

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 - TRANSPORT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wednesday 10 March 2021

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

UNCORRECTED

REGIONAL TRANSPORT AND ROADS

The Committee met at 9:30.

MEMBERS

Ms Abigail Boyd (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Banasiak (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. Scott Farlow

The Hon. Sam Farraway

The Hon. John Graham

The Hon. Rose Jackson

The Hon. Shayne Mallard

The Hon. Mick Veitch

PRESENT

The Hon. Paul Toole, *Minister for Regional Transport and Roads*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:

**Budget Estimates secretariat
Room 812
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: Good morning. Welcome to the public hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2020-2021 initial hearings. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gadigal people who are the traditional custodians of this land and I pay respects to the Elders past, present and emerging of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present. I welcome Minister Toole and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Regional Transport and Roads. Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live on the Parliament's website.

In accordance with the broadcast guidelines, while members of the media may be filmed or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. All witnesses in budget estimates have a right to procedural fairness according to the procedural fairness resolution adopted by the House in 2018. There may be some questions that a witness could answer only if they had more time or with certain documents at hand. In those circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days.

Minister Toole, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you. Any messages from advisers or members' staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee secretariat. We expect the transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web from tomorrow morning. Finally, could everyone please turn off their mobile phones or set them to silent for the duration of the hearing.

UNCORRECTED

PETE ALLAWAY, Chief Executive Officer, NSW TrainLink, and Chief Customer Officer for Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

CAROL-ANNE NELSON, Deputy Secretary, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

PETER REGAN, Acting Secretary, Transport for NSW, on former oath

BERNARD CARLON, Executive Director, Centres for Road Safety and Maritime Safety, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.30 a.m. until 12.30 p.m. with the Minister and from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. with the departmental witnesses, with questions from the Opposition and crossbench members only. If required, an additional 15 minutes is allocated at the end of each session for Government questions. As there is no provision for any witness to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questioning, we will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you, Chair. Welcome, Minister and everyone else, to the hearing. Minister, is your Government still looking at redesigning the Regional Road Block and the Repair and Improvement of Regional Roads [REPAIR] grant programs?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I understand that there is a report that has actually come up in relation to the block and REPAIR reports and that is something that we will be looking at in the future. I do not think—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This is the Deloitte report?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is correct. I have not seen the report, but actually I am aware of the report. I am also aware that you should always be looking at grants of any kind, looking at how you can make them better, how you can deliver outcomes better for communities, and also how you can ensure that taxpayers funds are being used in the manner in which they should be.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, the report from Deloitte, which we obtained through the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPAA], is dated 17 January 2020—more than 12 months since the receipt of that document. How much longer before anyone knows what is going to happen?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is fair to say, Mr Veitch, that in relation to that report, that report has come in. But I think you would understand that the past 12 months we have been involved in a pandemic so there has been a real health issue here in this State to actually deal with. The team from Transport have been focusing on making sure that there is a stimulus injection into local communities. There has been a lot of investment going out to councils across this State. There has been a lot of investment going into roads and bridges and it is about creating jobs in our local communities. Most importantly, those smaller projects have really been the focus of the department over that particular time. It is something that, yes, a report is there. Yes, it is something that we will be reviewing and looking at in the upcoming months. But again, our focus over the past 12 months—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So it is still on the table for consideration.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is there. Obviously, I have asked the department to actually provide a report to me in relation to what the findings are in that particular report. I have not read it. I am aware of it. I have asked the department now to provide a report to me as the Minister.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, I have read the document. Thank you for your people providing it under GIPAA. It does actually say there are some concerns about this process of removing, redesigning, rebranding, whatever is the end result. But on page 25 it says that some councils may receive a significantly lower funding allocation due to the revised structure. Councils will be very concerned to find out that that is a possibility. Is this one of the things that you are considering?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: As I have said, we actually have to have a look at that report in detail. As you would know, as the Minister I have been very cognisant of actually making sure that councils have continued to get strong investment. I get letters from councils all the time telling me at the moment, "Thank you, Minister. We are receiving investment like this that we have never seen previously." They are telling me about projects they can do that they used to only dream of.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What about the block and REPAIR grants? We will talk about some of these projects later. The block and REPAIR grants—

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is appropriate, though, as you would be aware, that while we are looking at things like our road reclassification and things like block grants, all of that needs to be considered at the same time. I have always said I do not want councils to be—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Sorry, I do not want to misquote you later on. Did you say that you are looking at this as a part of—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, I did not say that. I said it could be a good opportunity to look at it at the same time.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Good opportunity. Minister, what is the time frame then at this stage? End of year; part of the State budget this year?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would say that any change to be implemented could be possibly a 12- to 18-month process. Again, what we would do is we would have to consult with councils. We would actually get feedback from councils as to if there are proposed changes as to what they might look like, and how they might impact on councils. I think that is pretty fair to say that we have done that in my space for most of the grants and the programs that have been running. Again, something like that that would see change, we would actually go out and engage with councils to actually ensure that the formula—talk to them about what the impact might be so that we are certainly not going to make it worse for councils.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So you can guarantee that councils will not be worse off financially under whatever you introduce?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I cannot guarantee anything today because I actually have not seen the report. As I have said, I have asked that to come up to me from the department as a summary in relation to what that report actually speaks about.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is one of the things that has been considered as a part of this review or redesign of the block and REPAIR grant programs looking at councils, I guess, creating the ability for local employment opportunities, so that councils can select their own maintenance providers as opposed to the current arrangements? Is that one of the things that you would give consideration to?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have not seen the report so it is not fair to speculate what is in it and what some of those recommendations are or what some of those thoughts are that might have been put forward by Deloitte. Until I actually see that, then I would want to have a broader conversation with councils about what is put forward in that report. But I am not going to go out there—and I certainly put on the record—there is no decision made by Government and, certainly, I hope that you are not going to go out there and scaremonger amongst councils telling them that the Government is going to do this because that is not correct. That report is in, and as I have said—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This is January 2020.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is right. The Government has not actually acted upon that report. It is a report that is there, but as I have said the focus for the past 12 months has been around getting small projects out the door, getting that stimulus investment into our local councils.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, whilst it says January 2020, some elements of this may well be dated. Would you accept that sitting on the report is actually starting to create an issue around the currency of the information contained in the report?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is something that we will definitely be looking at as we have a look at that particular report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Would you look at engaging a subsequent report to ensure that the information in the Deloitte report is still accurate and current?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: What we need to do is I want to get that briefing from the department first and then I will have a look what the next steps might be. It might be then engaging with councils, it might be doing some extra additional work, I might be asking the department to look at additional options and look at different things. But at this point in time it is all speculative because I do not have the report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Did you advise the relevant peak bodies in the local government area that you were looking at rebadging, redesigning, reconstructing or repackaging the block and REPAIR grants?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, that is not a discussion we have had with Local Government NSW, not myself anyway as the Minister.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Did anyone flag with them that this was a review that was underway, that was on foot?

Ms NELSON: I can possibly help.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Thank you, Ms Nelson.

Ms NELSON: As part of the Deloitte report, they actually did engage with a number of councils and I think that is in the report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think eight councils.

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am talking about the peak bodies: Local Government NSW, the union. Were any of those flagged that this was afoot?

Ms NELSON: No. The people who were consulted are in the report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So they were not told? Okay. Minister, what other road grant programs are you looking at rebadging or redesigning other than the block and REPAIR grants.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Mr Veitch, I do not think that you actually stop looking at all the programs that you have got. Even our Fixing Local Roads, for example—we are always looking at how we can streamline that, how we can make it more simpler and how we can ensure that the dollars are getting out the door to support councils. I do not think it would be wise of any Minister or any government to be just sitting back on their laurels for grants that are out there in the system. It is about ensuring that at the end of the day you are getting your best bang for buck. It is about making sure those dollars can go as far as they can to achieve those benefits that are needed in local communities. I think all grants and all programs always need to be consistently reviewed, and that is something that I will continue to do.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, the Deloitte report actually undertook a literature review, which is an important part of any sort of review program. The 2014 Audit Office report conducted a review of the block and REPAIR grant programs, so nearly seven years ago. It is not as if people have not been advocating for some change. Would you agree?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think on any particular grant program, and I think it is the same as that one, you have got to make sure it is fit for purpose for today. That is primarily what needs to happen. Again, that was a report that was commissioned before my time as the Minister. And, as I have said, I have only recently become aware of that particular report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Which you have not read yet.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, my colleague is being a bit generous to you in saying it is just a year old. It is January 2020; that is 14 months ago. He is asking when will others know about this report. My question is: When will you know about this report? You are the Minister. This was delivered in January 2020. When will you read this report?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: As I have said to Mr Veitch, Mr Graham, I was made aware of this report last week. I have asked the department to prepare a brief in relation to that report and I will be getting that in the coming weeks.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: When did you ask that this report come up to you?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I was made aware of it about a week ago.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: And you asked for it to come up to you a week ago?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I was made aware of the report a week ago and then I have asked for a brief in relation to what is contained in the report.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have said this is speculative because you have not read the report. Minister, this is not speculative. The report is there. The agency knows it. The only issue here is you do not know what is in there because you have not done your job. Is that not the case?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think I have heard those comments from you before at previous budget estimates to other Ministers, so it is a bit of a pattern. But at the end of the day, as I said—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I do not think that is fair, Minister.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —you might not have been aware but last year there was a pandemic and there were a lot of issues.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have never had a Minister come before me and say that about a report in their agency.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, Mr Graham, this is about delivering for our community.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Point of order—

The CHAIR: I will hear the point of order.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: This is the first one for the day—

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Mallard. I am also very sympathetic to Hansard, and they cannot possibly do their jobs properly when people are talking over each other. If we could allow people to ask the question properly and allow people to answer the question properly, that would be appreciated.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, you found out about this report last week?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I heard of the report, yes. It was about last week.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Did that coincide with the fact that we received it last week in a GIPAA application? Do you think maybe it is coincidental?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: As soon as I became aware of it, that is when I asked for further advice in relation to that report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So a report dated January 2020—which we obtained under GIPAA—at the same time we receive it via the GIPAA, someone decides that they had better tell the Minister. Do you not think that is a bit shonky?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: When I was made aware of it, that is where I have asked for advice to be given to me as the Minister.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you satisfied that a report that is prepared around a very important funding program, the block and REPAIR grants, dated January 2020 is not brought to your notice until such time as the Opposition obtained it via a GIPAA application?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: What I am concerned more about are the outcomes at the end of the day and making sure we get the right outcomes for any particular report, but also what the outcomes and what the benefits might be to councils and communities across this State in relation to those REPAIR and block grants.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But you are okay with that: that there is a report dated 2020 and you only find out about it when we get it via GIPAA.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Normally, as I was saying, I would expect the department to bring these reports to me a lot earlier. I will say, though, that over the past 12 months there has been a very strong focus on dealing with a pandemic. The department of transport has been involved in various programs, various issues around ensuring that freight could move across this State, making sure that transport activities continued. And again, I would now see that providing a report to me on this particular report is important as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you not at all concerned that a GIPAA from the Opposition drives someone within the department to say, "We had better give this to the Minister." You get it the same week we get it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have been aware made aware of it and I have asked for the department to prepare a report in relation to it for me.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You did not scream behind closed doors, kick the bin or anything like that? I mean, this is 14 months.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not going to tell you what I do behind closed doors.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is 14 months, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I am not going to sit here and tell you what I do behind closed doors.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Clearly not a lot of reading behind closed doors.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is 14 months, Minister. Off the back of a GIPAA from the Opposition, you get made aware of this document. I am astounded.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: As I said, I have been made aware of the report. Whether it is timely off the back of your GIPAA or not, I am not aware of that. All I know is I was made aware of the report and as soon as I was made aware of that I asked for a report, or a briefing, to be given to me from the department in the coming weeks.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Well, if there is anything else you want to know in your department, let me know and I will put a GIPAA in. It seems to be the way that works.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Very helpful of you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, you also mentioned this is a part of the 15,000-kilometre road reclassification process. You are considering these two things—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I just said it could be an opportunity to look at everything at this point in time. I did not say that we would and I did not say that it was; I just said that it could also be an opportunity while we are looking at the way that councils maintain roads and their maintenance budgets they receive through the REPAIR and block grants.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the 15,000-kilometre roads reclassification panel that has been put in place—as I understand it, they have delivered their first or interim report after that exercise.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is that with the department or is that in the Minister's office?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is in the Minister's office.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Whereabouts in the Minister's office? Is it on your desk?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It actually is on my desk. I have only just received that report as well. I have had a brief look at that interim report that has been received from the independent expert panel. Again, I am looking forward to going through it and seeing what is outlined.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: When did you receive it, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I received it in the past week. I would probably need to now sit down and read the full contents of the report. Remember, we are not just talking about the reclassification of up to 15,000 roads. It has also got a number of factors looking at local roads, regional roads and State roads around that definition as well. So there was extra work that was done by the panel in relation to what is in that interim report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, how many reports do you expect from the panel? I know this is the first one. We should get the terminology right. Is it the first report or the interim report?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is the interim report.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How many more do you expect as a part of this exercise?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This is the first one to obviously take the next steps going forward. So once we have a look at the report and we will have a look at those roads that have been put forward by councils as a priority for reclassification, then that will mean we will have to look at things like the length of the road, the condition of the road.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yeah, no goat tracks.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There will be a report that will go to Cabinet in relation to those roads.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you have a timetable for this interim—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I just got the report. I think, again, what we need to do now is actually have a clear look at the roads that are being put forward by—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Christmas time?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would be hoping—and I am just saying hoping—by the middle of the year. Let's say by Christmas, because you actually said Christmas—so by Christmas to be looking at the start of the roads for reclassification.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Will this first tranche be the election commitments that were made around reclassification of roads, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is hardly surprising that we are not going to be keeping our election commitments. But I think we said even at the last hearing, even those roads that were put forward as election

UNCORRECTED

commitments, I still wanted them to go through this process. I still wanted them to engage with the panel, and I still wanted them to ensure that—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: To be assessed as a part of it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: To be assessed as a part of it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They are part of a first tranche, though?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have not looked at all the roads in it at this point in time, but it would not be surprising that there would not be some of those roads that would be election commitments earmarked in that particular document.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: As you would appreciate, there are a number of councils sweating on what the first tranche would look like—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: —because it will probably provide them with a bit of an indication about subsequent iterations or subsequent reports. Can you guarantee that no council is going to be worse off financially under this road reclassification process?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is pretty clear that even when I did the terms of reference I actually put a very strong focus on regional jobs. I put a very strong focus on acknowledging the work that councils do. Again, I have seen media reports where you are out there saying that councils are going—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So give us a guarantee.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. I have seen reports where you are saying that councils are going to be worse off. That is scaremongering because—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Just rule it out.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Then rule it out.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will tell you why—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have not ruled it out, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will tell you why councils are nervous.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have not ruled it out.

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr PAUL TOOLE: They are nervous because they remember what you did when you were last in government when you dumped thousands of kilometres back to councils without any support.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So they are not going to be financially worse off under this arrangement?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You actually dumped millions of dollars back onto councils to actually fund the maintenance. They are nervous because of what you have actually done.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is not a guarantee, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: When I talk to councils they tell me that they are still concerned because of what you guys did when you were last in government.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They are also concerned now about this process.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: What we are doing is making sure that we have engaged with all councils—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: All you have got to do, Minister, is guarantee that they will not be financially worse off under the road reclassification process.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I need to see the actual roads to be reclassified, Mr Veitch, but I am also very mindful to make sure that councils in some areas are very reliant on the maintenance work that they receive for their local workforce. I am also mindful to make sure that they continue to do the maintenance on those roads where possible because I think that is a critical piece of work—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How can you guarantee no-one is going to lose their job at—

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This is a critical piece of work that is being undertaken. You talk about jobs. We have created thousands of jobs already across this State just in the programs that we are running right now. We are creating—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But this is about the council road crews.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We are creating thousands of jobs as well. But, as I said, the panel has done their work. I will put on the record that I think that panel has done a pretty good job under the leadership of Wendy Machin. I think it is fair to say, though, that over the past 12 months to actually have to speak to all councils that participated through Zoom—I have had Local Government NSW. I had Linda Scott that came and saw me there a couple of weeks ago and she was actually praising the work that the panel has done, praising the work—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Just to reinforce, Minister, where I have been—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no, praising the work—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —done in engaging with communities.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is your involvement they are concerned with.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: At the end of the day, you have actually agreed to this. You have agreed that this is a big piece of work.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You have agreed that this is a complex piece of work, and you have actually in newspapers—I think it was *The Armidale Express*. I think we spoke about that 12 months ago where you actually said the Government needs to take its time—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: To get it right.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is a big piece of work. It is complex, and we need to get it right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the councils—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is exactly what we are going to be doing through this particular process.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am glad we agree that it is a large body of work.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You are agreeing with me again.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I will continue—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, you are agreeing with me again, so that is good.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I will continue—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, I know. You keep agreeing with me, so good.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But we will continue to prosecute the case around this issue for the councils—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I look forward to it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: —because they are concerned, and that is why they want to know when is the first tranche going to be released.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely, and I think you are right. I think that is a fair comment. I think councils are, in some cases, sitting back and wanting to see what actually happens in the first round, and that is natural. That is quite understandable. I think once councils see what the interim report does and what the actual first round of councils being reclassified—I think that will certainly send a message out to the councils that may wish to put forward additional roads into the future.

The CHAIR: Minister, did Minister Constance consult with you before issuing that direction for the clearance zone around all of the State-managed highways?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Minister Constance has always been talking to me in relation to things that we could do to make our road network more resilient. I am aware of that direction, but I am also aware of the intent of what Minister Constance was trying to achieve.

UNCORRECTED

The CHAIR: Minister Constance has had that opportunity to put that on the record. I am asking whether he consulted with you before issuing a direction that encompasses the highways under your portfolio responsibilities.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is right. It was a question that we were often having conversations about how we could actually improve the road network. I think there is no doubt when you have a look at those fires back in 2019-20, those bushfires themselves, when they went through those communities, it was pretty devastating. I think when you saw the trees that were coming down onto the side of the roads, when you saw the powerlines were coming down, when you saw the rail network that was being shut off—it actually showed that we needed to do things differently to ensure that we had a network that was going to be more resilient. We had communities where cars were queued up—queues of cars that could not get out. In some cases, Minister Constance and myself were concerned that some of these trees could potentially fall onto cars and actually kill somebody.

The CHAIR: With respect, that is a bit of a distraction from the question I asked. We all lived through that bushfire season. We all saw the horrors. What we are talking about here is the issuing of an illegal direction. Were you consulted in relation to that direction, yes or no?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I was not consulted in relation to that direction, but I am aware that we were already having various discussions around how we could make the corridor more resilient. We were already in discussions with the department; the department was already doing pieces of work around what we could do to ensure that the road network, again, was going to be improved. This was a time when we had arborists that were travelling across the State, taking trees down to ensure that they were not going to fall onto our road network. We had some communities where there is only one road going in and out. So, again, there needed to be a broader piece of work from the department to do this.

