIELD:** Given the examinations or evaluations that you are doing, and will continue to do, is there any potential for The Domain entrance to the Cahill Expressway to be reopened?

**Mr FORWARD:** No, because if we were to do that it would end up in a very dangerous weave where motorists would also have access to the city and would actually cross three or four lanes of traffic, which could be extremely dangerous. That is the reason why we have cut that route out.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Minister, earlier you mentioned the AusLink negotiations. Could you outline why you called on the Prime Minister to intervene in that?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The AusLink agreement will set the stage for the next four years of roads funding across Australia. The Federal Government has demonstrated an ongoing profound lack of commitment to major New South Wales roads. Unfortunately, this pattern is said to continue under the AusLink agreement. For one thing, the Federal Government has made it clear that it will not fully fund improvements and maintenance of major roads such as the Hume, New England, Federal, Sturt, Barton and Newell highways and the F3. The impact of those roads will be severe if the Federal Government continues to shirk its responsibilities for those roads.

The Pacific Highway is another case in point. Even though the Pacific Highway has been recognised as part of the Federal Government's AusLink national network, the Federal Government's funding falls woefully short of what is needed to complete the upgrade of the highway. Under the Federal Government's formula, which it used for other roads in the AusLink national network, the Federal Government should either fully fund projects or contribute at least 80 per cent. This approach has been used in a number of projects in the proposed AusLink agreement, including the widening of the F3 and the proposed new F3 to Branxton link.

If the Federal Government were serious about the Pacific Highway it would apply its own AusLink funding formula to that road. This means that the Federal Government should provide \$640 million a year to the Pacific Highway, instead of its proposed \$160 million. However, the Federal Government has planned to spend only \$160 million per year, meaning that by its own funding formula the Pacific Highway has been underfunded by \$480 million per year. If the Federal Government made a decision to invest that extra \$480 million each year between 2006 and 2016, we would have a high standard, dual carriage motorway from the F3 to the Queensland border.

The Pacific Highway is a critical part of the Auslink national network. The Federal Government has finally admitted this, but it is not putting its money where its mouth is. My call to the Prime Minister is to ensure that his Ministers treat the Pacific Highway, the major highway on Australia's east coast, in the same manner as other highways in the national network—that is, at least fund it to 80 per cent. The Federal Government is also determined to hoard more and more of its income from fuel excise tax—money that New South Wales motorists pay every time they fill up their cars and that they deserve to get back. I note today the Prime Minister scuttled another Federal Government plan to hit motorists with more petrol excise tax.

A few years back, between 1987 and 1999, the Federal Government paid an average of 21 per cent of its fuel excise tax money to fund major roads, but under Auslink it is offering us the insulting amount of 12 per cent. That is a \$325 million annual average shortfall in roads funding, which means that over the life of the Auslink agreement New South Wales will be ripped off to the tune of \$1.3 billion. I am trying to get a better deal for motorists in New South Wales, and I have called on the Prime Minister to intervene. This needs to go to the highest level.

I repeat my call to the Prime Minister: Set aside at least 21 per cent of Federal fuel excise for major roads and return to the traditional funding benchmark. This new roads funding agreement is vital for people all across Australia. John Howard should be taking a keen interest in the negotiations and the concerns of all States about the way the money will be doled out. I am deeply concerned at the way motorists in New South Wales are being ripped off by the Federal Government and I will be fighting to get a better deal for New South Wales.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** As you may be aware, one of my duty electorates is Ballina. I have had a long-standing interest in the upgrading of the Pacific Highway. You made comments about Auslink and how the funding arrangements will impact on the upgrading of the Pacific Highway. You also made a comment earlier about the Bonville deviation and the Ballina bypass. Would you give us an overall update on the progress of the Pacific Highway upgrade?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I can do that. The Pacific Highway is a vital road and freight link, and I am proud of the leadership that the New South Wales Government has shown on this issue. Since 1966, 44 new Pacific Highway projects have opened to traffic, representing 229 kilometres of four-lane dual carriageway. Eight projects are being constructed or are due to be constructed shortly, with another 20 upgraded projects in the planning stages. Due to the State Government's work on this

road, approximately 44 per cent of the upgrade of the highway from Hexham to the Queensland border either will be complete or will undergo construction by the end of this financial year.

We want the Pacific Highway to be safe for motorists. That is why the New South Wales Government introduced a \$35 million two-year program of interim road safety measures targeted at areas along the Pacific Highway where upgrades are not complete and where there is a history of crashes. These measures include speed cameras, profile line-marking, wire rope barriers, shoulder widening, and intersection improvements. Recently I travelled to Bonville, near Coffs Harbour, where a new major piece of the Pacific Highway will be built, with construction starting next year. During an inspection of the area I announced that in the interim the Roads and Traffic Authority would install speed cameras on the stretch of road as well as reduce the speed limit.