The CHAIR: Is it standard for Minister Constance to order and make directions in relation to roads that are your responsibility?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think the intent there of looking at different options for consideration to make the road network more resilient was what we were both concerned about trying to do.

The CHAIR: With respect, that does not answer my question. Is it normal for him to issue a direction in relation to roads that are within your ministerial responsibilities?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think we were both having discussions about what was needed to happen in relation to improving the road network.

The CHAIR: You understand you are not answering my question?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I am answering your question.

The CHAIR: Is this something that you have seen a lot from Minister Constance? Does he often issue ministerial directions over roads within your responsibility without consulting with you?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think Minister Constance and myself were both talking to the department about ways in which we could improve the network. Some of these roads actually overlap in certain areas between Minister Constance and myself, but it also ensures that—but it also means that we need to make sure that the road network itself is going to be safe for the future. That is why, as part of our clean-up, we saw something like \$64 million invested in actually cleaning up our highways and our roads and our rail network.

The CHAIR: We are talking about a ministerial direction, so did Minister Constance discuss the performance of Rodd Staples with you before terminating his employment?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: He did indicate that Mr Staples and he were going to be going a separate direction. Again, you need to refer the question to Minister Constance who is actually the cluster Minister responsible for the decision.

The CHAIR: Are you classified as a senior Minister for the purposes of your remuneration?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am a senior Minister.

The CHAIR: You are a senior Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, but a young bloke.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: He is the Deputy Leader of The Nationals.

The CHAIR: Are you able to tell me the name of any Minister who is not a senior Minister? Is that something you are aware of?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am sure it is on the record for you to find out.

The CHAIR: It certainly is not, which is why I am asking.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You would have to ask the appropriate people in relation to that.

The CHAIR: Is it well known within Cabinet who is a senior Minister for the purposes of remuneration and who is not?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you know what, I do not actually focus on what the title might be. I focus on the portfolio and the job I have been given to deliver, so I am not actually focusing on who has a title and who has seniority. To me that is second in nature to delivering what communities of this State need. As the Minister responsible for Regional Transport and Roads, that is what I am focusing on, not who has what title and who is more senior.

The CHAIR: You are not concerned about the extra \$17,000 you get as a senior Minister? That is not a consideration for you?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am a senior Minister. I am also the Deputy Leader of the NSW Nationals. I have also been a Minister for a number of years in different portfolios. So again, if you are asking me questions about which Ministers are and are not, I am not getting into it because I do not really care. At the end of the day, I care about delivering for communities across this State.

The CHAIR: Do you think that the public cares that certain Ministers get paid a certain amount at the discretion of the Premier without it being publicly known and without there being criteria? Do you think the public cares that you get \$17,000 more than the notional pay rate for a Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: What the community cares about is if I am doing the job given to me on behalf of the people of this State and that is what I will continue to do. I will continue to make sure that there is an investment into regional communities. I will make sure that we are working with councils to partner with them in fixing local roads. I will make sure that we are providing better options around public transport. I will continue to make sure that those benefits are going to continue to regional communities.

The CHAIR: Did you lobby within Cabinet against the pay freeze or pay for the pay freeze for public sector workers?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not going to go into what happens in Cabinet. What happens in Cabinet is a matter for Cabinet.

The CHAIR: Are you the Minister responsible for the regional seniors travel card?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am. I have been waiting—that is a great one.

The CHAIR: Okay, great. Can you explain to me why the regional seniors travel card is privately operated and acts like a cashless welfare card instead of acting like a concession card?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, it is a Visa card. Obviously that is how it is operating, to ensure that there are protections around that. What I will say to you: Isn't it pretty exciting, the fact that 337,000 eligible seniors last year signed up and received the card? That is 337,000 seniors who got \$250 in their pocket. They can use it for filling up the car, they can use it for taxis, they can use it for New South Wales trains, coaches and buses. Again, it helps with people's cost of living. What I have been getting as I have been going around the State is that the fact that community groups like the Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association [CPSA] have all been telling me that this has made a big difference in regional communities. There are so many people that have benefited from it. People are telling me that they are able to keep their medical appointments because of the support that has been given by this card. People are telling me, "I have been able to have those additional trips to go and see my family and friends because"—

The CHAIR: People are doing it tough and any amount of money gets very welcomed.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely. The way it is set up like a bankcard means that it is only a 12-month card. It has to be replaced after that 12-month period. But again, we have had over 200,000 seniors that have signed up already and received their cards.

The CHAIR: And as I say, that is great. Any amount of money in this climate is very, very helpful. How much money did Westpac get from the Government for running the scheme?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I can ask the department if they have that information. Otherwise we could bring that information this afternoon for you. I will say to you that the injection back into regional communities has also been outstanding. We are talking about, last year alone, about \$64 million being injected back into regional

UNCORRECTED

communities, so that has supported regional merchants. That is not only the customers but it is also merchants in regional locations that have benefited from that.

The CHAIR: You will come back to me with a cost?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We might have it this afternoon.

The CHAIR: That would be really good, on how much Westpac is profiting from this.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The CHAIR: And why is the service only available for regional seniors? Was it considered to be extended out to carers or people with a disability at all?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This was an election commitment that was made at the last election. What we are doing is honouring our election commitment. We did expand the program to include some eligible veterans as well, so the program slightly expanded to allow them to be included. I know that there are carers and people on disability that would also like to receive the card, and I get that. They are disappointed because they cannot get that \$250 card, but what I also said about 12 months ago was that a review was undertaken into the point-to-point services that are already being provided in regional communities because I do not want the card just to be there for two years and then people do not benefit. People on disability or people who are carers—I want to make sure that the programs that are there go beyond two years, that they go beyond three years, that they are there in five years time so that these people are continuing to get the support that they need.

The CHAIR: So to answer the question, this kind of card is not going to be rolled out to people with disability or carers?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This is a two-year trial on the existing card and it has been a very successful program.

The CHAIR: The answer is no, not yet?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: What I said was we would also be looking at the services that are available for people on carers and a disability, and making sure that they are aware of some of those transport options that they have in their communities because some people were not even aware of them.

The CHAIR: So no, not yet?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Moving to the Bridle Track, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You beauty. Here we go.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: We are going to recycle the same announcement three times. Here we go.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: He does not like it when there is a bit of action out there.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I am asking the questions, Mr Farraway. You will have your 15 minutes of Dorothy Dixers. The road was closed in 2010 when you were the mayor. In 2019 you announced a \$2 million grant to undertake a road study. My understanding is that there are two basic bypass route options: one is the Hodges Road and one is the Native Dog Creek option. Which one are we going for?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Are you talking about a road study?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think you need to probably get your facts a bit better because you are completely off the mark in relation to this particular program: how the money was delivered and what it was actually for.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: What did it deliver?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Let me tell you the story then, okay? In 2010 there was a rock slide, so whoever gave you your notes just tell them to give you the right notes next time and to not set you up in this meeting. What happened was, in 2010 there was a rock slide. If anyone knows the Bridle Track, it is a fairly steep terrain. The rocks came down on the road. It split the road and half of the road actually fell down this enormous cliff. The road, it was decided by the council at the time, was unsafe—unsafe to have vehicles going through. From a safety perspective the council decided to close the Bridle Track. What they did in the meantime was they put investments along the Duramana Road all the way out to Hill End, sealing the roads in that area. In relation to 2018—so, not 2019—I made an announcement that the New South Wales Government was giving Bathurst Regional Council \$2 million towards going and looking at options to reopen the Bridle Track.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: What—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. You said 2019, it was 2018. In relation to that \$2 million, it was to be kept aside for construction work on the road itself, so it was not to go towards a study. The money has been sitting with Bathurst Regional Council that entire time. In relation to that, the council itself wanted to look at what they needed to do. They looked at the existing road. They went, structurally, they will not be able to do the road up there because there could be another rock slide in the future which actually would then close the road potentially again. So what they did was they looked at an alternative route, which is up around the back of Monaghan's Bluff. In relation to that, there were three properties that needed to be acquired for that alternative route to be put in place.

With those properties, two were actually able to be acquired quite easily but one of them was, unfortunately, a deceased estate. That deceased estate had interest overseas, so it made it a little bit difficult for the council to be able to acquire that land. So they had to go through the normal legislative process of compulsorily acquiring that piece of land. I can say that now that they have that piece of land, they have done their design work and they are ready to start construction to build that road. I know the Hon. Sam Faraway and myself, last month, were out there on the road.

We caught up with some four-wheel drive operators—very happy customers, knowing that the Government's \$2 million investment into this road is going to see that alternative track put a ring in around Monaghan's Bluff. The council has indicated—and I will put on the record that it is a council road, so it is a local road under the care and responsibility of Bathurst Regional Council. They are indicating that they are hoping to have that open by the end of the year. The Hon. Sam Faraway is not allowed to answer today, but I know that he was just as excited as I was out there, with the bulldozer and seeing the equipment and the heavy machinery in that area taking the work on.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Will it be suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles as well?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is a matter for council. My understanding is council said it is for four-wheel drives, but you would have to direct your question to Bathurst Regional Council.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Can we move to—

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Come on, I want more dixers.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Isn't it great? It is a great place, if you have not been there. Bridle track—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: You do not know where I have been, Mr Toole. Can we talk about fast rail strategy and the McNaughton report? You obviously would be aware that we put in a call for papers under Standing Order 52 to understand where the McNaughton report was, and it did not come through. There were a couple of other missing documents as well. Where is the McNaughton report, as it stands?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: With the fast rail strategy, you are right: Professor Andrew McNaughton was engaged to undertake a study in relation to fast rail across this State. He actually went and engaged with communities. He engaged with various stakeholders. In relation to that particular focus as well, the Government has \$295 million it has actually committed to fast rail. But, again, there is some more work that needs to be done in relation to that particular report that has been put forward. We want to make sure that we get it right. We want to make sure that you also deliver a strategy that is not going to be something that is pie in the sky at the end of the day, because I think governments of all levels, time after time, have spoken about a fast rail strategy and again it is not delivered.

So I think we want to make this something that is real. We also know that it is something that is going to be rolled out over decades. But, again, we want to make sure that even with the existing rail network, there are things that we can put in place right now to be able to improve the network for customers going forward. It might be looking at things like stations. It might be looking at things like straightening up lines. That is part of the blueprint. In relation to it, as well, once that is finalised it will go to Cabinet and then Cabinet will make a decision as to what the next steps might be for that particular report.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: How much did the report cost?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not have that detail with me, but I will ask for that information to be provided to you this afternoon.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: So the report was not before Cabinet but it has been completed. Why was it—

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are some things that we are also additionally seeking out information on in relation to the report. We are just wanting to actually test a few more things before we take it up to Cabinet, which is, I think, what you do with any particular report.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: That is fine. I am trying to understand why it was not coming forward under Standing Order 52. Was it because it is not actually complete?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are some things that we are still just taking our time to actually ask questions about in relation to what is put forward in it.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: We will move to the Canberra-Bega railway proposal.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Canberra to Eden?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes, sorry, Canberra to Eden. My understanding was that it was put in the hands of the general manager's office and he allowed it for public viewing, but now Transport for NSW has approached those people and asked them to sign a confidentiality agreement after they have already viewed the document. Was it not the intention for that document to be put in the council's hands for public viewing? Is that why we are having to backtrack and tell people they cannot tell anyone what they saw?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not aware of the details you are speaking about. But I understand, to that, with Fixing Country Rail—it is actually the feasibility studies that we do through programs like Fixing Country Rail, so it is no different to Canberra to Eden; it is no different to Blayney to Demondrille; it is no different to the Gulgong to Maryvale line. All of those lines actually look at a feasibility study. In relation to those particular reports, what we actually ask for is information from various stakeholders about what they may be putting onto a rail line, what their projected forecast might be for growth in their particular business and what their expansion plans might be. A lot of that is commercial-in-confidence, so a lot of that information is not out there in the public for those reasons because, for a competitor, that could be something that could be used against those companies or individuals that are putting information forward in that particular report.

It is not uncommon that we do not show councils themselves. It is not uncommon that we do not show those councils that are involved in the report itself. But, again, it is under confidential terms because there is commercial-in-confidence information that is provided in these reports. You and I might think, at the end of the day, that there is not information in there provided that is not commercial-in-confidence. But if you actually get a competitor and they look at the information that is provided in that report, they might pick up what you and I do not think is something as not commercial-in-confidence nature.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: You do not know the status of this report and why it was put before council and why now they are saying—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We do show councils confidentially. Again, Mr Banasiak, councils are shown confidentially these reports where these studies have been undertaken.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: But this council has then given access to the public, and now those members of the public have been told to sign a confidentiality agreement and delete all records of what they saw and what they took.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The council itself would have had the opportunity to be shown it confidentially, so I am not aware as to why they have gone and shown it out beyond those realms.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Can you maybe take it on notice and find out?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can find out and provide it this afternoon if we have that information. We can do that this afternoon.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, I want to return to that ministerial direction issued by Minister Constance to the Secretary of Transport for NSW, Mr Staples. It was issued on 27 February 2020 and it said, in part:

I am writing to instruct you in your role as secretary for Transport for NSW to establish a 'clearance zone' around all state-managed highways, by ensuring trees within 40 metres either side cannot obstruct vital road access.

I accept your evidence that you have given this morning that you were not consulted, but have you actually seen that directive?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I was made aware of it, and I believe it might have been Mr Staples who actually made my office aware of it at that particular time. I have not actually, in relation to it, seen it but I was made aware of what actually was put forward. But again I say to you that the intent there was to ensure that there was a safer, more resilient network. But again this was part of many conversations that Minister Constance and I had about

UNCORRECTED

improving the network, but also conversations that we were already having and engaging with the department about what needed to happen going forward into the future, because you and I both agree—and everyone in this room—that those fires were horrific. I think there were things that we experienced that we have never seen, ever, and certainly hope not to see again.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: When you say Mr Staples made you aware of it, that was around 27 February 2020, around the time it was—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not recall the timing, but I do know that it was my office that he actually informed and it was my office that informed me in relation to what may have been put forward to Mr Staples.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Could you take on notice when your office was informed by Mr Staples?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will see if we can find that out for you. Sometimes it is just verbal. It might have been a verbal conversation.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. But take on notice that question. If you cannot find out—this does relate to your administration. I would hope you would be able to—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is the State network as well, which—as I said before—does overlap on other roads as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It would be unusual if you did not know, given this related to roads?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is right. But, as I said, I think we both had the same cause. We both wanted to achieve the same outcome about improving it as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But you have not seen that directive up until now?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No. I was made aware of it.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Understood. Have you asked the department to supply you with a copy of that directive now, the way you might have with these other reports?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, I do not need to ask them to supply me with a copy because we were doing things already. Whilst there may have been an indication for that to be considered, we were already looking at a number of different options. Again, as a Minister, I will ask the department all the time and I will challenge them all the time about things that we should be looking at, things that we can try differently as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have given evidence that you did discuss it with the agency, the agency raised it with you, you had many discussions. Did you understand the agency to have concerns about this ministerial directive?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think the agency itself was putting forward options to me and I was wanting to see what they were all going to come back with.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking you a different question though, Minister. Did you understand, as Minister, that the agency had concerns about this directive?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am sure the agency potentially would have had concerns in relation to this but I also know that myself, when you look at some of those—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, I want you to consider your answer there.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I am.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Because this is not potential. You have said you discussed it with the agency. My question is very specific: Did you understand, as Minister, that the agency had concerns with this ministerial directive?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I understand the agency was concerned about some of the thoughts about how it could be implemented, but I do not think they were focusing on one particular matter. They were looking at various options—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But they clearly had concerns.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —through this process.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: What were those concerns? Just tell us what you understood?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not know because I did not go into it. All I know is myself personally there would be issues around terrain, obviously species, lots of different factors, but I could see that for myself. Even

UNCORRECTED

looking at the State network, I have roads in my area that I know are up and down cliff faces, so again, there would always be challenges in relation to that. I do not think the intent could possibly be delivered into the road network in those areas—example Jenolan Caves, example Bells Line of Road.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: They are good examples.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You have a look at the terrain, you have a look at what is there. If the trees are not there, you have massive slope stabilisation. Again, I think the intent was there but I say to you, it was about trying to make sure it was looked at as part of options going forward.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is a very good example though, Jenolan Caves.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: What you are agreeing is it would be impossible for the agency to carry out the directive as written at that site. Impossible, you would agree with that?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to say there would be lots of roads that would be very difficult to achieve that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Not just very difficult, impossible?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But I think Minister Constance is also aware of that as well. He would be aware of that with the terrain and the number of those State roads as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We have asked questions of Minister Constance. I am asking about his written directive to the secretary of the department, and you agree in a range of places it would be impractical?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Impossible?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Did you agree with any of those concerns? You are really saying you do, you acknowledge some of those agency concerns about its implementation?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think I just—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I think you have answered.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think I can pick it up for myself just knowing the road network that I travel on all the time. I am pretty sure I could pick up where it is going to be challenging in various places.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Did the agency raise concerns about the legality of this direction?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I never went into that with the department because I was more concerned, again about what the outcome was going to be, about what we could do going forward for those communities that were impacted. All I know is that you looked at—and let's put the fires aside. After those fires went through, the fires had come and gone but we still had trees that were—there would be a small windstorm go through and trees would just fall over, limbs would still fall off trees. I was more concerned about making sure—again, Minister Constance—someone is not going to get killed by one of those trees landing on the road. We have done a lot of work on the Gwydir Highway, down the Hume, down the Princes Highway.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The response of Secretary Staples goes to some of those issues. Was one of the agency's concerns, was one of your concerns consultation, given this would have meant chopping down trees on council land or private land?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely. There would be a lot more involved. If you looked at it black and white, anyone could understand that would mean a lot more thought and processes. We probably have to have legislative changes as well through the Parliament. Again, there would need to be changes there.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But Minister, Minister Constance at budget estimates on 25 February made it clear this work has to happen. He was very clear that without this happening before there are other fires, there is a major problem in the State. To your knowledge has he withdrawn this ministerial directive?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I believe he has. Because I think with—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You believe he has withdrawn—

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You would have to ask Minister Constance that. I am not going to answer on behalf of him. I know that he is also seeing that the department has achieved a number of outcomes to deliver a safer and more resilient network and that is exactly what we both wanted to achieve.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking a specific question—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I know. Well, I am answering your question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —about roads in your administration. Has Minister Constance withdrawn this written ministerial directive that relates to roads in your administration or not?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I have not had that conversation with Minister Constance. As I said to you, I believe—and this is only my opinion—that he is very pleased with the direction that we have taken to ensure that the network is going to become safer and more resilient.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: He might be pleased, but I want to give you the opportunity to clarify the evidence you have given. You said you thought he had withdrawn it. But I think you are now saying you do not know whether he has withdrawn this written ministerial direction or not. Which of those two is it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I see it as more of his intent to improve the network. So, you might say—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: There is a written ministerial directive here. Is it in force or not?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You would have to ask him at the end of the day. I am not going to sit here and try to think what Minister Constance says, thoughts, where he might be. That is a matter for him.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I think it is fair for you to say we should ask him.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You needed to ask him those questions.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: In relation to the roads in your administration covered by this directive, you are not certain sitting here today whether or not that written directive is in force or is not. Is that a fair comment?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We have got options that we are already undertaking in relation to making the road network more resilient, and I am happy—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You are avoiding the question, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, I am not because we are already doing a number of measures.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: For your roads is this in force or not?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I said before about \$60 million has already been spent. We have \$10 million going forward as well to improve both the road and the rail network.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I accept, Minister, you have answered that question to the best of your ability.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: When you go and have a look at the Main Western Line—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to move on. How many trees would this have meant were cleared?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not believe that work would ever have been done. But that is not a question I can answer.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Do you have concerns that if this written ministerial directive was implemented it would have meant clearing thousands of trees from koala habitat in the south-west of Sydney, in the Blue Mountains, in the mid North Coast, the North and South coasts of New South Wales? Do you have concerns?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Again, the intent was what Minister Constance was after and that is certainly what we both wanted to achieve. Again, I am not going to sit here and speculate as to how many trees and how far it went in, because at the end of the day I just wanted to make sure people could get in and out safely from those communities. That is what I was focused on and that is what I want to make sure.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, do you have concerns that this would have been the largest broadscale land clearing in New South Wales' history? Much more, for example, than the total hectares cleared of primary forest between 2010 and 2018. Are you concerned about that?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Look, it is all speculative and they are hypothetical questions.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is not hypothetical.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is hypothetical.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: This is a written ministerial directive.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is hypothetical. You need to ask Minister Constance at the end of the day.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: And we certainly did.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Again, it has not been acted upon. You have got hypothetical numbers being thrown at me in relation to what it potentially looked like—how many trees, all of that. I have said to you there would be challenges around that as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is broadscale land clearing on a scale that would have been a fatal blow to the Government's net zero emissions by 2050. Is that of concern to you, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think the intent was there by both Ministers to improve the network. Again, when you saw communities lined up, they were beeping their horns, they could not get out—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Something had to be done. The question is do we have to clear every tree next to every highway? That is the question.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think when you live it, time after time and you see those communities, you see the horror on those faces, I think it is important that something changes. Again, that is why—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Are you concerned this was an illegal direction?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is why it was another option I believe that was to be looked at. It is not uncommon, at the end of the day, as a Minister, to ask the department to plan, to look at things as to how we can actually achieve better outcomes. I do not have a problem with that. I think that is something we should always do as a Minister—challenge departments to look at things that need to be implemented. Again they will come back with options.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, this directive is so broad that it is at a point of ridiculous, is it not? You would have driven past the Corridor of Oaks at Faulconbridge many, many times on your way home. Are you concerned that this ministerial directive in writing is so broad it would have required Transport for NSW to fell the oak tree—

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: There is a train line between the oak trees and the highway.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —planted by Country Party leader and legend Arty Fadden?