Councillor Keith Rhoades, Mayor of Coffs Harbour, praised my actions. The Nationals Federal member for Cowper also welcomed the announcement in Federal Parliament. It is good to see one member of The Nationals taking a sensible approach. Unfortunately, during my visit to Coffs Harbour and Bonville I understand that the local member of Parliament was in Sydney. His State colleagues insisted on distorting the facts about this Government's funding of Pacific Highway road projects and they resorted to useless media stunts. The honourable member for Myall Lakes fell into that category when he told the recent Pacific Highway summit in Port Macquarie that the State Opposition would complete the dual carriageway work by 2016. Page 7 of today's *Manning River Times* reports as follows:

"A Liberal-National State Government will commit to completing the upgrade of the Pacific Highway to a two-lane dual carriageway from Hexham to the Queensland border by 2016 or earlier", said The Nationals member for Myall Lakes, John Turner.

Mr Turner, who gave a keynote speech on behalf of The Nationals and the Liberal Party at the recent Roads Summit in Port Macquarie, said that a definite time frame had to be implemented to ensure the work was done. What he failed to mention was the \$5.9 billion gap between money already committed by the State Labor and Federal Coalition governments and the projected cost of the work. What taxes and charges are he and his cronies going to increase to cover the \$5.9 billion deficit? What services will they cut? This is typical of members of the New South Wales Opposition: they are all about cheap headlines and there is no substance to their announcements.

Opposition members need to attack the State Government on the Pacific Highway to help out their colleagues in the Federal Parliament, who consistently show a lack of commitment to the upgrading of the Pacific Highway. Even under the Federal Government's own formula it will underfund the Pacific Highway by \$480 million a year under Auslink. Under Auslink the Federal Government regards the Pacific Highway as a part of its new national network but it will not fund it in the same way as it funds other highways in the same network. The Federal Government will fund work on the other highways to the tune of 80 per cent or more, yet it will only kick in 20 per cent of the \$8 billion that it is estimated is needed to complete the dual carriageway by 2016.

I will go through the facts. Since 1995 the New South Wales Government has invested \$1,660 million in the highway, while the Federal Government has put in just \$660 million. In 1996 the Pacific Highway Reconstruction Program Agreement was signed between the New South Wales and Federal governments. Under the 10-year agreement the New South Wales Government committed \$166 million a year to the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border, while the Federal Government contributed just \$66 million a year. That means the New South Wales Government is contributing 72 per cent of funding for the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border. Almost three-quarters of what is spent on the Pacific Highway is being contributed by the New South Wales Government. The New South Wales Government is serious about upgrading the Pacific Highway. It has achieved a lot and it is making good progress on current projects.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** Madam Chair, could you please ask people in the gallery to refrain from commenting and answering questions? I am having difficulty hearing and understanding the Minister.

**CHAIR:** Order! I am having no difficulty at all.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I am having difficulty hearing the Minister. It appears as though somebody in the gallery might be slightly intoxicated. If that person does not desist from constantly interjecting I will raise the matter with the attendants.

**The Hon. IAN WEST:** The person who is constantly interjecting should not be interjecting at all. Persons in the gallery should desist from saying anything; otherwise they should be removed.

**CHAIR:** Order! We will have peace and quiet everywhere.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I certainly hope we will have some proper chairing. If those who might be slightly intoxicated continue to interject we will have this discussion again.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** We may well have it in camera.

**CHAIR:** Order! Minister, can you give us a breakdown of the proportion of the State's Roads budget that is spent on metropolitan areas in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong as opposed to the rest of New South Wales? What is the current breakdown?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The State budget provided for more than \$1.5 billion to be invested in roads in rural and regional areas of the State during 2005-06. That means that more than 62 per cent of the total 2005-06 Roads capital and maintenance program is spent outside Sydney. This Government recognises that rural roads are essential to the community. Country communities often do not have the public transport options available in the city, and better roads encourage tourists who bring with them economic benefits for country areas.

Almost \$475 million will be spent on the maintenance of rural and regional roads in 2005-06, partly funded by the Sydney Harbour Bridge toll charges. A \$79 million program of works is being implemented to increase safety conditions on the Pacific and Princes highways. The 12-year \$460 million program to upgrade the Penrith to Orange route will continue, including widening of the Great Western Highway between Leura and Katoomba and between Woodford and Hazelbrook.

**CHAIR:** I appreciate you might not be able to provide this information without notice, but can you provide the figure for Sydney and the rest of the State?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Newcastle, the Illawarra and the Hunter?

**CHAIR:** Yes. Recently there has been court action in relation to appeals against speeding offences, based on matters relating to speed cameras. Has the Government commenced an audit of speed cameras throughout the State to ensure they are accurate?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** There are 96 fixed speed cameras located in hazardous locations throughout New South Wales, with an additional 13 school zone camera sites established on a trial basis. Fixed speed cameras are an effective road safety initiative and have resulted in a 20 per cent reduction in the number of injuries from crashes and a 90 per cent reduction in the number of fatal crashes where cameras are located. Rigorous testing, maintenance, and certification procedures used in New South Wales ensure that fixed speed cameras continue to operate accurately and reliably.

Just to add to that, in 2004 New South Wales completed the on-site inspection and testing of all fixed speed cameras. All cameras were tested and found to be working according to the manufacturer's specification. While some New South Wales fixed speed cameras are similar in brand and type to those used in Victoria, rigorous testing, maintenance and certification procedures used in New South Wales ensure that fixed speed cameras continue to operate accurately and reliably. It is my understanding that this testing is ongoing.

**CHAIR:** If the cross-city tunnel does not achieve its contracted levels of patronage does the contract contain a bail-out clause similar to that relating to the airport and rail link line?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I have been advised that there is no bail-out clause.