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: There is a train station between them.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: He planted it in person on 6 December 1947. Transport for NSW might have to chop down that tree. Is that a concern?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I think Explorers Tree as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Explorers Tree. It is a good example, Minister. Have you got more examples?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, although it has been removed. I go back to what I said before. I think the Minister—and I cannot answer for him because it is a matter for him to answer—would be aware that there would be real challenges in terrain and topography like that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Regan, a letter was referred to in yesterday's estimates from Jim Betts to Rodd Staples in relation to this matter. I ask you to endeavour to produce that in this afternoon's session of estimates, if possible.

Mr REGAN: I will have a look at that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, I have a series of questions. However, at the outset I declare that my brother and brother-in-law are heavy vehicle long distance operators. I want to make sure everyone understands. What is the current commitment of the New South Wales Government towards the implementation of the objectives specified in the 2010 RTA strategy for major heavy vehicle rest areas on key rural freight routes in New South Wales?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Obviously it is a focus of the Government to ensure that there are rest areas available for our heavy vehicle operators in this State. When we look at our heavy vehicle operators, they are travelling long distances. They are certainly doing long hours as well. I put on the record that I think they also did an incredible job during the pandemic—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Hear, hear!

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —making sure that supermarkets remained full, making sure that chemists got the supplies they needed.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So they need rest areas.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: With rest areas, I do not think it is a place you should not be always looking at trying to explore to put in more. Again, when you have got new roads that are being built, it is always something that needs to be considered as part of a design of new highways, new roads being constructed by the department. We have a lot of heavy vehicles out there and the numbers will only increase with the amount of freight movement over the years to come.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What is the status of the 2010 strategy?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will have to take that one on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is it still a current document that we are working to? That is what I am after.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not sure. I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I may explore it this afternoon with the public servants.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will not take it on notice then. Leave it until this afternoon. That will be better.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If it can be provided—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There is a wonderful website that tells you where the rest areas are in New South Wales. Minister, how does the Government obtain the information for that website? How often is it checked? Have you had a look at it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will get the department to provide that to you this afternoon.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Have you had a look at it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have not actually looked at it. I speak to different operators, though, different companies as well in relation to their suggestions as to where we could put in additional ones from time to time. I would rather hear from those operators on the ground, especially some of those large operators who have got trucks right across this State and interstate because sometimes I believe that the ground knowledge at the end of the day, the grassroots knowledge is probably the most important way—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How do you canvass their views around heavy vehicle rest areas?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think their biggest challenge is the fact that sometimes they are being impeded by caravans and other vehicles, so when they go into these rest areas that is a real problem for them. The rest areas are being taken up with other vehicles which does not allow heavy vehicle operators to get—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I will come to the parking trial in a minute.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —that rest they actually may need from time to time as part of their journey.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I will come to the parking trial in a minute, Minister, to talk about what is happening there. Do you accept that the Government has a duty of care to our heavy vehicle operators right across New South Wales to provide safe, clean, hygienic rest areas so they can manage their fatigue?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is important. I think as part of that there are contractors in place that actually clean a number of those rest areas. In some cases we have councils that are responsible for cleaning those rest areas in various locations as well. I think it is important that they do—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you accept that you have got a responsibility as the Minister to make sure—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, I do. It is unfortunate sometimes when I get the odd report of vandalism and sometimes actions of individuals who have passed through and destroyed some of the amenities that are used by

UNCORRECTED

other customers. It upsets me that this happens from time to time. Again, it is important that we have those facilities available for heavy vehicle drivers.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you rolling out a program to build new heavy vehicle rest areas on highways west of the Great Dividing Range?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Are you talking about part of the new construction?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, I am just talking in general. There is the new construction, which I understand and appreciate the opportunity—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Which you support?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I understand that is an opportunity and you take that opportunity. This is for existing highways such as the Newell, which has a substantial number of heavy vehicles.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely. When you are looking at the Newell Highway, we are putting in something like 30-plus additional overtaking lanes. I mean that is the largest freight—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I want to talk about heavy vehicle rest areas right now. Are you putting in any?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely. Yes, I think it is something that we are very cognisant of and looking at delivering as part of the freight network there.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How do you engage the trucking industry, the drivers particularly, about their satisfaction with the available rest areas?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is difficult but, as I said to you, the best information that I get as a Minister—I am not going to speak for the department that would obviously get information provided to it through other means. What I do is when I speak to large operators across this State, they are the ones who tell me where we need additional rest areas for their drivers.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do they talk about what they require at the rest areas, Minister? When you have those conversations, do they tell you what they really need to manage their fatigue?

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Good McDonald's.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They actually don't like McDonald's.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think those rest areas—look at times like when we were going through COVID. Obviously some of those rest areas were the servo stations and some of them were those restaurants on the side of the road. They were actually looking at closing from time to time. We actually had to work with them to try to ensure that they remained open for our heavy vehicle operators to ensure that there were places in the State where they could pull over, get a timely rest and even something to eat. Again, where we are not responsible for some of those rest areas, we work with operators beyond our control to ensure that was delivered.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Sticking with the Canberra-Eden railway, I appreciate that you might need to take some of this on notice. Have you read the report or have you received a brief of this report?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, I have received a brief on the report.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Do we know how much this report cost to conduct?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: If you want that, we can provide it this afternoon so you do not have to wait—if we have that information. We will have a look at that as well. We can provide that this afternoon. I do not have it in front of me.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Will you explain why the proposed route in the feasibility study did a big arc around Queanbeyan rather than using the existing Queanbeyan railway corridor? Why was that considered as the most appropriate, given it has never been discussed within community as being an acceptable route?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Can we convey that info to you this afternoon?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Sure. Perhaps this afternoon as well: Why did you not consult with industries, particularly Bega Cheese, that would have potentially been a major beneficiary of such a project going ahead? I will move to the issue of Michael Fox, who has made representations to my colleague Roy Butler. Is that a yes; you are familiar?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, keep going. I might know the issue, but I do not know the individual.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: He put in a tender to supply RMS with concrete aggregate and other road materials in 2014 and he was promised a contract. Someone was going to come down and give him a concrete within a week. It was crickets and tumbleweeds for many months. He equipped himself on the premise that he was going to get this contract. When he eventually did get the contract it was fairly unfavourable and not what was actually discussed over the phone with a Transport for NSW representative. My colleague put in a GIPAA request to try to understand what was going back and forward between Mr Fox and Transport for NSW back at that time. The information from Transport for NSW has come back that these documents were missing. Does that trigger any memories?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, it does not, but if I think it is the issue that we are talking about I know that Mr Butler has raised it with our office and we are actually organising an opportunity for them to liaise with the department. But I think that is as far as it has gone at the moment. He has made our office aware. I do not know the details of it going back to 2014. Obviously there are processes around tenders, as well. But what I think needs to happen here, which is what we will do for Mr Butler—because Mr Butler is pretty good, actually. He will at least come into my office and ask questions. He will contact my office about wanting to follow up things as well. Again, that commitment has been given that we will liaise with the department to find an answer for Mr Fox. I would rather say, whether it is good or bad for an answer, we will still get an answer of some type for the individual.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Mr Butler has received a response from Transport for NSW stating that originally the thought was that the tapes were actually lost or deleted. When Mr Butler asked them to go back to Fujitsu and see whether they had a back-up there was a bit of radio silence. But you have come back saying that the barcodes on these tapes had fallen off and that they are in the process of being relabelled. I am not too sure whether you have seen this letter but I will pass it to you so you can understand where I am going.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will just get the department to follow up the letter anyway, if that is a response or something from the individual.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: It just talks about the fact that it will take some time to get these tapes relabelled and documented. We just want maybe a more definitive time frame in terms of—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not know the finer details—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I know you might not be able to give it, but—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It would be a matter for the department. It is operational so, again, we would have to actually find out from the department as to what the answer might be. It might be able to find out this afternoon. It might need a little bit more time on this one but it might have a response this afternoon.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I might pass to Labor.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It's you, Mick. You are on your own, mate. Your buddy has left.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: He is causing trouble somewhere else, my colleague Mr Graham.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Is he?

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: He is the walking wounded.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, he is causing trouble somewhere else.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: You are without Graham, Rose, and Mookhey.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is okay; I am here. Minister, I want to go to the rest area parking trial, which we quickly touched on in the last round of questions. That trial, where there are two parking areas, as I understand it, which have restrictions around other vehicles—they are predominantly set up for heavy vehicles such as B-doubles to pull over and rest. Can I ask you how many penalty notices have been issued for individuals not adhering to the requirements of the trial?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not have that in my back pocket but we will have a look this afternoon. If we have got the information available we will provide it this afternoon. Otherwise, we will have to provide it in the next 21 days.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. Who is actually responsible for policing the adherence to the requirements of those parking areas?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will ask Mr Regan if he is aware of who is responsible.

Mr REGAN: I am not aware but we can get that for you this afternoon.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you find out, thanks? In regard to these rest area parking trials—I have got the document in front of me—is there a plan at some stage to roll the trial out further into other parts of New South Wales rather than the North Coast—for example, the Newell Highway?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, absolutely. I think that is the whole focus of the trial: to actually work out what works, what does not work, and what things could be changed and done differently. I think you and I know, being both out in the west of the State, that the Newell Highway and the improvements that we are seeing are only going to further enhance the need for rest areas along that particular route. It is a trial, and I would like to think, Mr Veitch, that with any particular trial that we run across the State that we actually learn from it and, therefore, there is an opportunity to be able to roll out the benefits and what we have learnt from it into other areas as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The premise of the trial is about fatigue management for the heavy vehicle operators. I think everyone has got an interest in making sure that occurs. One of their complaints—as no doubt you have been hearing—is that they pull into the rest areas, particularly B-doubles, and the spots are all taken higgledy-piggledy by—and I am not attacking the grey nomads, but people who park and—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, it is true. I think that is why—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am really keen to see what that trial looks like and how it rolls out, and then if you could at some stage let us know, Minister, about subsequent—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, sure.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You mentioned the works on the Newell Highway. A truck driver would like me to ask—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Is that your relative?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, this is not my relative. They do not ply—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This is a different one. Okay, I am just checking!

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They do not ply their trade on the Newell; they are up and down from here to Melbourne. But this truck driver would like me to ask about the failure of new works, particularly the overtaking lane south of Peak Hill. I dare say you probably have a bit of an idea about this one. It has been repaired twice and then it was completely rebuilt within 12 weeks of completion, is what they are saying. Why did that particular overtaking lane fail?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is more operational, and I would have to ask Mr Regan if he is aware of why that particular section of road has failed. I am not sure if he has that—probably not now.

Mr REGAN: I am not aware but—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Maybe this afternoon.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But Minister, where this sits with you, though, is that it is an example of road works that have failed.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, what happens is that in some cases where road works fail—and, depending on the way in which it is set up, sometimes it is Transport that actually undertakes the roadworks for those particular areas—they will be responsible to come back within a period of time to deliver the road network or improve it back up to where it should be. In some cases, there are contractors that are involved in building the roads and they have a guarantee that they must, as part of their works, ensure that the standard is there for a period of time. I am not 100 per cent on this one—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are there penalties—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —but, again, it is ensuring that the road is built so we are not going back and rebuilding any particular section.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: When they fail, as per the information I have received, is that information fed up to you? That is a pretty substantial piece of work, and I think everyone is keen to make sure that the Newell is safe.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is there is a process that then feeds you up to the ministerial level?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: On that one, it would be operational. No, that one would not come to me because of the pure nature of the thousands of road and transport projects that are currently underway in the State, and also just on the pure nature of the actual length of the State road network here in New South Wales. Again, each individual area is not going to come up to me, unless it is something that I have highlighted or driven over as well and actually inquired of the department as to what is happening.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, as part of the trial for the parking of heavy vehicles there has been—you and I would know, and Mr Faraway, because we travel on regional roads a lot—I have noticed in some places the green reflectors, which actually provide heavy vehicle truck drivers an indication that there is a rest area not far away. Is there a plan to trial those across the State or roll those out as a part of a trial for the heavy vehicle rest areas?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not sure, but we will ask that question and see if there is an answer for you this afternoon on it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think it makes sense that if you are going to do that that they actually—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: If it becomes a common symbol—if, at the end of the day, that actually alerts our truck drivers as to where their rest areas are or that they are approaching them—I think that makes sense.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is what I reckon. If we could look at—maybe today you and I can walk away from here agreeing that we probably should have a look at rolling that out—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is all we will agree on, okay? Just don't get too friendly!

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Well, you know, this is heavy vehicle road safety. I think we should be working as much as we can together to make sure that those roads are safe for our truckies.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely. Yes, I think so.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Hello, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: G'day. How you going?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It is good to pop in briefly to ask a couple of follow-up questions about the regional seniors travel card, which I understand my colleague Ms Boyd asked about.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: A success story!

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: She just loves good news.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You love it, don't you, Minister?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: He does love it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, I love it because of the people who love it. That is why.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The Treasurer: Does he love it? Does the Treasurer love it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The Treasurer loves it because he is now funding it for the two-year period.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think you told Ms Boyd that 370,000—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It was 377,000 last year.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Some 377,000 people had signed up. So my understanding of the project is that when it was announced the funding was \$90 million for the trial.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So, look, just my basic maths: 250 times 370,000, that is now \$92 million already and it is about a year into it. How are you going to square that funding circle, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Thank you—a great question. I have to say that we had this conversation 12 months ago so I wish you had been here then. But I made a mistake: It is actually 337,500, so apologies there to you and to Ms Boyd as well. I will get that right. It is my glasses!

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: But it is still—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But, it is—look, this was an election commitment and this is an election commitment that we actually said, for those eligible seniors, they would receive the card. Now, we said even here at the last budget estimates that any senior eligible for the card would not miss out, okay? So that is the case. What

UNCORRECTED

we have actually seen is it has exceeded what we predicted might happen, but when you are running a new program like this for the very first time, it is hard to exactly know what that take-up is going to be. So it has been a lot higher than expected. You are right: We had \$90 million over the two-year period and, you know, in the first year there was \$84 million that had been spent through the program.

But what I am pleased about is the fact that it is a success. I am also pleased that people have actually benefited from the \$250 card, but it also shows that there is a benefit for people in regional communities because they do not get their transport subsidised like what you guys do in the city. So, to be fair, they do not have transport options. They do not have transport subsidised, so a card like this was modelled for the very first time. How did we model it? Well, it was hard because we had to look at how it was rolled out in Western Australia and in their particular case the take-up was only around 40 per cent. So that is why it was modelled off the take-up in Western Australia of potentially 40 per cent of eligible seniors getting the card. We exceeded it; been to Treasury; Treasury has agreed to fund it because they have seen and heard the stories of the benefits that the card provides.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So they have just agreed to fund it forever or what? What is the agreement that you have reached with Treasury?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is a two-year period. We said it is a two-year period; it is a two-year card trial that we are running. But again it has been a fantastic program with so many beneficial stories that have come back about it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: So Treasury has said, "Okay, you have exceeded your budget in the first year. We will complete the trial," because it would probably be pretty harsh to cut it off halfway through. But what about next year? What about the future? You have indicated it is such a great program.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I know!

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Obviously, it is going to be pretty harsh for people if it is like, "Well, actually we stuffed up the modelling. It is costing considerably more than we thought it was going to, and now we can't continue because Treasury is not willing to give us \$100 million a year in perpetuity for this program." Is that what is going to happen?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, I think that what we have actually seen is this card—we have always said two years, so that has obviously to be looked at. It would be in discussions that we will go through in our normal budgetary processes, but I will put this on the record that your members are out there also spruiking how great this card is. There are members like Janelle Saffin who, I read in an article this week, was encouraging the community to go out and get their regional seniors travel card because from a regional perspective—and, look, I appreciate—when did you come into the Parliament, 2019?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In 2019.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So, look, I appreciate that you may not know the history but this is a great card, as you would be aware. Do you agree? Do you agree it is a great card?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Look, I think giving people 250 bucks—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But I have to tell you this: I am going to say to you, right, this is the card that you guys did not want. This is the card that you guys would not match at the last election.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I have no idea what you are talking about.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And now you want to come in here and attack the cost of the card.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: No.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But I can give you all the stories of those individuals, those communities that have benefited from it. I can tell you about the \$64 million that is being reinjected back into regional communities. I can tell you about all the locations, about 2,400 locations, that have actually benefited from the card. Over 5½ thousand merchants have actually benefited from the cards. So, you know what? At a time when communities were doing it tough, this injection, this support from the card—they set you up for these questions, I know; they should not have given it to you—but this card is a real benefit and this card is something that you guys did not want. I have had taxidrivers at Alstonville as well who I have met with who have said to me, "Minister, that card, during COVID because numbers have declined, that card kept us afloat. That card kept our taxis operating." So it has had enormous benefits in our communities. And I, as the Minister, am pleased with the rollout of the card. I am pleased with the success and I am absolutely pleased that those people who have been eligible for it have received it.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, you said you are pleased with the rollout of the card. I mean, does that include the delays in expanding access to Department of Veterans' Affairs gold cardholders, the exclusion of recipients of the Commonwealth Disability Support Pension and carers' payment? Are those the type of things that you are proud of?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Actually this is about meeting our election commitments. I feel as though it is a bit of déjà vu here: We are asking the same questions. The actual card itself, we are meeting the election commitment so it was for Commonwealth senior health cardholders, age pensioners. We actually extended the program for those veterans last year as well. That took an extra six weeks to include them into the actual program as well and why shouldn't they be allowed to? These are people who have gone out there and fought for our country and I actually thought, as the Minister, they also deserve the card, so why not include them? In that case I made the decision to include those eligible veterans as well. But on top of that—and I will just repeat what I said previously: You know that this card as we said would go for a two-year period. This card itself has supported already so many people, but when you have got people who are on disabilities, people who are carers, I actually asked the department 12 months ago to look at the programs that are out there currently available.

A lot of those community groups that I spoke to and a lot of individuals that were on disabilities or carers, they did not know that that service was available for them in their town. So we have done a lot of work around community transport because I want to make sure that if this card is not there in three years' time or four years' time I want to make sure that the people who are most vulnerable, our frail, our elderly and our aged, are going to continue to receive the support that they actually need. So those people on disabilities and those people who are carers will get that support, and that ongoing support, beyond what this card potentially may be.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Yes. I think that is the key question here. I am actually not really contesting that people have found the card beneficial. Clearly they have. Clearly they are using it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Then you should write to 337,500 people and tell them, though, that you did not support it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What I am doing, though, is asking when you say in three or four years' time, will this card actually still be available for them? Because the budget, as you have acknowledged, has been considerably higher than what was anticipated and there is no commitment. But the clock is ticking now towards the end of the trial and there is no forward commitment for three, four or any years down the track that it is actually still going to be available. Don't you think you should be up-front with people?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But it is like any program—and I made this comment at the very start of this budget estimates: Any program, you should review them. Any program, you should always go back and see what is successful, what could be changed, what needs to happen. This is a two-year trial to begin with. This actually is something now that we are going to go away, have a look at the successes, have a look if it needs to be changed in any way. That is a matter for the Government to go through as we go forward, like any particular program. But what I can tell you now is this is just another measure that we have got as part of our cost-of-living support that we are giving to individuals out there in our communities.

I was saying before, when I get people saying to me, "Do you know what? If it wasn't for this card I wouldn't have been to go and visit my family and friends in other parts of the State as many times as I have had." I have people who have said to me in the Far West of the State, "You know, I've had to travel over 100 kilometres just to get into the doctor's to keep a medical appointment." Do you know what people were doing before? They would forgo the doctor's appointment. So now they have got a card that actually helps with the cost of living. They are able to fuel up the car.

The CHAIR: Imagine being that poor in the first place.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: They are able to get in there and actually use that support from that card that they have been able to get. It is an important program that we have seen in regional communities for the very first time. As the Minister, I have got to say that, you know, I do not go into any community at the moment that is not telling me how wonderful and how beneficial it has been back to them.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: It seems as though you have already made your decision about whether the card is worthwhile or not. Having heard what you have to say, it is feasible that after all of that you do your analysis, the Government looks at it and, "Actually, no, it is too expensive. Bye-bye regional seniors travel card." That is on the table, isn't it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, hang on. Wait—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is Labor's policy.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You cannot come in here because you guys would never have had this card on the table. This is the card. You cannot come in here and actually talk about the card. This is the card that 337,500 people—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We can scrutinise implementation of government policy. That is what we do.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We can—can and will.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Stop backing her up.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We can scrutinise. That is our role—to scrutinise government expenditure.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are 337,500 people you should write to and tell them you do not like this card, you never wanted this card, you would never match the card, and now I have got—

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Scrutinise your own policies.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We will scrutinise government expenditure, Sam, because that is what we are supposed to do.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: That is alright, but, again, your own policies; be responsible for your own policies.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will tell you what is funny—this is funny—I have got members now in your party—I have got the member for Campbelltown who is actually asking for the card to be included into Campbelltown. It is a regional seniors travel card.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And the Blue Mountains.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And the Blue Mountains.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That was the funny thing?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is unbelievable.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Again, because of the success of the card—Campbelltown is not regional. I am sorry. I have to tell you, it is not regional. You might not have been aware of that but it is not regional. Campbelltown is not regional. Newcastle is not regional. Blue Mountains is not regional. You cannot have it into those communities.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I appreciate you will not be extending the geographical spread of the card. Will you be extending the availability of the card beyond January next year? That is the question.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will go through our normal budgetary processes. What I can say is this: The Treasurer has been very supportive of the card. He has heard of the stories of the benefits of the card and how it has provided huge support for individuals with their cost of living in regional communities. Again, I am pretty impressed with the way it has been supported in our areas.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: In your review of the card that will be occurring in the normal course of government, will you take into consideration any outcomes from the Auditor-General's investigation that is including the regional seniors travel card?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will take into consideration your feedback if you want to provide it. We will take the feedback from those that want to provide feedback. But again, we will make a decision around the card and how it is framed and shaped for the future.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: You are aware, though, that the Auditor-General is doing a report into public transport in regional areas that includes the regional seniors travel card.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It will go beyond just looking at the card—

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Indeed.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —and I am sure as the Minister I will be very interested to actually see what the report actually says about regional transport and roads. If we can do things differently and do them better—because at the end of the day it is about putting the customer first. That is what I care about—is the customer and making sure there is a benefit back to those—

The CHAIR: People.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —individuals and those communities.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Have you made any changes between the first and second year of the trial? Have there been any changes that you have made then?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Only the veterans. The eligible veterans, we have actually included as well. That is the only change that has been made in relation to the card.

The CHAIR: Your Government has systematically stripped away public services from people in the regions, including closing down a number of train lines and taking away public transport options. Are you seriously expecting us to celebrate you giving back \$250 to people per year to spend on what is now a really difficult place to live if you want to get around?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will put on the record a couple of things to that question. Firstly, you are speaking about the card itself, and I will just firstly put on the record that I do not appreciate the fact that you attack groups like CPSA who are actually saying that this card has provided great opportunity for people in regional communities—

The CHAIR: And I will object to you saying that anyone is attacking anyone who is appreciating the card. Nobody—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: People have said that it is very easy to use. People have said when they go to Service NSW, it is an excellent card. They can actually apply very quickly as well. I am able to—

The CHAIR: Could I just clarify my question to you, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, I am about to—that is the second part. The first part I am going to come back to about train services.

The CHAIR: It seems that you did not understand the question, though—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I understand it.

The CHAIR: —because I did not, at any point, say that it was not good to give people more money to deal with the increased cost of living that they are facing under your Government. No-one is taking that away from you. It is great; the card is great. But are you not concerned as Minister for Regional Transport and Roads that there are other things you could be doing as Minister to make that transport more accessible and easy and cheaper in the first place?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, absolutely. I think there are a lot of things that we are doing. I wish you would actually come and speak to me because I am very happy to sit down and explain to you many of the programs that we are rolling out. In relation to train services to begin with, I will just give you a couple of examples and then I will roll onto some public bus transport systems that we have got in place as well. What we have actually got at the moment is additional train services that have been rolled out. I think we go back a couple of years, and I will just use one in my very own backyard—the Bathurst Bullet number two. That is an additional train service. That was giving people in the Central West a second option, an opportunity to actually use that train service to get to Sydney to visit family and friends, to visit medical appointments.

We have also got in Griffith a train service that runs from Griffith all the way through to Central. We have reintroduced that in my time as the Minister. There is also train services from Singleton. We have got two train services that are operating from that area. In my time as the Minister, that public transport has been rolled out as well. In my time as the Minister as well, we have also got our 16 regional cities bus program. This is actually identifying those 16 regional cities across the State. In some cases they might be towns that potentially have grown quite rapidly over the past decade, but again, we have actually gone in there and we have given those communities some quick wins in relation to additional bus services.

The CHAIR: Could you give us some examples of the north as well, of the Northern Rivers area for example?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I can give you an example—Tweed. Tweed is part of this particular program. Tweed was one of the very first cities that was actually rolled out through the regional cities bus program. Tweed received hundreds of additional services into that local community.

The CHAIR: Does that region have any chance of receiving a rail service again?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There is a feasibility study in relation to a light rail in that area, but that is still early days. That is part of a feasibility study. With those 16 regional cities, when we have gone into some of those communities, some people have never had a bus come past their door at all—

The CHAIR: Let alone a publicly owned one.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: As the Minister, I want people to actually think about public transport as their first choice and not their last choice, because in a lot of cases there is already a bus that goes past their front door and people are not aware of it. So we are doing a campaign around trying to advertise more, getting people to understand that there is a service in your community. We have gone out to a more broader piece of work looking at the whole network of buses that are operating in those communities. So—

The CHAIR: Has your—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Hang on. I can sit here and talk about public transport changes that have been rolled out into communities that have not seen these happening before. We have also got our isolated communities bus program. Again, I have got buses that are running into communities that are small villages and some of these have been trials. Some have worked; some have not worked. But you know what? They have never had a bus go into their community before, and I do not care if it does not work. I just want to give it a go because the thing is, some are successful, some have to be tweaked, some may not work at all. But again, as the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads I have been given the opportunity to try things that have not been tried before and I will continue to do that if we make a difference to the lives of those individuals in those areas.

The CHAIR: Has your department done any research into the cost of regional transport and how it has increased over the past 10 or 20 years?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: If you are asking me about the cost that we are putting into public transport—

The CHAIR: No, I am asking about the cost to the public.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to ask the department if they have that information. They can provide it this afternoon if it is available.

The CHAIR: Thank you, that would be very useful.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Just quickly picking up from the Chair's comments, how many feasibility studies into regional rail do we actually have on the hop at the moment? I am just counting. We have got the McNaughton one, the Narrandera to Tocumwal, the Canberra to Eden, you just mentioned a light rail.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Blayney to Demondrille.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Blayney to Demondrille—Cowra lines. There are a few and we can provide them all this afternoon as a list to you anyway. There is the Canberra to Eden—and these are under Fixing Country Rail. So, these are part of the Fixing Country Rail program, going out and doing the feasibility studies. You have got Canberra to Eden. You have got Blayney to Demondrille, which is the Cowra lines. You have got Gulgong to Maryvale. There is Narrandera to Tocumwal as well. So there are a number of them that are out there that are being considered. Some of them come back and actually show, because of the information being provided, that it is not feasible to do the rail line today. But it actually says that potentially, in some cases, it might be something to look at in five or 10 years' time. What we do now is the work. We get the information from stakeholders to look at their forecast for growth and what they are going to put onto the rail line. That is all fed back in and then we can actually look at what steps happen from those particular reports.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: What is your aim in terms of how many of these feasibility studies will actually turn into a real project? Do you have a goal?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think, first of all, being under Fixing Country Rail, they have got to be close to having a benefit-cost ratio [BCR] of one. Some of them have different options and they have got a very low BCR, so to do additional work at this point in time would actually be a waste of taxpayers' dollars. But where there are some that are close to a BCR of one, it might not mean that it is eligible today, but I have actually looked at doing more investigative work, which means that you go out and do the detailed design—the Cowra lines is one for example. We have actually announced that they are going to go out over the next 18 months to two years to go and actually look at the railway line, to have a look at the bridges, to actually come back with what the actual cost for that might be. Because that is one particularly, when the Main Western rail line is at capacity, there will be the need for an additional line for consideration. That work is already underway. We announced that last year with the member for Cootamundra. We had the mayors of Blayney and Cowra and Weddin that were there as well. So we announced that as part of the study and the report that had been provided.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Perhaps on notice, how many of these feasibility studies have that lower BCR that you are considering to do further work?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It depends though. Is the question—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: You mentioned one, but how many others? Perhaps on notice—

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can have a look. We will do that as a two-part question: what are the studies that are being done and which ones are being followed up. We will provide that this afternoon.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes. Sure. In the most recent budget you announced \$1.6 million towards bus services throughout New South Wales. It is described as funding regional, metropolitan bus services, school services and funding of new and replacement buses.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is a lot.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: That is a lot that you are going to squeeze out of \$1.6 million. How many new buses are we going to get out of \$1.6 million?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are a number of things here. I will give you an example. There is a rollout of our buses where we have got about 900 buses that are being replaced through our seatbelt program. There are new buses that are coming there. I might have that info with me if you give me a minute.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Yes, sure. While you are looking for that, can you also look at how much of that \$1.6 million is going to go to extending school bus routes? That is possibly one of the biggest bugbears our local members receive regarding bus services, that the bus does not come close enough to pick up their kids and they have to travel a greater distance.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: In relation to that question, if there is an issue in relation to a bus or a bus service, again, the first thing that they need to do is actually contact the operator. We have spoken to Mr Butler in relation to this one especially. They need to actually contact the bus operator, who will then contact the department and the department will then assess what it actually means. I think in some cases there can be changes that are made, but in some cases we have also got to consider what it does to the whole timetable.

I understand that there are families that would like the bus to go to their front door, but sometimes you could be adding an extra 80 kilometres or more to a trip. That means that start and finish times for those families that are already using the service can actually change quite quickly. There is also the opportunity though, as part of the transport subsidy scheme, to be eligible for support to be able to drive them. It may not even be the bus coming to their front door, but it might be that if they drive to the neighbouring property they can actually get a transport subsidy for driving them. We do encourage individuals that are not eligible for the bus service if it is not changed to be able to get the transport subsidy.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Just going back to some of the original question, how much of that \$1.6 million is going to actually go towards the school services and how much will go towards replacement buses? Do you have that breakdown?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Everything.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not. I thought I did and I do, but I don't.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: You do but you don't.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do, but I cannot grab it at the moment.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Do you want to take it on notice and provide it later on? Mr Regan is looking—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes. We will answer it this afternoon.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Okay. Thank you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, why are you proceeding with the River Street bridge in Dubbo, now referred to as the "New Dubbo Bridge" project?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, look, this has been a project that has been considered now for a number of years. This is a project that I remember—if we go back to about 2016 there were six options that were considered at that time. It was about June of 2017 when the River Street bridge was the preferred option. The reason why it is happening is because it is about flood-proofing that community with a second high-level crossing bridge. We also know there is a lot of congestion that occurs within the city of Dubbo, and this was the preferred option that came back in the middle of 2017.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Would you accept that the council does not support the project, that the community does not support the project, that NSW Farmers does not support the project, that truck drivers do not support the project and your own BCR, Minister, does not support the project?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think we have to be careful here, Mr Veitch. I appreciate that there are diverse views on any major project. I have been to Dubbo, as you have been, on a number of occasions. I have heard various views in relation to River Street bridge. I have heard people that are actually opposed to it. I have heard people that are very supportive of it. On one side as well—we do go back a few years ago—the council was supportive of River Street bridge. So there was a number of years ago where the council supported the River Street bridge option. I have also got people like the Dubbo Chamber of Commerce who are actually supportive of the River Street bridge.

I have got a Dubbo City Toyota dealer who actually is going to be impacted by the bridge who actually is supportive of it. I have also got Ian Bailey, who was a former engineer of Dubbo city council, who says that this is the right option. He said he has seen the community be cut off in times of flood. He has also seen the congestion that occurs within the community of Dubbo. He is also aware of the tens of millions of dollars that was lost to that local economy back in 2010. That impacted on businesses at a time when they were already hurting. Again, this is about providing an opportunity to flood-proof that community and also relieve the congestion for Dubbo.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, earlier in the response to a question from my colleague you were talking about a BCR of one.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The River Street bridge BCR is 0.5 and in August 2020 it was 0.3. That is nowhere near one, so your own BCR does not say that this is the project. Minister, you accept that they are the numbers that have been provided in a question on notice, by the way. That is where I got those from.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes. As I said to Mr Banasiak, there were a couple of those feasibility line studies that actually do not reach one today. I will put it this way: As the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, I do not want to focus on everything with a BCR because, I will tell you what, there would not be many projects getting built in regional communities. I want to be mindful of the fact that—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think you and I might agree about the BCR process.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —we do not want to rely on that as the only measure. There has to be a number of measures for consideration in building any particular project, otherwise regionally we will not be doing anything. It is a factor. But, again, I go back to the point that it is about providing a second high level crossing in that community at times when they are going to flood. They have not had a flood for a number of years, but we all know it will flood again.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, you mentioned the list of options that were considered by the department in your earlier response.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Why did the community's preferred Troy Bridge Road option not go through the benefit-cost ratio process?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I know that Troy Bridge Road is an option that was considered. I also know that the Troy Bridge itself would be three to four times longer than River Street bridge. I also know that the costs estimated for that are going to be a lot higher as well. Again, this is not going to fundamentally deal with the issue around flooding and congestion in that community. There are a number of options and the River Street bridge was the preferred option that came back. I think if you have a look at it as well, when you have got a project like this that is actually needed in that community it is going to create around 400 jobs. It is a project that has actually got the support of the Commonwealth Government because they see the importance of this as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Just to be clear: I do not think I have ever said there should not be a second crossing in Dubbo. I think the debate in that community is actually about which is the better option.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So what are you supporting?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is what I am saying to you: The community is actually putting forward a number of options.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So what are you supporting?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Well, I want to assess all the options, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But they are available, Mr Veitch.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No they are not, Minister. You did not do a BCR on Troy Bridge Road or the Dubbo bypass.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Troy Bridge Road will be three to four times longer than River Street.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So have you looked at it as a part of the Dubbo bypass, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Okay, yes. So the bypass—again, Mr Veitch—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Sometimes called a freightway.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will have you convinced by the end because at the moment—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Does not know me very well.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —the bypass itself would be further north of town. The issue here with the bypass is the fact that 90 per cent of vehicles at the moment actually go into Dubbo. So if you are building a bypass, you are basically building a project that is needed for 10 per cent of the vehicles that are going to continue on. So, again, if the council wishes to build that, they can do that. That is an option for them. Transport for NSW will assist them, but it is not going to deliver the outcome that is needed. The bypass is going to be costly. The bypass itself is not going to achieve the issues around flooding.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So is the bypass off the table?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, council's own strategic plan, and I encourage you to read it, says that the bypass—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think I have.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You do not know.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Keep going.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It says that the council's bypass is not needed for decades. So this is a longer-term project that even the council recognises through its own document.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, I do not think that is right.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So as part of their transport strategy for that area, that project is not needed for a long period of time. And, again, I say to you that 90 per cent of the vehicles actually have Dubbo as their point of destination, but you would be building a bypass for 10 per cent of the traffic.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Have you spoken to the trucking industry?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It does not seem to add up as best value and achieving the outcomes of when there is flooding in that community.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, did you advise the Federal Government of the BCR?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have numerous conversations with—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This is pretty straightforward. This is a significant project.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I did not personally, I can say that. Whether the department has done that, but they also—I speak to the Deputy Prime Minister all the time about major projects across the State and about the importance and the value of them. But, again, that may have been something the department may have presented to the—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, do you accept that you have a fair bit of work to do to convince the council, the community, NSW Farmers and truck drivers about the merits of your River Street bridge project?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you know what? I also appreciate the fact that in any large project there is always going to be a diverse range of views. I appreciate that. You come in here and you told me people were against it, but I also point out to you that there are also people who are supportive of the project. Again, there have been changes that have been made to the design of the River Street bridge, but this is about trying to achieve flood proofing of that area and dealing with congestion.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, will you go back and talk to those stakeholder groups I just mentioned?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you know what? I have actually been into that community—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So have I.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —and I have spoken to individuals who are for it and I have spoken to individuals who are against it. I know the department also set up a shop in the main street as well, asking for community engagement through that whole process. So we are going through the detailed design for the project. There will still be opportunities for feedback, but this is the project that is going to deliver the outcome that is needed for the community.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: To be fair, though, Minister, it sounds to me like this project is going ahead. So it is not about consultation now to stop the project, it is about providing feedback in the implementation of the project.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We have received a lot of feedback and I appreciate—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Well, you do not have to be here. You can go. It is fascinating, Government members do not like scrutinising the expenditure of taxpayers' funds. I find that amazing.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I am fascinated by the Dubbo bridge, mate. My family is from Dubbo. It is a great project.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, will you go back and talk to those stakeholders? NSW Farmers are against it. The community is against it. Councillor Ben Shields, the mayor of Dubbo, spoke to me at length. They are against this project and they want to know why a BCR was not done on others.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: South Dubbo bridge—I have also spoken to the local member. We awarded the council \$100,000 to look at South Dubbo bridge to look at options in relation to the movement of traffic.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, I know.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And you know what? I will say this on the record: In some cases, there is no reason why some of these other options cannot be looked at if they wish to do them, and there is no one solution that is going to solve all their transport and traffic issues in that community. But the one that is going to resolve the issues primarily around flooding and the one that is going to address the issues around congestion in that town is the River Street bridge. We have made changes to the design. The feedback has been fed through from the community. And, again, there will still be further opportunity for them to have a say in relation to this particular project.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, the Serisier duplication came in at 0.7 on the BCR—almost double the River Street bridge. Why was that not considered?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The BCRs for both the Emile Serisier and River Street bridges were similar at that time, 0.5 and 0.7, and the Emile Serisier would have had a much greater impact on property. What we try to do in Transport is to minimise the impact on property. We will engage with the community. And, again, this one would have had a greater impact.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, will you have a conversation with those stakeholders that I just mentioned?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will tell you this, Mr Veitch: I meet with NSW Farmers all the time on a range of topics, and I will continue to meet with them on a range of topics. I am also very comfortable, as the Minister, to continue to talk to them about the benefits and around the various options that were considered. I am very happy to explain to them that the council was supportive of this project a number of years ago. I am also very happy to talk to them and other stakeholders, where the opportunity arises, around what the benefits are today in the longer-term strategy for things like a bypass.