**CHAIR:** What does that mean for the budget?



**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Whose budget?

**CHAIR:** The State budget.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** There will be no financial impact if there is no bail-out clause.

**CHAIR:** What is the Government planning to do to ease the congestion and confusion being created around the Sydney central business district as a result of the opening of the tunnel?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I think Mr Forward has already answered that question. If you want to, we can go through it again.

**Mr FORWARD:** All new road projects create changes in how motorists operate. The cross-city tunnel has provided a new route from the east to the west. It will take motorists time to get used to that route and the advantages that it offers. We are going through a process that we repeated on the Eastern Distributor and on other major road projects in Sydney, including the Sydney Harbour tunnel. It is nothing new. We provided a lot of detail to motorists by way of advertising. CrossCity Motorway, the company responsible for the tunnel, letterboxed hundreds of thousands of households in eastern Sydney and in the inner west of Sydney to inform them.

It has also taken out extensive advertising in various papers and various papers have contained inserts that reflect the route that the cross-city tunnel takes, the entry points and exit points. There has been a lot of publicity, and now there is a lot of discussion amongst motorists. Changes have been well promoted; it just takes time for motorists to adjust to them.

**CHAIR:** With respect to the Queanbeyan northern upgrade, one of your predecessors, Mr Scully, stated in March last year that \$2.5 million was allocated to complete that work. Can you tell the Committee why its completion seems to be dragging on?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The New South Wales Government recognises the need to remove heavy vehicles from the Queanbeyan CBD and has been identifying options to achieve this objective. Following detailed studies, the northern upgrade route, which falls within both New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, has been adopted as the preferred option to assist in addressing this issue. The project will see upgrading at a number of intersections, pavement improvements and the construction of a new bridge over the Canberra-Queanbeyan railway line. Work is complete on a number of specific improvements within New South Wales, including adjustments to the junction of Thurrallilly Street and Bungendore Road, and traffic signals at the junction of Yass Road and Aurora Avenue. Works at the junction of Railway Street and Oaks Estate Road are continuing. Tenders closed in November 2004 for construction of a new bridge, to replace an existing single-lane timber structure, on Railway Street over the Canberra-Queanbeyan railway line, Oaks Estate in the Australian Capital Territory, and works commenced during August. An estimated amount of \$2.95 million in 2005-06 from State funds should complete the remaining work.

**CHAIR:** So the railway bridge is under way, is it?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Yes, that is my understanding.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Minister, I have a few questions in relation to the access ramps linking Gardeners Road to Southern Cross Drive. How many additional motor vehicles per day are expected to travel through each of the residential streets intersecting with Gardeners Road heading towards the Kingsford roundabout, as well as along Gardeners Road, as a result of the ramps?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is my understanding that a local traffic management process is under way.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Can you specify what you understand that local traffic management study to be?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Okay. The Roads and Traffic Authority is developing a proposal to provide direct access between Southern Cross Drive and Gardeners Road at Eastlakes. Construction of south-facing ramps is being considered. Concept design, traffic assessment, urban design, utility investigation, socioeconomic, air quality assessment, noise assessment and community consultation are at advanced stages of completion. A community update about the proposal was issued recently. Options for a local area traffic management scheme for the area between Tunstall Avenue and Euston Road are being developed by the RTA, with input from local residents. A local area traffic management working group has been organised by the member for Heffron, and three meetings have already taken place. The RTA will be placing the local area traffic management options on display for public comment. A review of environmental factors will be prepared and placed on display for further public comment.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Is it intended to do an environmental impact study [EIS] on the proposal?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** A review of environmental factors will be prepared and placed on display for further public comment.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** But no EIS?