Again, if council want to do it now, that is a matter for them. Like they did in Orange on the Northern Distributor, they can build that bypass today if they wish to. Transport alternatives—I will make a commitment: I will get Transport to assist them in looking at what needs to happen. But if council wishes to build it and pay for it today, they can do it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, the Parkes bypass—where is that up to?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I might ask Ms Nelson if she has that, because it is an important project for the Deputy Prime Minister and one that we have been working on closely.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Maybe we should come back to that this afternoon.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will come back to that this afternoon, Mr Veitch.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, I want to go back to those projects—the faster rail.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Out of the budget—and, again, the Government members will not like this because I am talking about scrutinising government expenditure—Sydney to Canberra, \$80 million for preliminary work; Sydney to Nowra, \$125 million to start the duplication of the rail line; Sydney to Newcastle and Port Macquarie, \$80 million to develop a new rail alignment; and Sydney to the Central West, an initial \$10 million to get work underway on a route. Are you able to provide on notice how much money has been expended against each of those and provide a status report on where those projects are up to?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am sure we can have a look at that for you. I do not know if we are going to be able to this afternoon, but if we can provide it to you this afternoon, we will. Otherwise, we will have to provide it over the coming days.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think it is important, because we talked about it earlier.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is important as well, because wherever we have rail lines that have bends and all that, I am very keen to have additional loops put in. I am also keen to straighten the lines where we can, because this is all building into Mr Banasiak's question around having fast rail and having a strategy as part of a long-determined plan that is needed. So, again, that is something important to me.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you could just get back on the breakdown, a status report of where those expenditures are up to.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Sure.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, I want to ask about the duplication of the Great Western Highway project that is close to your heart—not just yours, but other members of the Government. Minister, this is \$2.5 billion and rising. You do not appear to have the money to build this road, let alone the tunnels you are now talking about. Will you rule out tolls ever being introduced on the Great Western Highway, including as a result of this project?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We never said there would be tolls.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am not asking you whether you have ever talked about it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We have said there will be no tolls. I have always said—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Will you rule it out?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have already said no.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have said no? So no toll booths?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have already said no tolls.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No toll booths—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have already said no tolls.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —west of Penrith, ever?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have already said no tolls.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister Constance has provided over the biggest ever leap in toll revenue in New South Wales history. How can we trust you, given your Liberal colleagues?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have been very clear on this from when we first announced the \$2.5 billion for duplication of the Great Western Highway. I have always said there would be no tolls. Again, what I am actually wanting to create here is a safer road through the Mountains, not only for—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You do not have the money. Minister Constance will not give you the money.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Well, ask your question to Minister Constance. Sorry—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: He is only going to give you the tolls, is he not?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Sorry, you asked me my portfolio, my area. My answer was no. If you want to go to Minister Constance, ask him.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been clear that parts of the Blue Mountains National Park will be revoked as a part of this plan. Which parcels of the national park will be revoked?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: First of all, I will put on the record—and I will say this again, because one of your members keeps saying that there is going to be impact on the World Heritage area. I will tell you now: No, that is not going to happen. As part of the design that is occurring, we said there would be very small impact on national parks within that area.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking you to be up-front with the community. Which portions?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can actually give you the exact location. I am happy to get someone to drive you there and show you, if you need as well. In relation to that, this is an important project—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I think you are taking on notice the exact parcels.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is your question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Is that correct? I think you have just taken on notice to give us the exact parcels that are under negotiation with the parks service.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is going to be difficult too, because it is still in discussions with—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So what is under negotiation?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is still going to be difficult to give you that at the moment, so I am not going to take it on notice because it is going to be difficult to give you that, because—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So you are not going to tell the community?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —we are in discussions with National Parks and Wildlife Service at the moment to determine what parcels of land potentially may be taken back for the road.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But you want to keep that secret?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: But we have not determined that at this point. So when we get in there—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am just asking: Can you tell the community what parts are under discussion?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Absolutely. It is all part of the design. Of course we will.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, so you will take on notice what parcels of the park are under discussion?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: How about I put it this way: We will be outlining that to the community once the actual design has been finalised.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: How about I put it this way: Why are you keeping it a secret?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you know what? There is no secret. It is funny you actually raise this as part of this project because we have been up-front the entire process that has actually gone through. Again, we have actually gone out to the community. We have allowed the community to shape what they would like to see for the Great Western Highway. We have had the community—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Why does not the community know which parcels of the Blue Mountains National Park, an incredibly well-loved resource, might be turned into roadway under this proposal?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Because you know what, we have actually gone out to the community. What I am impressed with is the fact that there are members of the Blackheath community who have actually said—when we went out with our options previously, about looking at going through the main street, going around the escarpment to save Station Street, save Centennial Glen. Now we are looking at the tunnels, the two-tunnel options.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, I am familiar with that.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have had the community—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But surely you can tell—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, I have had the community—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If that is your approach, Minister, surely you can tell the community.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Hang on.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Why keep it a secret?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You are saying one thing, but I am having the community saying to me, "Thank you, Minister. You are listening and the department is working with us to get the outcomes that are needed."

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, how much more of the Blue Mountains National Park will you have to impact on if you clear trees 40 metres either side of this highway in accordance with Minister Constance's standing ministerial direction? How much of the park will go then, on top of the revocation?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Now you have gone completely AWOL at the end of the day. At the end of the day—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, it is not the end of the day. There is a long way to go—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. Hang on, hang on.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —and I am raising these concerns on behalf of the community.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You asked me about national parks. I said there will be a minimal impact. We are in discussions with National Parks and Wildlife Service at the moment as to what parcels we may be looking at. You made the ridiculous comment that—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am saying add 40 metres to the impact on either side.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You made the ridiculous comment that it would be 40 metres. I never said that; you actually said that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is Minister Constance's—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Again, it is just scaremongering.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking you to add that to what you are already going to take.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is because you do not understand this project at all. Why this is happening is because every four days, this road is actually closed for around 78 minutes on average. That has an impact on locals—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If you want to put the case, why keep this secret?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —and it has an impact on people living out in the west and beyond.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Why keep this secret?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Again, we are making it a safer road for locals and we are making this a safer road for people that are travelling through.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, surely you understand if you try to keep this secret, you are risking a community backlash that will not allow the project to proceed?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. This is what we get from yourself. This is what we are getting from the member for Blue Mountains. I am getting groups like the Blackheath action group that are telling me that this is what is right, this is what needs to happen, and you guys are doing—and they have even changed their opinion as to where they were a number of years ago.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will invite you once more to put that information on notice.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. We are not going into—I have said to you the same thing. It is a minimal—minimal—impact on national parks.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But you will not tell us how much?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. I never said that. We are in discussions with National Parks in relation to that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Minister, in response to Mr Veitch's questions about BCRs, you said BCR is not the only thing that you look at; there are other measures. I am not talking specifically about the Troy bypass, but what are these other measures that you would look at and what are the weightings that you would apply to those measures?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think if we actually looked at building—if I applied a BCR to programs like fixing local roads, you would not build it, because some of these local roads would not have the volume of traffic on it when you are looking over the length of the road. So, again, you would not be investing in projects like that. We have got things like fixing country bridges. Again, if I had a BCR put over that bridge, you would not be building that particular bridge that is needed for that community. It is hard to say to a community when there is a fire or a flood that goes through that area and you lose your bridge, "Bad luck. We are not going to build it because it does not have a BCR."

Again, it is about making sure the needs of communities are also addressed. When I look at some of those bridges, for example, they are about not only the mums and dads that use it every day, getting to work and getting into the shops, the school bus using it, but also emergency services go across those particular bridges as well. Importantly, we need to make sure that the BCR is not the be-all and the end-all. It goes beyond even my projects. It is community projects in our regional areas as well. It is a factor. Sometimes it is an important factor, but I want to say to you it is not the be-all and end-all for a number of projects.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: So the other measure is just the needs of the community. Was there anything else?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Needs of the community, traffic volume—all of that. All that is important.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: In estimates with Minister Constance, we were talking about the taxi system. I know you picked up on some of that earlier. He mentioned that there is a potential proposal to acquire country plates. Has he discussed that with you?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is actually part of the Sue Baker-Finch report. We have both had a briefing from Sue Baker-Finch in relation to that. We have had discussions with the department. As you would be aware now, that independent report that we commissioned, we actually got Sue Baker-Finch to talk to taxi operators. We also got her to have a look at what the impact might be on the point-to-point services in regional communities. If some of them are at risk as well, I want to know that. At the moment we have that report out. We are looking for feedback in relation to it before next steps are undertaken.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Did she express any concern about the country places? What we heard in the point-to-point inquiry was that a lot of these country taxi services are almost acting as a de facto ambulance. So, it is actually quicker in some cases to get a taxi to take you to hospital than it is to get an ambulance. Does any of that come through in your conversations with Ms Baker-Finch or Minister Constance?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Look, it did not in my conversations there. It also goes into making sure that there is that support provided by the taxi industry as well—looking at making sure that we have wheelchair accessible taxis. Again, it is an area that we do not want to overlook. We want to make sure that if the industry is going to be changed—a couple of things. What has been the impact of the reform? To understand really what it has actually done. Is there more that needs to be done? What changes need to potentially occur? Where we are right now is actually asking for feedback on the recommendations that Sue Baker-Finch has put forward. I think there are about 24 recommendations out there at the moment; obviously, we will consider them. I know that the Legislative Council did its inquiry as well, so that will also be considered. We actually instigated our independent review with Sue Baker-Finch before that upper House inquiry had actually been called for anyway.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Have you heard concerns from taxi people who have read Sue Baker-Finch's report? They seem to indicate that her report pretty much mirrors the point-to-point report from the Legislative Council committee. There are concerns that she did not actually do a thorough job in consulting with the taxi industry and she just lifted heavily from what was already found in our report.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have not heard one person say that to me and I have spoken to a lot of taxi operators. They have not said that to me at all. Who was the chair of that committee? Was it you?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: No.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So you are talking yourself up, are you?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: No, it was Ms Boyd. I was just sitting here as the deputy chair.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Oh, she gave you that question.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: No, no.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No taxi operators have raised that with me. At the time when we announced the independent review, the industry was actually pleased that we were putting a focus on to actually go back and

UNCORRECTED

have a look at what the impact of the reforms might have been around the point to point over the years as well. Again, we will consider that in the coming months.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Lastly, you mentioned earlier about the fast rail. Many governments have promised this—I think in my lifetime there have been at least three or four. Can you guarantee that I will be able to hop onto a fast rail before I am 90? So many governments have promised this. It is just this pie in the sky election promise that goes nowhere; it is just this little carrot that dangles. Will I be able to get on one of these fast rails?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not know what your health is like, so I am not really sure. I cannot speak about your health. I think what is important here, though, is having the blueprint that is needed because, again, as I have said to you, it will be over time. We have heard Federal governments talk about a fast rail strategy. Do I think that all four routes are going to happen in one hit? No, but I think what is important here is about what needs to be identified. So that over the years you are straightening up some of those lines that are needed, you are replacing some of those stations and putting in new stations where they may be needed where communities have grown. It is not going to happen holistically overnight. We are talking billions and billions of dollars for a fast rail, even for just one particular route to be done.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: What is your priority in terms of those routes though? Obviously they are not going to be all done at once, but what is your priority in terms of a route that should be done first?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We can guess that.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think I would rather—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: You do not want to play favourites, Minister?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have a personal view. I have to be realistic about where the best benefits are going to occur in the State as quickly as possible.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Okay, and where do you think those best benefits are?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not going to guess today. I know where but I am not going to—

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: It would not be a guess, would it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is speculative.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, I want to go back to the Parkes bypass. In this year's budget there is an allocation of \$5 million to continue that on.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And there are a number of other bypasses that are included in the budget. In our exchange over the River Street bridge, you said that the Dubbo city council could fund their own bypass.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you saying that the State Government will not fund a bypass of Dubbo?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, what I said was that in the transport strategy that Dubbo Regional Council has, it is in their long-term plan for a bypass, but if they want to do it today they can go and do it. What I said I would do is that I would provide support from Transport to help them in their design in looking at what is needed for the bypass. It is no different to councils like Orange City Council that put in a bypass. They did that themselves. That is the Northern Distributor Road, which has actually been delivered, bypassing the community of Orange.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But you are not ruling out the potential that at some stage in the future the State may fund a bypass of Dubbo.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am not ruling it out because I think we are also agreeing that it is still decades away for the need for a bypass. If you were to put a bypass in—again, it does not show that it is needed right now. I will go back to the traffic volumes on that particular road. If you put in a bypass, you are actually only really putting it in for 10 per cent of the vehicles that are going to be using it because the other 90 per cent are going into Dubbo as a point of destination. So, you would be building a bypass for 10 per cent of those vehicles.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, a couple of weeks ago, on 4 March, Win News Illawarra reported that South Coast residents were outraged at the revelations that the flyover that was promised and announced late November last year for the Jervis Bay intersection has actually been listed as "in planning" for the next 10 years. Your Government promised that work would be underway by 2022. Minister, can you clarify: Is the work on that flyover actually going to commence in 2022?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, it will. It got a little bit mixed up—2022 is going to be the start of construction for the Jervis Bay flyover. So, that is still committed. What they actually mixed up—in that particular report they were talking about projects over the next 10 years and they reported it as though it was going to happen in 10 years' time. So, it was actually not reported correctly. We are still on track as to what our original commitments have been down there with the community and the local members.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So to allay everyone's fears, it is actually going to happen in?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: In 2022.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In 2022. And it is scheduled to finish about when? What is the completion date?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is okay. If you take that on notice and get back to us?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will get it this afternoon.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, I want to ask about the revenue coming in from camera fines to this Government. It will be a record amount of revenue. We have never seen this much camera revenue raised. Do you have any idea how much money will be raised, and much of it in the country, from red-light and speed cameras this financial year, in the past seven months?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not have that but it is published through Revenue NSW each month. I would encourage you to have a look at the results that are available on that website.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The reported data is \$160 million at the end of seven months. Do you agree that we are well on track for it to be a record year? You do not doubt that, do you?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you know what? I wish it was not a record year.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Sure.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I wish it was not a record year. I hate to say this, but I just wish people were not getting fined out there. I wish people were driving to the speed limit that they are meant to be doing. I wish people were not breaking the law. If they were not breaking the law then we would not see these speed fines being issued. Again, I want people to do the right thing out there. When I saw the road toll continually rising—I mean, in 2019 it was 355 people. Last year it was 297. It might have been the lowest on record but the thing is—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Very promising, although impacted slightly by COVID.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The thing is, this is someone's family member or someone's friend who has been killed. If you go to a regional community, it is probably someone that belongs to the local football team or belongs to the local community organisation.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Is this a view you put to members of your team, for example, Wes Fang, who stood up—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Who?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Wes Fang. I do not know if you have met him.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Come on, you are not playing that game, are you?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am referring to the Hon. Wes Fang, a member of the State's upper House. I think the Minister has now recalled who he is. He had these statements to make on the removal of speed camera warning signs. He put out a statement, "City Centric Libs Targeting Regional Motorists". He was very upset. The statement said it was:

... a major shift in policy for the Coalition, yet it was not presented to the joint party room in either of the past two sitting weeks.

This is just another example in a long line of Liberal Party city centric policy decisions, and I've had an absolute gut full.