**Mr FORWARD:** As part of the process of preparing the review of environmental factors we carry out what is known as an eight-part test, where we work through criteria. If it passes the eight-part test an environmental impact statement is not required. If it does not pass the eight-part test then an EIS is required.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Can you guarantee that the Kingsford roundabout will be able to cope with the level of traffic expected to be generated by the ramps? It is obviously a significant traffic problem already—one could say a black spot. Can you give that guarantee?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that it will depend on some of the decisions that the local council may make. Those decisions may have an impact on the traffic throughput at that roundabout.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** What sorts of decisions might the council make?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** There is the possible closure of local roads and streets.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I will perhaps come back to that issue if there is time. When will the Government announce its plans for the future of the F6 corridor? What options are currently under investigation?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that since 1951 the F6 corridor has been reserved. The metropolitan road network, including the F6 corridor, is currently being reviewed as part of the Government's road infrastructure planning and future planning for the metropolitan area. Obviously there will be significant interaction between the Metropolitan Strategy and which roads it will, as a consequence, be necessary to upgrade or consider.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** My question was: When will the Government announce the findings?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously any planning around the F6 will be subject to any finalisation of the Metropolitan Strategy.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Do we have a date for the finalisation of that strategy?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That is a question for Minister Sartor.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Is the M4 east link project subject to similar sorts of constraints?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Yes, very similar constraints. The transport needs east of the M4 are being reviewed in light of the development of the Metropolitan Strategy—the 30-year plan for dealing with Sydney's growing and changing population. So it is also subject to that Metropolitan Strategy.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Thank you. I turn now to the Princes Highway. Now that you have the Roads portfolio, Minister, what is the nature of the funding framework and your approach to funding the Princes Highway? What is the nature of the commitment in terms of dollars and over what period?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** In 1998 the New South Wales Government committed to a 12-year \$380 million construction program on the Princes Highway. A total of \$362 million has been invested in the Princes Highway, comprising \$229 million for development works—that is \$195 million of State funds and \$34 million of Federal funds. It also comprises \$109 million worth of asset maintenance—all State Government money—and \$24 million of road safety and traffic and transport works. That is \$23 million of State money and only \$1 million of Federal money. In the next four years more than \$253 million in State funds has been proposed in the RTA's indicative forward programs. Of this, \$248 million is proposed for further development of the route. Despite repeated requests, the Federal Government did not include the Princes Highway south of Wollongong as part of the national network in the recent AusLink white paper. In December 2004 the Government announced that more than \$30 million of New South Wales funds would be spent over the next three years on road safety improvements.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I tried to take down those figures but I might have got them wrong. I apologise in advance if I misquote them in asking you questions. Did you say that you are operating under the commitment that Minister Scully was working under, which is a \$380 million funding commitment over 12 years, starting in 1998?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That is right.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I think I understood you to say that \$362 million has already been spent, leaving \$18 million. Obviously you propose to go beyond the original \$380 million commitment over 12 years. Is that the case?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That was in 1998. It may not necessarily mean that, but it is possible.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I am trying to understand the nature of the commitment that the State Government is making. Are you still working within the \$380 million framework?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** At the moment in the AusLink negotiations I have obviously been trying to secure the Princes Highway as part of the AusLink national network. It seems to me that the Federal Government thinks—

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** You have made that clear; I will not debate you on that issue. That is another debate. I am interested in knowing literally how much funding we are working with.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** In the next four years more than \$253 million in State funds has been proposed in the RTA's indicative forward programs.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Fine. I will stop you there. Is that \$253 million on top of the \$380 million program commitment that was announced and commenced in the 1998-99 budget or is that \$253 million within the \$380 million?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is part of the \$380 million. In 1998 the State Government committed to a 12-year \$380 million construction program on the Princes Highway. A total of \$362 million has been invested in the Princes Highway to date.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** From 1998 to the 2004-05 budget. I want to be absolutely clear about that so there is no misunderstanding.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Yes, that is my understanding. In the next four years more than \$253 million in State funds has been proposed in the RTA's indicative forward program. Of this, \$248 million is proposed for the further development of the route.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I apologise for interrupting but I am trying to save time. Is that \$248 million a subset of the \$253 million or is it an extra \$248 million?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that it is part of the \$380 million commitment made in 1998. So it is all a subset of that, and we are working towards that goal. Obviously it is 12-year commitment of \$380 million.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** So that we are all working from the same set of understood facts, can you provide—I accept that you may need to take this question on notice—an exact breakdown of exactly which projects have been funded in terms of the \$362 million between 1998 and 2004-05? Is that possible?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** So your interest is in the \$18 million. Is that correct? That is the difference between what has been announced as the target and what has been spent.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** That is part of what I am interested in, yes.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** That is the \$380 million and the \$362 million that has been spent to date. In December 2004 the Government announced that more than \$30 million of New South Wales funds would be spent over the next three years on road safety improvements. That means that we will cover the \$12 million shortfall that you are trying to identify because in December 2004 it was announced that another \$30 million would be spent on road safety improvements on the Princes Highway over the next three years. That means that in excess of the target amount will be spent. That is my understanding.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I am not suggesting a shortfall; I want to understand the totality of the commitment literally. One of the problems we have had over the past six budgets is that Minister Scully has kept talking about a \$380 million commitment over 10 years, which is fine, but up to now he has not been prepared to give any degree of specificity as to what is within that \$380 million commitment. Given that you are starting afresh, will you indicate exactly what projects have been funded thus far between 1998-99 and 2004-05 out of that \$362 million? Are you prepared to do that?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Would you repeat the last part of that question?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** You stated that \$362 million has been spent between 1998-99 and 2004-05. Would you provide a breakdown of all the projects on which that \$362 million has been spent?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** They are the numbers I gave you, that is, \$229 million for development works, \$109 million for asset maintenance and \$24 million for road safety and traffic and transport works.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Could you break down each of those into specific projects at specific geographical locations? For example, how much was spent on the widening work between Mogo and Moruya? How much was spent on the Strongs Road intersection, which was recently worked on? We have a reasonable degree of information about the bypass because that appears every year as a major works in the budget papers. I want to ensure that you get all the credit for all the other projects you have done in past budgets. Would you outline project by project, geographical location by geographical location, what they have seen and what you have spent?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously some of the money has been spent on different parts of the Princes Highway because \$109 million spent on asset management was obviously maintenance and \$24 million was spent on road safety and traffic and transport works. It would be very difficult for

us to identify what part of the Princes Highway maintenance money has been spent on because it would be spread along the whole of the road.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Is it not possible to provide those figures?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is not possible to give you the figures that you think would add up to \$362 million because some of the money is not constrained to a geographical location; it is spent on the whole of the Princes Highway on asset management.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Obviously it is possible to break down further development works?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Yes.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** In terms of asset maintenance, surely there is a capacity to break down some of that as well. Would you give a commitment to provide those figures?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** To the degree that it is possible, yes.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** In relation to the indicative forward projects on which you foreshadowed \$253 million will be spent, is that over three years?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Four years.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Could you provide the Committee with a list of all the elements of that indicative forward program, including geographical locations?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Some of that detail would be in the budget papers, I imagine, but to the extent that it is not, I will take that question on notice and try to determine where that money will be spent.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Do you have any say in commuter parking at railway stations?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** No.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Will the Government fund the upgrade of Narellan Road, Camden, between the F5 and Badgally Road, including the intersection of those two roads, which is currently graded "F" for fail?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** In 2003 the Government announced a \$30 million road improvement package that included the removal of two Narellan Road roundabouts, significantly improving travel times to the Hume Highway and Campbelltown. As part of a State government investment Narellan Road will also be extended to The Northern Road. The two roundabouts at Waterworth Drive and Mount Annan Drive cause long delays to motorists and buses using Narellan Road and will be replaced with traffic control signals. The signals will include phases for bus priority. Work commenced in June this year. The construction of the extension of Narellan Road is set to commence in 2006.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Is it correct that the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] has confirmed advice by Theiss John Holland and the Lane Cove Tunnel Company that the traffic volume used in the ventilation design and air quality dispersion modelling were higher than those used in the Lane Cove Tunnel environmental impact statement [EIS]?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** In 2001-02 the Lane Cove tunnel went through a rigorous environmental assessment which included the public exhibition of an environmental impact statement. I am advised that in 2002 the Government gave planning approval with strict air quality standards applying both in and outside the tunnel. Those standards are well above the international standards for managing air quality. When the tunnel opens air quality will be monitored closely and monitoring information will be placed on the RTA web site.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Are you aware that Dr Peter Manins of the CSIRO has revealed that the traffic data used by the ventilation designers result in the PM10 emissions being underestimated between 50 and 100 per cent, with traffic volumes underestimated by 20 per cent and the number of hours the tunnel will operate at or near capacity just after opening are underestimated?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I will take that question on notice.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Are you also aware that Dr Manins has further advised that, for whatever set of circumstances, the emission load is 82 per cent higher than designed, that is, within the 50 and 100 per cent range, the annual load limits set by the conditions of approval will be breached?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** All I can say is that I have been advised that in 2002 the Government gave planning approval with strict air quality standards applying both in and outside the tunnel. Those standards are well above the international standards for managing air quality. When the tunnel opens, air quality will be monitored closely and monitoring information will be placed on the RTA's web site.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Based on the Thiess John Holland information it would appear that the RTA has been complicit in providing false information to the Lane Cove Tunnel Air Quality Community Consultative Committee, knowing that truck and peak hour traffic volumes were significantly lower than the EIS?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I will take that question on notice.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Will the Minister now direct the RTA to ensure that the ventilation design and air dispersal modelling is based on traffic volumes and fleet mixes, not on lower than those set out in Working Paper 9 of the EIS; and use in tunnel and stack emission data from other Sydney tunnels which show PM10 levels between 50 and 100 per cent higher than used by Thiess John Holland?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The Government gave planning approval. In doing that it was with strict air quality standards applying both inside and outside the tunnel. Those standard are well above the international standards for managing air quality. When the tunnel opens air quality will be monitored closely and that monitoring information will be placed on the RTA web site.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Has the RTA provided you with detailed cost estimates? If so, what are the respective costs to install filtration equipment within the Lane Cove Tunnel to remove particulate with the particle size of 10 microns or less, or do you say that such equipment is not needed?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The answer to the first part of your question is no and, therefore, the rest of the question is not relevant.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** How much money does the Government put into Motorcycle Awareness Week?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** To date the Government has spent \$1.5 million in advertising that coincides with awareness week.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** The \$1.5 million is spent by the Government on awareness week?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** On motorcycle awareness and safety which coincides with awareness week.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Does any grant of money go to a motorcycle group or any group as part of awareness week?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** To the best of my knowledge there is no direct funding to that particular group but obviously our programs coincide to ensure that that community group gets the

best results it possibly can for its constituency, and the RTA assists in that objective by ensuring that the advertising campaign coincides with that community initiative, thereby making sure that collectively we get the best result for motor cyclists.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** What is the cost effectiveness of \$1.5 million for that program?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Safety dollars are extremely important. Advertising road safety is a very valuable and important function of the RTA. I think the RTA gets good value for money, as do motorists and motor cyclists.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Will you continue to put up money in subsequent years?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** There is no intention to change that support we currently extend to the Motorcycle Council of New South Wales.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Is the Government committed to implementing real changes to motorcycle safety when it involves changes in RTA policy?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously we always seek to be open to suggestions on how to improve road safety for motor cyclists. We are happy to receive any submissions and ideas that could assist in improving road safety for all road users.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Is the Minister aware that Cross City Tunnel operators fine people if is the E-tag technology of tunnel operators does not work?

**Mr FORWARD:** That is not correct. How electronic tags work is that the various providers of E-tags have what is known as a white list. In other words, a list of those numberplates that then link up to a tag. If a motorist goes through and, for whatever reason, the tag or equipment does not work, a photograph is taken of the numberplate. If the numberplate coincides with a numberplate on a white list, all that happens is that that particular account gets billed for the cost of the transaction.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** So a person who has an E- tag is not fined, they just have to pay the toll at the regular rate that should have been paid?