Given the views you are expressing, have you talked to the Hon. Wes Fang about this statement?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Mr Fang has raised his views in relation to those changes. He might have felt strong about his views, but we have also explained to him about the number of lives that have been lost on our roads. It is disproportionate as well.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking you about your view. The view that the Hon. Wes Fang is putting is in line with those that Duncan Gay or Andrew Stoner—very senior Nationals—expressed over a long period of time.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: He is putting a view consistent with them. What is your view, Minister, on this question? Do you disagree with the Hon. Wes Fang?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I agree that something needed to happen. I think that if anyone in this room feels as though nothing should not happen, then you are kidding yourself. You are kidding yourself when you are actually looking at the number of people dying on our roads. My office gives me reports all the time of a young child or an elderly person in a community, and it is because of people that could not see those fatalities being reduced because they are actually speeding.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Did this go to the—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Speeding is still our number one killer out there on the roads. Again, people need to do the right thing. We explained that—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Did this go to the—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No. We explained that to the person in question that you have mentioned. We have also had an opportunity for a backbench briefing. We also have had the opportunity for members to come and talk to us, which a number of them have taken that opportunity up to do. Again, this is about evidence. Let us be clear here. If there is evidence—and I know you have actually said that. If there is evidence to show that we can save lives, then we should be doing things differently.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, I accept that is your view. Given you do have evidence in front of you—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —about the impact of turning on point-to-point cameras for cars in New South Wales, what is your position on supporting that policy initiative, given it will save lives and given your strong views on these issues?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think there are a couple of things. You need to take the community on the journey with you. I think that is important. But I think also it needs to show that there is evidence to be able to show that lives will be saved. The quantum would have to be high as well. Those changes that we made show that it would save 34 to 43 lives every year.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have that evidence on your desk.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, no. Point-to-point cameras—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You accept—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Point-to-point cameras—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —that that would make a difference.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —were for heavy vehicles, where we did see incidents occurring on those roads. That could have been at a time when there was construction taking place in those areas, but also we have to show significant evidence that it is going to save substantially a number of lives.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: How significant would that benefit have to be for you to back it in?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It would have to be significant to show that it is going to save lives. I think at the moment we have made a number of changes—Minister Constance and myself—and we are making changes to try to ensure that there is someone sitting at home around that dinner table at Christmas time, rather than an empty chair for someone who has actually lost a loved one.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Accepting that, you are not ruling out this further step, depending on the evidence?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is evidence and I think the quantum would have to show clearly that it is going to substantially save lives. Like the evidence—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: And you have not seen that evidence so far?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have not seen that evidence and I have not seen the evidence to show that. You sit here and talk to me about it, but I hate how you guys go out there and claim it is revenue raising. It is not okay to—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is the community concern.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is not okay to speed. I have seen your releases. You put out a release and you basically say that it is revenue raising. Well, is it okay if someone is travelling at 10 kilometres or 15 kilometres or 20 kilometres over the limit? No, it is not.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, let me ask you this—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is not okay.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If that is your view—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No. I will tell you this—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —let me ask you this. Let me ask you for this commitment, then.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I might hate—I tell you, I hate it too.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, let me put this question to you—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I hate getting a fine in the mail—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —but I would rather that than a knock on the door—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Let me put—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —or a phone call from a police officer telling me that one of my loved ones has died.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Will you give us—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That would be worse than actually—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —claiming that.

The CHAIR: Please speak one at a time, for Hansard.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, will you give us this guarantee, then, given that that is your strong view? The proportion of fines revenue that has gone into road safety—it has been a proportion of the money that the Government has spent on road safety. For example, the last public figures show that \$304 million was spent; \$157 million of that came from the camera revenue and the Government topped the rest up. So camera revenue was a bit over half, but 48 per cent of that was coming from the Government to top this up. Will you commit, given the strong views you have put here, that as revenue goes through the roof—which is happening now—the Government will not use that as a backdoor way to cut road safety funds? Will you keep that proportion? Will you keep topping this up, even as camera revenue is going through the roof?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Do you know what? I actually wish I had a problem that I could actually walk up to the Treasurer and say, "I need more money for road safety." I would actually hope that the day comes where we are not actually collecting it because people are doing the wrong thing. When that occurs, then that has to be a good thing because that means that people are actually changing a culture. It means that they are actually accepting that road responsibility is something that they take serious and they acknowledge that every time they get behind the wheel of the car their actions can have fatal consequences. So at the end of the day it is important that that investment continues as part of our Community Road Safety Fund. And you know it is going there because we have made this very clear—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. I want to be clear—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We have made this very clear—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —I do not dispute that camera revenue is going in there.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —as to where—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to know—and I think you are committing to it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes. Our Community Road Safety Fund continues to roll out.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, but you will not—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And even the changes that you have—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —cut that government proportion. Is that what you are agreeing to?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: No, it will not. You also know—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, thank you.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —that the changes that are seeing—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, that is good. Minister, I think it is a significant commitment.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —the money being invested back into our roads that are needing it as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, that cuts to the transparency around how the funds are being spent. In my view, it is a part of the educative process for the community around the fines revenue, the top-up and how it is then spent on safety measures across New South Wales. Do you agree that transparency plays a role in the educative process for the people of New South Wales?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think at the end of the day this is something that both Minister Constance and myself are at arm's length from. It should not be about politics. This should not be about politics—about choosing those roads that need to actually see this investment being made as a part of our Safer Roads funding program. I know Mr Carlon is here this afternoon and he would be very happy to answer questions about this. But this is done through the Centre for Road Safety. This is the organisation that should be determining where that expenditure is occurring, because they are the ones that get all the data as to where there are crashes, where there are fatalities and where there are near misses.

So they are the ones who are in the best position to identify where that expenditure should occur. It should not be up to a Minister. It should not be up to me, as the Minister today, or the next Minister after me. It should be done independently and at arm's length to get the right outcome.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is the transparency I am talking about.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is exactly right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is the transparency that needs to be around there. We will ask Mr Carlon some questions this afternoon. We did flag with Mr Carlon in a briefing earlier this week—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I hope you ask him. You brought him in, so he is keen.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We have flagged some of the questions. We will go to this, because it is a pretty serious matter. I see this as a part of the educative process for people of New South Wales. I agree that the evidence that is provided should dictate the expenditure, not these characters at a table making a decision. That is that transparency I am asking you about, and I am glad you agree with me that there should be a transparency arrangement in place around those funds. Minister, with regard to that, though, we raised the issue about black spot funding and Mr Carlon spoke to us earlier this week about that.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: On Monday.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, on Monday. It has been a long estimates. What we are asking and what we would like on the record is to clearly state—the black spot funding program, as it stands, is in the Community Road Safety Fund. There are other expenditures, such as the rumble strip program, for instance. I want to explore some of these this afternoon. Essentially, the black spot funding program is reducing in that fund. But, to be clear, the dollars—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It goes into another fund. Overall, the expenditure for road safety is going up. It just means that the particular program that you are talking about—the funds there are in this other program which is still delivering safer roads here in the State. I will get Mr Carlon this afternoon to clarify that again. I want that on the record.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We will give Mr Carlon ample time this afternoon to work through that. Minister, this also comes to the evaluation of the funding and creates that evidence back-up or support of the evidence that was used in the first place. When we do these programs or these funding allocations out of the road safety fund, is there an evaluation of the outcomes that are obtained?

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, that is right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There is?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, and I am sure Mr Carlon will be very happy to talk to you about that this afternoon.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is okay. That goes to some of the reports that I have here, which I will talk about later on this afternoon. Does that also relate to the sponsorship that is paid for out of the road safety fund?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, that does come out of that as well. My understanding is yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And there is an evaluation of the breadth of engagement?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, correct. Because there was the knock-on effect. We get high profile people in like Brad Fittler through the National Rugby League. For a lot of people, people like Brad Fittler and other personalities are big names that people listen to. If they are out there promoting a road safety message, it is probably better they are doing it than say you and I because they will take more notice of these individuals, being high profile sporting stars in the State. It is evaluated and it is part of the program that we see rolled out as part of Safer Roads.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, why do we pay for policing wages expenditure out of the Community Road Safety Fund, as opposed to just general revenue for the policing budget?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: In a moment I will ask Mr Carlon to answer potentially more quickly, then you can go into more detail. My understanding is it is especially for the long weekend periods where we have more police out there on our roads. We always know that it is probably the weekends where there is a greater police presence as part of the advertising campaign that is needed for those particular times of the year as well. I might get Mr Carlon to add if I can.

Mr CARLON: Very quickly. We have for many decades had an enhanced enforcement program with police and when the Community Road Safety Fund was established that program was transitioned into the Community Road Safety Fund. The operations, which are additional, so they are additional overtime and extended and cancelled shifts, those operations are the ones that you would be very familiar with at Easter, Christmas, school holiday periods and long weekends during those double demerit periods. Those operations, combined with campaigns and the community education programs that we run, see those periods of the year with actually the lowest fatality rate compared to any of the other periods—like weekends or even midweek. They are very effective in the highest risk periods when there are very high volumes of people travelling across the network, and they been very effective over many years. Again, that program is subject to evaluation, which has determined that it has been very effective in reducing trauma.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, there would be an argument that could be put that says that those programs, when it relates to policing, should be funded by police out of their budget, and that there would be more funds from the Community Road Safety Fund to be used on other things. What is the rationale behind using the Community Road Safety Fund for some of those programs, as opposed to budgeting the allocation as a part of the police budget?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to ask Mr Carlon to give you the rationale on the history of why.

Mr CARLON: I think these programs are very specifically designed around particular road trauma periods, like holiday periods, but also where we see emerging trends, which come through the evidence base, that enable a quick response, very directed for police to be able to engage in that enhanced enforcement activity. We find that has been very effective in addressing those issues. We may see a trend emerge in a particular regional area and the police will design a campaign which is actually around targeting, let us say alcohol-related fatalities on the North Coast. That additional resource, through cancelled rest days and additional leave, then gives the flexibility for us to be able to fund those initiatives from the fund. As I said, we have evaluated those initiatives and they have been very effective in being flexible and responding both to the trends, but also in the long-term holiday periods where we have the highest risk in attacking those issues.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, the sponsorship funds that are allocated out of the Community Road Safety Fund, when the Government undertakes a sponsorship arrangement, does it have to follow the advertising guidelines or is it separate to the advertising guidelines? I am trying to work out how it is considered.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Is this for the community road safety?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will hand that over to Mr Carlon.

Mr CARLON: Those programs are seen as a completely integrated education, communication and advertising program, and are designed to support the specific outcomes that we are looking for in terms of the behaviour change that we are seeking around particular issues. Each of those projects is evaluated using our formal review of sponsorship value, which is a consistent approach across government. We identify the value for money in actually applying that into sponsorship, for community education and advertising, and it is within that framework. All of that is actually part of the process of the approval for the campaigns conducted in New South Wales that go through the Government advertising review process.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Carlon, we will certainly come back to you in the agency session to talk through some of these issues. I am interested that the Minister says he has not seen evidence about the impact of point-to-point cameras. Have you provided information evidence to the Minister's office, it may not have made it to the Minister, about this potential policy decision to turn on for cars point-to-point camera information?

Mr CARLON: We are constantly reviewing options for improving road safety, clearly, and looking at the international evidence as well. There is international evidence which we provide. Clearly, the program for average speed cameras is one which has been very effective. We have seen a 45 per cent reduction in heavy vehicle-related crashes on those areas where the program has operated, compared to an 18 per cent reduction on the rest of the network. It is not that light vehicle enforcement does not happen on those parts of the network as well, police and also mobile speed cameras operate, as well as fixed speed cameras operate most lengths.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might stop you there. I want to be up-front and ask you while the Minister is here, rather than ask you this later, just to give the Minister a chance to respond if required. Surely you must have been briefed in the incoming government briefs or subsequently some of this information would have been provided to the Government?

Mr CARLON: Yes, we provide information to the Government all the time about initiatives that would improve road safety. We are in the process of kicking off the development process for the new road safety plan for the next five years. Clearly that evidence will be part of the considerations for the development of the next plan.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Carlon, we might come back to that in the agency session. Minister, I am going to put this to you relatively gently. Clearly, this information is around Government, clearly it is put to the Government about these various options, are you prepared, given the position you put, to request a brief on this issue, specifically on this evidence about how many lives might be saved by this particular policy initiative, given that you have said today it is not fresh in your mind, you have not reviewed it? Are you happy to request that?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are a couple of things there. You never stand still on road safety. That is pretty clear. I do not think there is ever going to be a silver lining at the end of the day. I think it is one thing that you continually address, one thing that you continually look at. In relation to that, again, the evidence would need to show that there is a quantum of lives to be saved. It would have to be substantial in relation to that. The third factor is, as I said to you earlier, you still have to take the community on the journey with you.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, I agree.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is important. Sometimes it does upset me that we actually play politics around road safety, rather than dealing with what needs to happen here to protect lives.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Well, I am putting this to you pretty gently, Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am just saying that you do play politics on it and I think it is not fair when we are out there trying to save lives. It would be nice to put the politics aside to ensure that we are trying to save those lives on the roads where people are being killed. You look at things like speeding—yes, way too many. I cannot believe—can you believe still?—that people get in a car and do not even put a seatbelt on.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, if you want to suggest people are playing—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is crazy. Today?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If you want to suggest people are playing politics—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Still people get in a car and do not put a seatbelt on. I would be looking at things like, "Seriously, why are you not putting a seatbelt on when you get in a car?"

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, you have been briefed on this issue. Let me put it more strongly: You have been briefed; you know the evidence. You just have not acted. You cannot recall the evidence now but Mr Carlon has just given it to you again—45 per cent compared to 18.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think Mr Carlon also said international evidence as well.

Mr CARLON: That is in relation to heavy vehicles that crash.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: To heavy vehicles.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The best clue—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Don't put words in his mouth. It is not what he said.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The best clue about what might happen—is that big enough as lives saved?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We are talking about point-to-point cameras turned on for heavier vehicles. They are not on for light vehicles. Again, the evidence and the research would have to be undertaken extensively to show that there is going to be a quantum of lives be saved through it. At this point in time we have got a number of changes. It is about making sure we take the community on the journey—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So would a 45 per cent reduction in crashes—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is for heavy vehicles.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Let me put the question: If that translated to cars would that be enough for you to say "This is significant"?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Where do you stand? Where would you stand on it? Would you actually support it?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, when you are in opposition you can ask the questions. You are the Minister for this area.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I understand. But would you support it or play politics?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am totally confused about where you are coming from.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Would you support it?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We are happy to answer questions about the Opposition's policy position.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am just asking: Would you support it?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Answer it.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Later.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So you won't answer it. I threw it back at you. You would rather play politics than answer the question on road safety.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Minister, you have been briefed on this. You have received the evidence, we have not. You are the Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Hang on, 2½ hours later you realise that I am the Minister. Well done. Good job.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am upset that you are the Minister but I did not expect you to be upset you were. The difference is you have been briefed, you have seen the evidence, you get the evidence from the Centre for Road Safety—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And you cannot put words into Mr Carlon's mouth. He is speaking about 45 per cent on heavier vehicles. That evidence is there for heavy vehicles at that point in time. Again, there has been international research done but there has not been the extensive research which I would test, I would challenge, to ensure that it comes back and shows that there is a quantum of lives to be saved. That is something we have not explored enough yet. This is what we are doing as part of our next measures. Again, I want the community to be on side with the changes that they are seeing rolled out over the next 12 months.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can I put it gently to you again, given that is your position—and I accept where you are coming from—will you request updated evidence from the Centre for Road Safety to look at this policy question?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: So you come out and tell me that you are supporting it and then I will know that you are backing it in.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, okay. You say you are not briefed. I am asking you: Will you get briefed? You are saying the Opposition's position will determine whether or not you ask for this evidence.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will still make decisions. I stand by my record on road safety. I will stand by the changes that Minister Constance and I have made over the last two years in this area because we both take it seriously. We both understand how important it is for people to be doing the right thing out there on the roads. I cannot believe that people still think that it is okay to break the law and put other people's lives at risk. I am going to keep doing the things that need to happen. I will not stand still on it because, at the end of the day, we will actually deliver what is needed.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will not insist on pressing that question. I did not think it was a complicated question, but I will not insist on pressing it and I am happy to move on from whether you would get briefed on that. I want to ask about your views on mobile phone detection cameras. That is one of the new initiatives that has been introduced. It was introduced with the actions taken by Minister Constance and yourself, as the roads Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is correct.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It was a decision taken with the support of the Opposition. We support that camera program. One of my concerns about it, though, is this: There is a loophole that applies not just to this camera program but to others where some offenders pay five times the fine, register the offence to a corporation and no-one loses points. Those drivers are detected doing the wrong thing but do not lose any points. The revenue comes into the State so there is plenty of money sloshing around the system but dangerous drivers are left on the road as a result of that loophole. It exists for other offences but it is being used dramatically for these mobile phone detection cameras. Do you share those concerns about the use of this loophole?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will ask Mr Carlon to explain the changes.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am interested in your view, but I am happy to hear from Mr Carlon.

Mr CARLON: Minister, did you want to speak before?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You can go.

Mr CARLON: I think there are two issues here, and number one is that people generally tend to use the data from Revenue NSW on their website—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Carlon, with your agreement, I might come back to that. I want to ask you some questions about this and I have seen some of the information. I am interested in the Minister's view. Minister, I am interested more here in whether you see this as a problem or not? There are some technical issues which I want to ask about. This has been discussed in the Parliament. I have put a range of strong views and the Government has acted on elements of this. But I am interested do you think this is a problem or not because some people are just getting off the hook altogether.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: And I think that is exactly why some of the reforms that we recently put through about addressing some of these loopholes, where we did have individuals that could potentially put the car across into a business name and actually not cop the fine themselves. It is then very difficult to be able to pinpoint the person who was responsible for driving that particular vehicle. Yes, we have made a number of changes and a number of reforms.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The loophole is still being used though.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: If the loophole is there—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Do you have concerns about that?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —we will continue to look at it because, at the end of the day, if there is a loophole we will look at that to see if we need to tweak it even further. I would find it offensive if someone is driving a vehicle and they are not being found out and it is going across to the company, or the company feels as though it is more lucrative for them to pay the fine for that individual and not have the individual—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It cuts across a lot of what you and Minister Constance are saying in other areas. It is the fact that this loophole is there and it has become known and used. In my view, it has become abused. It really cuts across some of the other things you are trying to do in this space. Do you think that is a fair comment?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think it is something we would have to definitely be looking at, so my answer is yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In the short time I have left—I am not sure how long—

The CHAIR: Eight minutes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You and I, on a regular basis, talk about the two intersections that I am about to raise.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Gocup?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Gocup Road, Snowy Mountains Highway intersection, and the Batlow Road, Snowy Mountains Highway intersection. I will talk about the Batlow Road one first. I noticed the other day when I drove past the electronic signs are up saying that there is a new speed limit coming into play. The locals would like to know, just to clarify, is that speed limit just for the construction phase or will that be the speed limit going forward for that particular intersection?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will double-check for you by this afternoon, but my understanding was there is a speed limit change. I have actually been down to Batlow Road. I was down there with the local member, Joe McGirr, as well in relation to that. My understanding is that through consultation with various stakeholders that road has been reviewed and the speed limit is going to be changed. That is my understanding but I will confirm 100 per cent this afternoon if it is not just during construction. But I believe it is ongoing.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The extension of the 80 kilometres out past the Batlow Road—as I understand it, you will check—is a permanent adjustment?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Batlow Road or the actual road?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The Snowy Mountains Highway at that Batlow Road intersection. You are extending the 80 kilometres—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: My understanding is it is more Batlow Road but we will clarify it this afternoon. I think it was the Batlow Road that actually had the speed review done on it. That is my understanding. If it is for that section, I would presume it would be because of some roadworks that are going to occur at the intersection. We will clarify this afternoon for you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I had my colleague Mr Graham with me and I showed him the Batlow Road intersection.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You took him regional. You took him out to the regions. Well done. Good job.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I love a road trip.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The timber truck came into the intersection and I did not have to actually say anything to him. He just watched the timber truck and the vision provided all of my statement. The Gocup Road intersection, there is going to be a roundabout put in there?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, a roundabout.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: When will that work be completed?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can clarify exactly the time this afternoon—and this maybe one even for Mr Carlon this afternoon if you wish to follow it up. When I have actually read and heard some of the reports of fatalities that have occurred down Gocup Road it has really concerned me. I have actually been down there on a number of occasions now to have a look at what is happening, what needs to happen and to hear the community's views and the views from the council. Obviously there has been a determination to put in the roundabout. We are going through the detailed design phase at the moment. My understanding is that potentially that will be completed sometime this year. And then it would take at least 12 months to actually construct the roundabout itself.