**Mr FORWARD:** Correct.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Will the Government insist on technology that makes it possible for motorbike riders to use E-tags on the new tollways?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Three initiatives are currently under development to overcome difficulties experienced by motorcyclists with regard to tag recognition when passing through toll gantries. The first is that the Roads and Traffic Authority is trialling a special bracket to attach tags to motorcycles. The trial is in its early stages, and the results to date have been positive. The second one is Q-Free. An electronic tag supplier has built a prototype motorcycle tag that is softer than those currently available, and waterproofed. Initial designs have been provided to the Motorcycle Council of New South Wales for input prior to proceeding.

The third one is that Cross City Motorway, the operators of the cross-city tunnel, have proposed the introduction of a tag armband. This type of tag is currently being used in Norway and France. Testing indicates that the reliability of E-tags increases if the rear of the tag faces forward—the same orientation as it would have if it were attached to the windscreen of a motor vehicle. Motorcyclists are advised to keep a short distance back from the vehicle immediately in front of them, and to keep in the centre of their lanes.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Has the Government taken any steps to reduce the use of wire rope barrier cable fencing, or to move it further from lanes to diminish the hazard to motorcyclists?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Would you repeat that?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** I am talking about the wire rope. We get a number of complaints from motorcyclists that it is very dangerous. Are you taking any measures to phase it out?

**Mr FORWARD:** At an AusRoads meeting, which I am chair of, we discussed the issue of wire rope barriers. The VicRoads agency was going to do a study, and canvassed throughout Australia to find evidence that the wire rope barriers were dangerous to motorcyclists. They were unable to provide any evidence that actually suggested it was dangerous to motorcyclists. It needs to be realised that if a motorcyclist comes off and slides across the road, he is more than likely to be hit by an oncoming vehicle. If he slides into the wire rope, he slides back onto the road that he has come off. There is no evidence, according to the VicRoads authority, that this is dangerous to motorcyclists. If they were to hit a concrete barrier, chances are they will also end up with quite severe injury.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Has the RTA or the Minister's office received complaints from motorcyclists about wire rope barriers?

**Mr FORWARD:** I have not received any complaints from motorcyclists about wire rope for years.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Does "years" mean three years, or five years?

**Mr FORWARD:** I have been chief executive now for six years, and I have not received one complaint.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Minister, in 2003 Minister Scully committed the Government to the expenditure of \$100,000 to conduct a feasibility study for a second crossing over the Shoalhaven River, and last year or the year before in the estimates hearing he said that one of the expenditures during the 2003-04 year was for "investigations for a second crossing of the Shoalhaven River". Can you confirm that the investigations have actually taken place, and can you detail the findings of the feasibility study?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** This Government recognises the importance of the Princes Highway as a major road transport corridor for New South Wales. Obviously, in our negotiations over Auslink, the Federal Government has not agreed on its significance, particularly anywhere south of Wollongong. The benefits of improving traffic flow across the Shoalhaven River at Nowra are recognised; and, as a first step in identifying options and locations, a feasibility study for an additional crossing was initiated. The original study has been completed, and it indicated that further analysis of traffic management each side of the existing bridges is warranted. Funds of \$100,000 were provided in 2004-05 for completion of this study, and the findings are currently being reviewed.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Would you release the study, if it is finished, as you said?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is currently being collated. So I will make a decision when I receive it. You are asking me to make a decision about something that has not happened yet, so it is difficult for me to answer.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** So the study has finished—

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** No, the study apparently has not been finished.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I am sorry; I thought you said in an earlier answer that it had been.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** No. Funds of \$100,000 were provided in 2004-05 for completion of the study, and the findings are currently being reviewed.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Minister, I refer you to page 99 of Budget Paper No. 4, and to the \$6.5 million estimate for expenditure on planning of the Oak Flats to Dunmore dual carriageway. Why did the RTA underspend its 2004-05 allocation for the planning of this particular piece of road by—as the budget figures show by a comparison of this year's budget papers and those for last year—a figure of \$1.09 million, or in fact nearly 50 per cent?



**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I will take that question on notice.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Given that there is no money in the budget, and no listed completion date, can you tell me why the Government has reneged on Minister Scully's position, as noted at last year's Roads estimates, that construction on the missing link between Oak Flats and Dunmore would commence "when we finish the North Kiama bypass"? As we all know, that bypass will be finished in its totality probably by Christmas. Why is there no money in this year's budget to start the Oak Flats to Dunmore link?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that there is currently a commitment of \$380 million expenditure over a 12-year period on the development of the Princes Highway. That \$380 million commitment includes the following works: the Oak Flats interchange, which has been completed; the Oak Flats to Dunmore works, currently programmed to commence construction in 2006-07; the North Kiama bypass, which is currently under construction; the Berry bypass, where route options are being investigated; and other works. So it is planned for 2006-07.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** In the 2003-04 budget papers the Oak Flats to Dunmore link was estimated to cost \$114 million. Is that still the figure that the RTA is working off? If it is not, is there a more current figure available? You mentioned that it was programmed to start in the 2006-07 financial year, but do you have a completion date?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I have not been advised of any more current figure. Obviously, the final cost would be determined by the tender process and the submissions that we received through that tender process. It is currently programmed to commence next year, 2006-07.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** So you just do not have an estimated completion date?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, it will be subject to the commencement date, and it has not yet commenced.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I presume it will be some time in 2006-07?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is currently programmed to commence construction in 2006-07.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Going back to the Shoalhaven River at Nowra, and the issue of the second crossing, is the Government considering the issue of the construction of a link road between the Princes Highway and north Nowra to alleviate congestion on Illaroo Road as part of that Shoalhaven River crossing project?