In relation to that, that intersection has actually had a number of changes as well. We have seen the vehicle-activated signage that has been installed. When I was down there talking to the community they said more needed to happen, so I went back to the Centre for Road Safety and asked them whether they could have another look at it. They have also installed some rumble strips. I know that the Centre for Road Safety, being the experts

UNCORRECTED

when it comes to what needs to be delivered for the community, looked at things like traffic lights and the potential for moving the intersection, but they did come up saying that the roundabout would actually provide the most benefits back to the community in that area. We are going through the roundabout; we have committed to the roundabout. Right now we are in that design phase for how it is going to look and where it is going to be situated on that intersection.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It would be fair to say there are some mixed views about whether there should be a complete alternative route, whether there should be a roundabout or whether there should be traffic lights. I put on the record publicly that I originally supported the bypass proposal but it is going to take five or six years to do.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In the meantime, what do you do? The roundabout may not be the way to go in the longer term, but you know what? It is going to save lives, so let us put the roundabout in.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That is what I explained to the community when I was down there. What they were pleased about was the fact that, one, I had actually gone down there—and I know you have been down there before.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I live there.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think you have got an interest, but I think they appreciated the fact that I went down there to see firsthand what they were talking about. The issue there as well was there are some people who actually said, "Let's move the intersection. Let's completely go across the old railway line", but the problem with that is exactly what you said. That would take years to happen. I just do not think we can wait years to have a solution there to provide a safer intersection for people at that Gocup intersection. We are going to be led by the experts. The Centre for Road Safety has identified what needs to happen and Transport has then got on with it. I think that is what we need to do for that area.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, the Snowy Mountains Highway, like a lot of the highways, took a fair beating during the Dunns Road bushfire last year. What are the lessons that we have learnt about the construction of our roads and the furniture that goes with our roads arising from those bushfires? How are we feeding that into the construction of our future roads?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think there are a number of things. I know Ms Nelson will be able to go into more detail, so you could probably ask her that question this afternoon as well. I think there are a couple of things. We have also learnt—even where the fires have gone through there have been a lot of culverts that have been replaced with fire-resistant culverts. I know it is a culvert, but they are fire resistant. Bridges are being replaced, making sure that they are fire resistant. That has been something that we have learnt to work—even working with councils from a State perspective, as well, to ensure that we are more resilient when it comes to the road network. We also know that the bushfire inquiry indicated that the removal of trees for safe commuters was also important. We know that it identified that in some communities, especially down on the South Coast; there is only one road in and one road out. It is something that we have to look at from a broader transport plan for those communities. As a Government, we are investing \$10 million to continue with a number of these measures.

Even though we talk about the trees being cleaned up, we have still had teams from Transport and arborists that have been out there. They have still been working on the side of the roads. Whilst we might think that the fires have come and gone, this has been an extensive program that the team from Transport has been leading, cleaning up on the Gwydir Highway, the Hume Highway—even in my area with the Jenolan Caves Road. But even that has created other challenges. The trees might have been burnt and come down, then they have blown down and then we have floods. We have had to do things like bank stabilisation or slope stabilisation. There have been a number of measures that still need to be undertaken to ensure that our road network is going to be more resilient into the future.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In the dying moments, I want to ask you about McKanes bridge. You and I have had this conversation before.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You should have taken Mr Graham to it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The bridge has been promised many times. You actually had to become the roads Minister to get the bridge done in your own electorate.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: A man of action.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I have seen the photograph of yourself and Mr Faraway standing in front of a bucket.

UNCORRECTED

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That was Bridle Track.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That was Bridle Track, was it? Same day.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: They must follow our Facebook pages.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What is the estimated completion date for that work and is it on track?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to—it is a \$10 million project. I would have to check because there was a delay. There were some microbats that were discovered under the bridge when they started the work, so they had to put tools down to ensure that the management of those microbats was done in the most appropriate way. I would just have to see how much of a delay has occurred to the project but, again, when you are talking about a McDonald timber truss bridge it is one of only four remaining in the State. It is a heritage bridge and certainly one that is important to preserve in that community. But thank you for your interest in my area.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Well, I am in your area a lot. Thank you. I am just after the revised completion date.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can do that. We will get that this afternoon.

The CHAIR: I will ask Government members if they have any questions they want to ask.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: No. I think we have covered a bit of ground.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, Sam gave me his.

The CHAIR: That is right. At the beginning, yes.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, I could tell. I thought they were all from Sam.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I did not think I would ever see a dixer from the Shooters. I did not think I would ever see that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They set you up.

The CHAIR: I did just pop into the other estimates hearing that is running in parallel with this one and it was a lot less well behaved than this one. Thank you all for a very productive session. Thank you, Minister Toole. We are finished with your questioning. We will break for lunch and return at 2.00 p.m. for further questions.

(The Minister withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

ANTHONY PETER HAYES, Executive Director, Community and Place, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

GILLIAN ABIGAIL GERAGHTY, Head of Regional Project Delivery, Infrastructure and Place, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

BARBARA ALISON WISE, Executive Director, Transport Partnerships, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much and welcome. We will start again with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Regan, I might just start by asking if you have had a chance to find that document that alluded to that correspondence from Betts to Staples, and if you are in a position to table it.

Mr REGAN: Yes. I have not got the hard copy yet. We will have it this afternoon and I can talk to it if you need to, but I will be able to table a hard copy this afternoon.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, okay. Perhaps give us a brief description of it now and then when you are able to table it I will appreciate you doing that.

Mr REGAN: Sure.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If you would just describe it to us.

Mr REGAN: Just bear with me. So the letter from Mr Betts, which I understand was tabled yesterday as well in the Committee hearing yesterday, describes some issues that would need to be considered from the context of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in relation to the letter that Mr Staples had discussed with Mr Betts. In particular, there are issues associated with national parks and State forests and legal and pragmatic considerations that need to be resolved. It talks around bushfire risk management, I understand, and forestry, land clearance, and notes that the issues would be considered in the Bushfire Inquiry and that the findings and recommendations of the inquiry would most likely form a whole-of-government position on the issue.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Okay. I am happy to leave it there and we might come back to that, including you actually tabling the hard copy. What is the length of the State's highway networks?

Mr REGAN: I do not have the exact figure. I will come back on notice for you for the full State highway network.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, okay. Perhaps on notice, but perhaps for this session, if you could give us a rough sense of that just for the purposes of this discussion.

Mr REGAN: That is fine. I can do that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That would be good, and on that note I might hand to my colleague.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There was a fair bit taken on notice this morning so I will just work through what I have got and we will see if we can accommodate that as we go. I want to start out with continuing my line of questioning of the Minister around the heavy vehicle rest areas. Just how much are we spending this year, first, on the maintenance and, second, on the construction of heavy vehicle rest areas?

Mr REGAN: So I do not have the detail at this point on how much we are spending this year but I will pass to Ms Nelson, who may be able to address that.

Ms NELSON: There are about 1,600 rest stops in New South Wales. Transport operate and maintain some of those, some of them are councils, some of them are commercial operations. Obviously a really important part of the heavy vehicle industry, especially in terms of fatigue management—one of the real things that we are interested in. As part of the recent changes at Transport, we have actually established a dedicated freight branch and they are working very specifically with the heavy industry on a strategy around rest stops with a program being put together in consultation with the heavy industry right as we speak. Anthony Hayes my colleague here today is actually on the working group that is working through that so he might provide a bit of commentary on where they are up to with that. Our big focus with this is really working with industry and with councils as well as the commercial operators to really understand where these are going to make most sense, how we address some

UNCORRECTED

of the issues that were raised this morning. One of the issues that I know you raised this morning was around fines.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. That is in the two trials.

Ms NELSON: Yes. We double-checked that. So it is a New South Wales police fine. They issue those fines, but Mr Hayes can provide a bit more detail around what we are doing in terms of that particular issue.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Just before you go, Mr Hayes, just to confirm: Who is going to take on notice the first part of my question around the maintenance and costs and construction expenditure?

Ms NELSON: Sorry, can you just exactly tell me—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The maintenance this year on the rest areas that the State Government is responsible for and the construction cost of the new ones?

Ms NELSON: Okay. I will see what we can do but I suspect with maintenance areas we will certainly be able to get some information around cleaning because we do put out contracts for that, and we did actually in the last 12 months significantly increase cleaning as a result of COVID. It was one of our COVID initiatives. So we will definitely be able to get you that but I suspect the maintenance might just be tied up in our normal maintenance numbers. But we will see what we can get.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I will appreciate whatever you can find out.

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hayes?

Mr HAYES: My apologies. In 2018, as a result of the—well, there were two publications, the Freight and Ports Plan but also a Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Framework. As a result of that, Transport for NSW has now established a project team that is looking at heavy vehicle rest stops as a strategic challenge that we need to be addressing. That has progressed to the point where we have now done—we are looking at having a strategic business plan produced later in the year. It is still early days at the moment, but that has involved surveys of all of the key industry groups working with key partners to make sure that we are addressing all the key issues and challenges. That is along the lines of where should rest stops be placed? What is an appropriate distance between each one from a safety perspective? What amenities need to be provided to the users of those safety aspects; use of those and the amenities et cetera? So it is a fairly extensive group that is looking into it. As I said it is still early days and we have not got the outline of the report yet but it is expected to have a strategic business case later this year.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: As I understand it, there are some guidelines around the construction of heavy vehicle rest areas. I gather that is going to be fed into the system, Mr Regan, as a part of the work that Mr Hayes is doing?

Mr REGAN: Yes, I believe so. Mr Hayes, do you want to continue to answer?

Mr HAYES: Yes. There most certainly will be and there are a number of key issues, such as fatigue. In this morning's session there was discussion about the safety of non-heavy vehicle users using the space. All of those issues are being addressed as part of that project.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The Minister and I both agreed this morning that we supported the use of the green reflectors as an indicator of where there was a suitable rest area. Is that a part of this process that you are talking about?

Mr HAYES: That is an excellent question. I do not have an answer on the spot at that level of detail.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am happy for you to take this sort of stuff on notice. I am actually more about trying to get a general picture of just what is happening. Is the proposal here then also about then putting in place a program that will construct the new heavy vehicle rest areas where they are most needed, not just on the new highways but on the existing highways as well?

Mr HAYES: I think it is more broadly about taking a more strategic approach to working in partnership with the freight industry. As Ms Nelson said, we are one player within the overall discussion. There are a number of rest stops that are provided either by council or by—there are a number of different ways that that needs to be addressed. We are one player in that. What we are trying to do is have a coordinated approach with all of the key partners so that we provide the best service to the industry that we can

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You have undertaken consultation with stakeholders, I think you said earlier, as a part of the early phase of this work. How was that consultation undertaken? Was it face to face with

UNCORRECTED

the peak bodies? Was it selection of the, I do not know—standing at the heavy rest areas like Mundoonan and talking to the truckies when they pulled in? What were the mechanisms upon which we consulted with the drivers?

Mr HAYES: The initial engagement, unfortunately, was before my time, so again I would have to answer that on notice, if I may. But it certainly involved looking at, as I mentioned before, the fatigue, but also what kind of technologies do the users require? What does the future look like in terms of fuel et cetera? It is quite a broad discussion across many aspects. The idea of producing a strategic business case is that then we can allocate appropriate people and an appropriate strategy going into the future to work with the industry.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Regan, is one of the fundamentals of this project, this exercise—which, by the way, I fully support; it is pretty important work—is one of the fundamentals that the State has an obligation to ensure that the heavy vehicle industry has access to safe, clean and hygienic rest areas?

Mr REGAN: I think, as Ms Nelson was saying before, that there is a combination of providers of the rest areas. Some are State and some are local council and, obviously, some of them are also commercial.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. That is exactly right.

Mr REGAN: So what we are looking to do is to work quite openly and collaboratively to try and improve the spread and the distribution of those rest areas to assist industry and also from a safety management perspective to provide where we can or to identify and facilitate where other parties might be better placed to do so. So I think it is in that broader context that we are looking to improve the rest areas and the definition of those rest areas and make sure that the information is readily available as to where they are. But also I think the green reflectors are a good example of the sort of nuance and the subtlety that the program can have in terms of giving people—even if they have not pre-planned, and particularly heavy vehicles—the opportunity to take advantage of those where possible rather than continuing on.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: One of the benefits of a well-designed rest area is it manages the vehicle conflict or the multiple users of the rest area, whether it be the mums and dads that have got to pull over with a young family, to the grey nomads who want to use the rest area overnight as a place to stop, to the B-double driver or the road train driver out in the Far West where they need to be able to drive in and drive out rather than have to reverse and all that sort of stuff. Some of the dynamics around a rest area is a bit more than I think a lot of people give appreciation to. If you talk to the truckies they will say they prefer the ones that are actually off the road so they do not get the road noise, which assists in their fatigue management—they get a good sleep. Are these the sort of things that are being picked up in the consultation but we are going to try to accommodate in a rollout? You are talking about a sophisticated program here.

Mr REGAN: Absolutely. I understand the issues you are making. Mr Hayes may want to comment but certainly those issues and the segregation and the clarity around that segregation I totally understand that it is important.

Mr HAYES: It is identifying the opportunities to improve the current rest stops. It is also setting a good framework for what do future rest stops look like? I know the consultation has taken place not only with the industry—and our freight team have done a lot of consultation—but it is also discussions with council, it is discussions with petrol stations et cetera to make sure that we are covering the whole gamut.

Ms NELSON: I think it would be fair to say the work is being done in the context of improving safety outcomes for the heavy vehicle industry and other road users as well as what we can do to contribute to a more productive freight industry across the State. They are the kind of top line outcomes, if you like, and then a lot of work—but as you pointed out, there are many issues in this so it does take a bit of time to work through those. I think, hopefully, what we will see is some trials of different things. We have got a couple of trials on foot. But I think we need to try some different things as well to really kind of test out and push it. But we need to do it with the industry, which we are very cognisant about.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. The map that I spoke about with the Minister, which is essentially you can go on and hover the cursor across the spot and it will come up on the screen as to what is available at those rest areas, I have actually had it said to me that there are some inaccuracies in some of those. I have not experienced that myself; this has been conveyed to me. How often is the information checked or the data is checked that supports that interactive map?

Ms NELSON: I am not sure. But we appreciate that sort of feedback and I am happy to go and have the website checked because the last thing we want to be doing is putting out inaccurate information. I am not sure how often it is checked but I take the feedback and we will make sure that it is double-checked and that the information on there is accurate.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If someone identifies that there is an inaccuracy or even a subtle inaccuracy in the data about a particular rest area, how do they feed that up into the system to be collected so that the appropriate amendments can be made?

Ms NELSON: That is an excellent question.

Mr REGAN: Yes. I was going to say, that is a good question. I think what we might do—that is a very good question. I think if there is not a clear pathway for that feedback to be fed to us then there should be and we will look at that. I am happy to take that on notice and come back with what the current position is but also we can attempt to come back and give some sense as to where people should send that feedback and how we will go about looking at it. Because certainly that kind of feedback from users is invaluable in ensuring that the system is up-to-date. So I totally understand.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Often it is the best way of data collection to maintain accuracy.

Mr REGAN: That is right. We are really open to that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Righto. I just want to move to the trial. When is the trial going to end for the two rest areas on the North Coast?

Mr REGAN: The two rest areas—Yelgun and Arrawarra—and the trial that we are looking at has two aspects. The first is that there is no parking in the designated heavy vehicle areas for vehicles under 12 tonnes, so attempting to achieve that segregation. The second is for our parking restrictions for light or recreational vehicles and, again, trying to ensure that they are kept separate. I think we advised before that the police have the enforcement arrangements there. The trial that we have been undertaking, at this point we are reviewing the outcome and the effectiveness. We have not taken a decision on next steps or a further rollout. So effectively it is still being considered. But the trial is ongoing at the moment.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So it is an ongoing trial.

Mr REGAN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Again, if people that are engaging in the trial want to provide feedback, is there a process upon which they can do that?

Mr REGAN: We will check that and come back on that to make sure that that is clear.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I could be wrong but I would envisage that if you are a truckie that has pulled over there and spent two or three hours balancing your logbook time and if something has happened and you are not happy, it is probably then and there is the best time to collect the data.

Mr REGAN: That is right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How you do that, I do not know.

Mr REGAN: I would say we are very much open to that feedback. We will have a look and if it is not clear how to come back with that feedback, we will make it so.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Before you commenced the trial at these two sites was there any work undertaken as to what would be required at these sites? Were you trialling other things other than just the segregation of vehicles at these rest areas—for instance, technological innovation? Are we looking at any of those sort of things?

Mr REGAN: Mr Hayes?

Mr HAYES: Yes, we will be. It is early days for the trial, so all your questions are very handy because they will go straight into the project group for further review and discussion. But certainly it is not just to look at making the most of what we have now; it is looking at the opportunities for the future to make it a safer environment but also a more productive environment.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Am I able to ask what some of the things are that we are doing at these sites? It is not a secret, is it?

Ms NELSON: No. Sorry, what—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What are some of the innovations we might be testing out at these sites?

Ms NELSON: At the moment the real trial is just around that total segregation and its signage. But I think Mr Hayes is flagging that in the future we will look at other trials of different things, including the use of different technologies. Are there better ways to design the rest stops? Should we put in different sorts of facilities?

UNCORRECTED

Are there other facilities that would make sense for the different rest stops? Do we understand where the most strategic routes are for heavy vehicles where they do not have other options? All of that is part of this planning process. These two particular trials are very much about trying to get that segregation, because I think that came through in the initial consultation process as probably their number one issue: that they cannot get access to these rest stops because other people are using it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think there is frustration all round.

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The grey nomads get annoyed because the truckies are taking up space. The truckies get annoyed because the grey nomads are there. There is a range of frustrations around how these things operate.