**Mr FORWARD:** It is really early days yet in terms of the crossing and the roads that it is linked to. Part of that study is to investigate those options.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** In other words, the Illaroo Road issue will come within its ambit?

**Mr FORWARD:** Not necessarily. The access to the bridge, wherever it goes, would be part of that process. I do not want to pre-empt the findings of the study or the findings of the investigations in all the discussions we have had with the council. That is an option, but there might be some other options too that I do not want to rule out.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** So it is one possible option that you may look at?

**Mr FORWARD:** Possibly.

**CHAIR:** Minister, could I ask you some questions about the Great Western Highway? Can you give the Committee an idea of what plans the Government has to improve the Great Western Highway, and the time frame and the like?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The State Government is committed to improving the transport services and options available to the people in the Central West, the Blue Mountains and Western Sydney. The Great Western Highway upgrade program will deliver four lanes to Katoomba and mostly three to four lanes to Lithgow. An average of \$30 million per annum will be spent on the existing Great Western Highway and Mitchell Highway between 1999 and 2011, in addition to the Federal Government's \$100 million contribution to this road of national importance.

Projects to widen the Great Western Highway have been completed at Valley Heights, Faulconbridge, Linden, Wentworth Falls, Shell Corner, Medlow Bath, Soldiers Pinch and South Bowenfels. Construction of the Leura to Katoomba project is under way, having commenced in early 2003. Preliminary construction commenced on the Woodford to Hazelbrook project. Planning of other projects, including Lawson and Wentworth Falls east, is continuing.

**CHAIR:** What about beyond the Blue Mountains through the Central West?

**Mr FORWARD:** The plan there is to provide three lanes to Bathurst progressively.

**CHAIR:** Does that come within the 1999 to 2011 time frame?

**Mr FORWARD:** I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** Minister, you mentioned the Berry bypass as a project that is programmed. Obviously, that is subject to funding and budgetary processes. Is that programmed to commence in 2006-07 as well, like Oak Flats to Dunmore, or when is it programmed to commence?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that at the moment route options are being investigated, and the scheduling of commencement of works has not been determined.

**CHAIR:** If I could revert to the Great Western Highway. Minister, as you know, there is a concept for a new four-lane highway planned to follow the Bell's Line of Road. Does the Government support that concept?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that the Federal Government and State Government had committed \$1 million each for the exploration of the works necessary to upgrade that road. That report is yet to come to me. At that stage, obviously, I will be able to look at it to determine which way the Government will need to go.

**CHAIR:** Within the next couple of years will the extraordinary number of various speed limits through the Blue Mountains be evened out, so to speak? Between Penrith and Blackheath there are currently 46 speed changes on the Great Western Highway.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that at the Road Summit held in March this year the Government announced a review of speed limits on a number of routes. The review investigated 77 full-time speed zones over 285 kilometres of road. The reason for setting speed limits is to maximise road safety and to ensure a credible application of speed zones across the State by treating roads of a similar standard, usage and crash rate in a consistent manner. The purpose of speed zoning is to achieve a balance between road safety for road users and the need for mobility.

The Roads and Traffic Authority formed a team to review speed limits on these roads. This review examined the speed zones currently in use, the key factors influencing these limits, such as crash history of each length, and the level and type of adjoining developments. The result of the review of speed limits on these routes is yet to be finalised. It is my understanding that at least part of the road that you have inquired into is the subject of that review.

**CHAIR:** Can you give the Committee any information about the progress and result of the trial of flashing lights in school zones?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that the trial has been occurring and that data has been collected, but an evaluation of the data has not been completed.

**CHAIR:** What is the expected completion date? When it is completed will it be made public?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I have not been informed of that to date.

**CHAIR:** You do not know?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I have not been informed of it.

**CHAIR:** Would you make it public?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** I cannot answer that question until I receive the report.

**CHAIR:** Does the Government have any plans for embracing the development of an ethanol market, which would help to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and lower conventional fuel costs?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The New South Wales Government is committed to investigating and facilitating the use of environmentally friendly alternative fuels. These include ethanol, biodiesel, liquefied natural gas, compressed natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas. Alternative fuels will be increasingly important as we move away from reliance on fossil fuels, and establish a more diverse and secure energy supply.

Although some alternative fuels can cut greenhouse gas emissions they can also cause the level of other pollutants in the environment to rise. It is necessary to carefully work through the pollution implications of some alternative fuels and be guided by good science. We must ensure that the alternative fuels we use are compatible with the environment, and are safe for vehicles and mechanical equipment. We also must ensure that they are compatible with initiatives being undertaken at a national level and in other jurisdictions.

**CHAIR:** The impact of the Government suspending maintenance funding on all grain rail lines means that more trucks travel on roads in districts such as Rankin Springs, Barmedman, Burcher West Wyalong, Gwabegar, Binnaway, Willbriggie and Yanco. What impact has that had on roads affected by the closure of grain rail lines?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Earlier this year the Government announced funding to continue rail services on 11 grain lines for the upcoming harvest, as well as the suspension of services on four other lines. In areas where rail service has been suspended, road transport will be used for the grain harvest. I am advised that trucks primarily would use local and regional roads to transport the grain. Although councils have a responsibility to manage these roads, the Government will consider submissions from councils regarding any impact that can be demonstrated from the change to road transport.

**CHAIR:** Have you informed councils of that? Do they know they can make submissions?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The State Government is always open to receiving delegations from local councils. I understand it is common practice for the Minister for Roads to receive delegations from local councils on the maintenance of local and regional roads. I, as the new Minister for Roads, will continue that practice. On a case-by-case basis the argument they offer up to the RTA and me will be considered before we make a decision about whether funds should be allocated for the extra damage caused to the roads.

**CHAIR:** Do you intend to reject the National Transport Commission recommendations for B-doubles and triple trucks?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** At this stage my understanding is that it is not a recommendation of the commission. My understanding is that there is a process of public submissions and that the commission has not made recommendations at this stage. Obviously, the commission is in the process of considering the submissions that have been received and will then formulate recommendations for members of the commission to consider.

**CHAIR:** Does the State Government make a submission in the process?

**Mr FORWARD:** We are part of the Standing Committee on Transport. The paper will go to a future meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport after the consultation process the Minister has just outlined. The committee will then make a decision and make recommendations to the Australian Transport Council, which is the ministerial council that considers these matters. Then there would be a vote.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding is that the commission has not made any recommendations yet. It is too early in the process for the Government to form a view.

**CHAIR:** When you form a view, would that view be made public before it goes to the commission or the standing committee?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously I have not been to a commission meeting so I am not in a position to be able to say how I will behave when I am in that situation and what decisions will be made about whether the State Government will publicly state its decision. I am not aware of the process.

**CHAIR:** Can Mr Forward advise us?

**Mr FORWARD:** Normally the process is that there is a ministerial discussion at an Australian Transport Council. It is hard to say what is likely to happen there. Often matters are referred back to the commission for further work. Sometimes more information is required. A variety of things can happen. It is a bit difficult for the Minister to make a decision when there is ongoing discussion in a ministerial forum.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Was the decision to change vehicle flows in East Sydney by closing streets and changing traffic direction the result of a joint recommendation made by the Cross City Tunnel consortium and the RTA?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The \$680 million Cross City Tunnel between Darling Harbour and Kings Cross links the Western and Eastern distributors, saves time in trips across the city and reduces traffic from service roads. Changes have been made to local traffic arrangements as a consequence of the Cross City Tunnel to improve public transport and local conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** But as there is considerable dispute that the conditions have been improved, I was asking whether the decision to change vehicle flow in East Sydney streets was the result of a joint recommendation by the Cross City Tunnel consortium and the RTA, or was it made separately?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** My understanding on advice I have received to date is that it was as a consequence of the planning process and the EIS process.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Did the RTA decide to change the road directions and close the roads, or was it a joint decision of the consortium and the RTA?

**Mr FORWARD:** There was a broad objective to provide reduced traffic flows on William Street. To do that there was a proposal to provide the Cross City Tunnel. As part of the project the tunnel actually connected the area just east of the Kings Cross tunnel in the tunnel as part of the Cross City Tunnel to the harbour crossings—The Domain tunnel and then onto the harbour tunnel and also up in through the city. To make those changes the RTA worked through the environmental impact statement the Minister just outlined and worked through a proposal that went on public exhibition that included the very street changes that you are talking about. That process was subject to public consultation and then subject to an evaluation by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. As part of that environmental assessment process we had an approved project.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** What is the daily traffic volume using the Cross City Tunnel?

**Mr FORWARD:** This is the early ramp-up period?

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Yes, it is.

**Mr FORWARD:** It is unlikely to be high traffic volumes at this point in time, but I am advised by the Cross City Tunnel motorway company that it is in the mid 20,000 vehicles a day.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Could you give us daily figures?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** It is 25,000 on average.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** If you have that average you must have been given figures. Could you take it on notice and release those figures?

**Mr FORWARD:** The advice of the Cross City Tunnel company is that it is an average figure of around 24,000, 25,000 vehicles a day.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Have you been given figures on a daily basis?

**Mr FORWARD:** The advice I have been given is the Minister's advice that he just outlined.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** You are saying that you have not been given daily figures?

**Mr FORWARD:** No. I have been given some average figures for the tunnel.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Do you have that information here now?

**Mr FORWARD:** No.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Could you take it on notice and release that information?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Obviously, we would need to consult with the Cross City Tunnel people. It would be commercial information that they may or may not wish to publish. We have been advised that, of recent days, it averages about 24,000 to 25,000 vehicles a day.

**Ms LEE RHIANNON:** Will you take it on notice that you will ask the consortium if that information can be released?

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I thank the Minister and his advisers for their time. The Committee has decided that questions on notice should be replied to within 35 days.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** We will attempt to get the answers back to you as quickly as possible.

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**

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