Mr REGAN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I sat at Mundoonan, which I think is a very good one, on the Hume Highway. It is up off the highway. It is a natural barrier, so there is no sound. The truck drivers just drive in and they can drive out. There is no reversing so there are no reversing noises. Then you have the amenities block in the middle, and then on the other side is where the smaller vehicles are. I was talking to my brother-in-law, who said that is one of the ones he prefers to stop at for the reason that he can actually get a decent sleep uninterrupted—it might be short and sharp, but that is what it does—and the toilets are always clean. He can go for walk.

Mr REGAN: By coincidence, I was there on Sunday.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: At Mundoonan?

Mr REGAN: And I noticed the way it is segregated from the highway is quite different to some of the others.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. I said, "If you are going to complain, you have to show me one that works well." That is one of the ones he proposed as one that works well. Also the facilities are clean. He said they can go for a walk. They can get out of the truck and go for a pleasant walk around just to stretch their legs.

Mr REGAN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: He said—he is my age now—that stretching is actually quite important.

Ms NELSON: Yes.

Mr REGAN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the capacity where they can just do some gentle stretching.

Mr REGAN: We will certainly come back on notice with any further information we have got and make sure that there is a conduit for that information.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I appreciate your time on that.

Mr REGAN: That is fine.

Mr HAYES: One last thing if I may too: The other part of what we are trying to do is to establish a greater degree of consistency. The experience is quite different from one rest stop to another, so part of the conversation has been about how we make it a more consistent approach. In terms of information, there is a website entitled NSW Rest Areas where people can provide feedback right now.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, beautiful.

Mr HAYES: But as I said, this conversation is timely because we can add that into the broader project right now.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I go back to the Canberra to Eden railway that we were discussing with the Minister, and he took most of it on notice. I will put it in your hands. There was concern raised with me that the report was made available to the public through the council, perhaps inadvertently or it should not have been. Do we know how many people have viewed that document when they should not have?

Ms NELSON: No, you are correct. I am not sure how many people have viewed the document. I think, as the Minister said this morning, those documents are presented in toto to the councils but under very strict disclosure arrangements, and part of that is they are not supposed to share it further. So I think there was just some miscommunication or something there. Once we found out that it was being discussed more widely and shared more widely then we have tried to swing back around and ask the council to approach those individuals and let

UNCORRECTED

them know that it is confidential. On the website we have the details of all the feasibility studies, where they are up to and copies of the executive summaries. So they are all there.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Your position is that council knows how many people viewed the document but you do not know.

Ms NELSON: That is correct.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: It was my understanding that you have sent out confidentiality agreements. Was that done via council?

Mr REGAN: The information we have at the moment is that the Cooma Monaro Progress Association [CMPA] was the party that the document had been shared with, but it is some of their members who have then seen it. So we have asked that the CMPA obtain a confidentiality deed from their members, which is what would have happened if it had been done directly by the council as intended. I do not have the exact number. Certainly, as Ms Nelson says, it may have been inadvertent but we are trying to tidy that situation up.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Sure. You do not know how many have been returned to you? I imagine they would have to come directly back to you.

Mr REGAN: We do not have that information with us at the moment.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Perhaps you could take it on notice and come back to us as to whether everyone from the progress association who had viewed the documents has actually complied with that.

Mr REGAN: Yes, happy to do that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Can you explain why the report, from what we have been informed, took a view to essentially bypass Queanbeyan as the proposed route rather than use the existing railroad corridor through Queanbeyan? Why was that decision taken?

Mr REGAN: My understanding is that there were a number of routes identified, including using the additional corridor through Queanbeyan. There is a range of criteria that has been looked at in assessing different routes. I think we have got probably about five options that were identified. The more cost-effective solutions look to have included the route that you refer to. But I note that no formal decision has been made on a route, so I think there is still plenty of opportunity for comment on that. We can look and come back with further detail. We have been able to get a little bit more information but do not have the precise answer to that question at this point.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: And the other question I asked about was in relation to consultation with some of the major industries that might benefit and why perhaps an industry like Bega Cheese was not consulted in terms of how they may benefit from such a project.

Mr REGAN: Yes, certainly. Our information is that they were identified as a stakeholder that would need to be consulted.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: But were they?

Mr REGAN: I have not got information yet as to whether they would be.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Can we go to the Michael Fox issue, if you have information on that to hand?

Mr REGAN: Yes. This is quite historic, as you mentioned before. We have been working through but there has been some delay in obtaining some of this information. We are continuing to work through to obtain that. Once we have done that, we will be reviewing it in the context of the GIPAA request. So we are still looking at that and we will continue. We will have to take that more formally on notice. We do not have an answer as to a time frame at this point as to when it would be available.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Were the tapes ever actually really lost or destroyed? Because the original correspondence my colleague received implied that they were destroyed. Then when it was suggested that you go back to Fujitsu, after a couple of months of crickets and tumbleweeds you said that you had found the solution, they were not destroyed and that the label had just fallen off.

Mr REGAN: My understanding is that the tapes could not be located originally.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Okay.

Mr REGAN: They should be able to be located, but we are working that through.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: But no definitive time line?

Mr REGAN: No, but we are working on it. It has come to our attention more recently in December of last year and we are working that through. We should be able to obtain those tapes.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Perhaps on notice, when you go back, if you do get a—

Mr REGAN: A time frame.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: —a time frame, if you can report back.

Mr REGAN: That is fine. We will do that.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Thank you. Back on to that Canberra to Eden railway line, it has been flagged that if it does not go ahead there are some interest groups that would like to turn it into a rail trail. I am wondering whether the department has done any investigative work into potential asbestos in the old tracks, because I know that was an issue with other older tracks with the ballasts. Have you done any work in that space in terms of if it does become a rail trail is there a risk of that exposure? Would you have to rip up the old tracks or what have you?

Mr REGAN: I understand. I might ask Ms Nelson to answer that.

Ms NELSON: I am not aware of any specific investigations that have been done on that line, but certainly whenever we are looking at turning any of these spaces into more publicly available space, there would be a significant amount of environmental assessment that we would have to do before we could progress it very far. As you can imagine, especially with the older lines, there has been a lot of diesel dropped onto these tracks and old trains have gone through. There is a lot of history in the ground. So before we contemplate anything like a rail trail, there would have to be a bit of environmental assessment.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: But nothing came through in terms of that initial feasibility study? Nothing came through in that feasibility study about even if you did go ahead with the project, were there any concerns raised in that about asbestos and having to make remediation works as you are upgrading the tracks?

Ms NELSON: Not that I am aware of. I have read the report, but it is some time since I have read it. I cannot remember that being an issue, but certainly if you are going to reinstate lines, there are often issues that you have to resolve and a lot of investigation needs to go into any of those issues around potentially hazardous materials, condition of the assets—all of those things would have to be worked through at length.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Sure. I do remember it being an issue around Junee and Gundagai when you realigned the road, there was that issue.

Ms NELSON: It is not uncommon at all in those environments to find those sort of things. I just cannot recall whether there was anything in particular.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: No problems at all.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Greetings to you, Mr Secretary. Greetings to your officials as well. Mr Secretary, through you, however you wish to direct, I want to ask you some questions about the ministerial direction, if that is possible.

Mr REGAN: Yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Last time when you were talking, you made the point that perhaps I should reserve some of these questions for the attendance of Ms Nelson, if you recall, so through you or Ms Nelson, however you see fit. Mr Secretary, I already asked you this last time when we had the opportunity to talk about this. Perhaps I might direct this question to Ms Nelson. Ms Nelson, did you recommend to the Minister that he establish a clearance zone around all State-managed highways by ensuring trees within 40 metres either side cannot obstruct vital road access?

Ms NELSON: Sorry, can you just repeat the question, maybe a little slower?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did you advise the Minister to direct or to adopt a policy that would see a clearance zone established around all State-managed highways by ensuring trees within 40 metres either side cannot obstruct vital road access?

Ms NELSON: The advice that was provided through me up to both Ministers' offices was around the development of what we called a corridor resilience program. That is basically a series of initiatives that we developed in response to the lessons we learnt out of the bushfires in 2019-20. There is a series of initiatives of that.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You mean 2020?

Ms NELSON: So 2019-20. We basically put forward to both Ministers that our recommendation was to initiate a program that we called the corridor resilience program, and that program was informed by a whole lot of things. So it was informed by the experience of the hundreds of transport staff who were involved in that initial response. It was informed by conversations we had with the RFS and Resilience NSW. It was informed by conversations we had with our Victorian counterparts. As you know, Victoria is prone to a lot of bushfires, so they have a lot of experience in this space, so we spoke to them. It was certainly informed by conversations with both Ministers' offices.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: When did you provide the advice to both Ministers about the adoption of that corridor strategy?

Ms NELSON: I did not actually start with the department until 2 March, so it would have been after that. I cannot recall specific dates. It was a series of conversations over time.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: But you can recall it was after 2 March?

Ms NELSON: Well, I did not start till 2 March so I know it was 2 March—after then.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So it was after 2 March 2020. Is that correct?

Ms NELSON: That is correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The Minister made the direction on 27 February 2020. Do you have a copy of the directions with you, by any chance?

Ms NELSON: I do not, but I am familiar with the letter.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You are familiar with them, I presume. I am sorry I did not bring a copy. I do not know whether Mr Secretary or others might be able to obtain a copy, otherwise I can get one brought down for you.

Ms NELSON: That is fine.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The Minister made the direction to establish a clearance zone around all State-managed highways by ensuring that trees within 40 metres of either side cannot obstruct vital road access on 27 February 2020. That is well before you provided the advice with the corridor strategy. Is that a fair rendering of the chronology?

Ms NELSON: I am not sure I would say well before. I started on 2 March and I do recall within my first couple of weeks having conversations with both Ministers' offices about the bushfires. As you can imagine, it was the topic of the—coming into the portfolio.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Of course. It is a serious matter.

Ms NELSON: So there were a series of conversations about issues and concerns that they had, suggestions that they had about how we might respond better in the future, both in the incident of those kind of events as well as how do we make our network more resilient. That is where we came up with this program, which is basically a series of initiatives.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: We will unpack that. Trust me, we will. But the point here is the Minister had made the direction to the secretary at the time before you provided him advice about the corridor resilience strategy. Is that fair?

Ms NELSON: Personally, yes, because I was not employed by the department until 2 March.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To the best of your knowledge—and, Mr Secretary, this is to you as well, of course. If you think it is better that you answer it, that is fine. Was this policy to remove trees created in the Minister's office?

Mr REGAN: I think perhaps I might answer initially. Certainly Ms Nelson can only comment on those discussions after 2 March. Throughout the end of 2019, the back quarter of 2019 and into 2020, you will recall that there was very significant bushfire impact in large parts of the State, and there was ongoing discussion around the impacts that was having on the transport network in different capacities—for example, the very significant damage to the main western line around about Christmas and New Year. It was well before that. There was a significant amount of discussion between the department and the Ministers' offices around the impacts and around what we could do around clearing of the transport corridors, about the repair of the transport corridors. I think it is fair to say that there was a fair amount of ongoing discussion.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Of course there was. I assume that there would have been around that time, especially as everyone was managing a crisis, including a lot of the department as well as staff, which I am sure you will agree was impacted. But the question was, the policy of establishing clearance zones by ensuring trees within 40 metres were removed, was that an idea that was created in the Minister's office or was it created in the department?

Mr REGAN: I am not aware.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Well, was it created in the department?

Mr REGAN: The letter that you are referring to from the Minister sets out an objective of increasing the resilience and the ability of the transport network to recover from bushfires, and that is what we were working on through that time.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I just want you to be very clear here. To be fair, both to the Minister and to the department, the Minister's letter is clear:

I am writing to instruct you in your role as Secretary to establish a clearance zone around all State-managed highways by ensuring trees within 40 metres of either side cannot obstruct vital road access.

That is a separate policy to the corridor resilience strategy that is adopted later on. I just want to nail the genesis of the idea. Did it arise from the department's advice or did it arise from elsewhere?

Mr REGAN: I am not sure I would necessarily agree that they are separate. They are talking about the same issue that is being addressed.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: It was designed to achieve the same objective. I accept that, of course. But there is a specific instruction to establish clearance zones. I am just focusing on that detail. Did the department at any point prior to 27 February 2020 advise the Minister to adopt that policy?

Mr REGAN: I am not aware of a specific advice on that policy, no.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you, Mr Regan. That clarifies that. When did you, Ms Nelson, learn that this direction had been made?

Ms NELSON: Shortly after I started, Mr Staples and I discussed it, and then we discussed it with both Minister's offices. Specifically with Minister Constance the conversation was very much about trying to understand what the outcome was that he was looking for, so what the real problem was that he was trying to solve so that we could then come back to his office and also Minister Toole's office with some options and suggestions for a response to those concerns. As I said, that was part of the conversation. We were also participating in the bushfire inquiry and talking to a lot of other people to really think through how we respond better in the future and also how do we create a network and an asset base that is more resilient for the future?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did Mr Staples ask you to seek legal advice from any source as to whether or not it was within the power of the department to implement the clearance on construction?

Ms NELSON: As part of our development of the program we sought lots of advice, which is very normal. We sought some legal advice, we sought environmental advice, we sought cultural heritage advice. That advice was very much about, "Tell me, if these are the outcomes that we are looking for, what is the envelope that I could work inside without changing legislation to deliver these initiatives?" Because what we were all very keen to do was work out how we could move as quickly as possible to address some of those outcomes and to deliver some real change.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I want to be very clear, I am certainly not questioning the department's motives in respect to any of this. I accept the reasons you would seek all of those forms of advice. But let me be very clear, in terms of the legal advice that you sought, did you seek advice as to whether or not under the roads Act you had the power to implement the 40-metre clearance policy?

Ms NELSON: We sought advice from legal about what our constraints were in terms of vegetation management.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did the legal advice say that you had limited power to establish the 40-metre clearance zone?

Ms NELSON: I do not recall it saying that specifically. I recall it setting out what we could do. The question that I asked to legal was, "Tell me what I can do. Tell me what is possible without having to change legislation or get into a long-run process." For example, I wanted to understand, am I allowed to go onto private property? Can I do these things? We are talking about lawyers here, so you get the very roundabout question—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I will not take that personally as a former lawyer. Or maybe I should?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We know what you are talking about.

Ms NELSON: It was more because what I was trying to understand was if I want to get out there and get some stuff happening really quickly, tell me what I can effectively do very quickly. It was a similar question to our environmental specialists: What can I do relatively quickly? What is in my sphere of influence without having to step out and start engaging with lots of other people.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Can I ask, Mr Secretary, to you perhaps, I presume that neither Ministers' offices sought legal advice prior to the issuing of the instruction on 27 February?

Mr REGAN: I am not sure. You would have to ask that directly to them.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did the department provide the legal advice to the Minister's office prior to 27 February?

Mr REGAN: Not that I am aware of, no.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Thank you, Mr Regan.

Mr REGAN: To pick up on Ms Nelson's comment, there is in looking at this a temporal nature to what issues could be addressed immediately and what would take longer because they would require other consents. One of the things we were keen to understand is what steps would have to be taken to achieve different outcomes, and so some of those are much easier to do in the near term, some of them would require liaison with other agencies or with property owners, some would require approval. It was about trying to understand the steps involved. I do not think anyone was expecting that you could achieve your full outcome immediately.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Again I am not making any inferences about the department's conduct whatsoever in this matter, but I do want to ask specifically about that because in the reply that Mr Staples sends on 31 July he said in response to Minister Constance's specific request to establish a 40-metre clearance zone:

TfNSW has limited power to establish a 40-metre clearance zone under the Roads Act 1993

I can only presume that a part of the legal advice that you sought made it clear that Transport for NSW does not have the power to implement it in the way in which the Minister directed it. Is that unfair?

Mr REGAN: No, I think it is as described. What we did do is look at what we could do under what time sequence. Some of those issues, as I just said before, there is not a clear set of powers to immediately have achieved one interpretation of the outcome. I think what we were attempting to do through that process, and what the department was already working to do, was to look at ways to decrease the risk, and to decrease the risk over time is a sensible way to approach it.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Of course, and that is not disputed, Mr Regan. In terms of the environmental advice that you sought, did you seek advice as to the amount of the number of trees that would be removed if the 40-metre clearance policy was adopted?

Ms NELSON: The environmental advice was more around, again, what are our obligations to remove trees, what can we do, what would we need special permits for, how would we go about that process. It was process driven.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: If it was process driven, then I will just proceed to the core of the question. To implement the Minister's instruction to establish a 40-metre clearance around State-managed highways, how many trees would need to be removed?

Mr REGAN: I have never seen an estimate of how many trees would need to be removed to achieve that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did the department ever obtain the estimate?

Mr REGAN: I do not think that is an estimate that—without going out and surveying the entire area that you are referring to, I could not speculate.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To be fair, we would agree that there would be a lot of trees being removed. Do we agree with that?

Mr REGAN: You need to go back to the initial request which was around seeking from us, in addition to what you mentioned, any recommendations around what we could do to ensure that trees do not obstruct

UNCORRECTED

roadways or access during emergencies. In that regard, what we were doing was looking at the higher-risk trees. We were not looking at all trees.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Sure, but the Minister's instruction was for all trees.

Mr REGAN: No, I do not believe it is correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The Minister's instruction was:

... to establish a 'clearance zone' around all state-managed highways, by ensuring trees within 40 metres either side cannot obstruct vital road access

How else would you interpret that?

Mr REGAN: That would not mean all trees.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So how many trees did you consider that would mean?

Mr REGAN: That is what I am saying. To do that you would need to survey each individual part of the site because we place significant emphasis on the fact that it was about risk mitigation and looking—and Ms Nelson can comment—about particular trees or particular types of trees that if they did fall would be harder to remove.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I accept that. If you adopted a risk-based approach to what tree and what risk each tree faces, how many trees did we consider to be high risk enough that they required removal?

Ms NELSON: What we did was we went through a process for understanding, again, what the intent was. Really, that was about high-risk trees being not just any tree that might fall onto the highway but the very large trees. So what normally happens is if a small tree falls, it is not a big deal—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: But how many large trees then would need removal?

Ms NELSON: So what we did then was we looked at the whole State. We worked out that we are looking for—and this was after talking to staff as well who had been involved in the sorts of trees—so these were the very large trees that would require arborists and people to come in and dissect them before they could be removed. Then what we did was we stepped back and looked at the whole State, looked at strategic corridors and evacuation routes. We put the drought map over it. We talked to the RFS about where the higher risks were and we identified the Gwydir Highway and the Princess Highway as our priority one for removal and particular sections then within them, and then we basically formed some specialist teams, which included specialists, arborists, all sorts of people. They had a documented process that they would go through to identify those trees. That is the process that we have been implementing since July. We did a first pass on both highways and then we did a second pass just over the summer and they are just finishing that up as we speak.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: What is the result of that pass? How many trees are going to be required to be removed after the process?

Ms NELSON: We have kilometres of trees; I am not sure I have numbers of trees though.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How many kilometres of trees?

Ms NELSON: So we have done a phase one on Princess Highway of 223 kilometres and on the Gwydir Highway of 127 kilometres.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Of trees that need removal?

Ms NELSON: That have been removed. These are high-risk trees that have been removed.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So you have removed 223 kilometres on which highway?

Ms NELSON: Princess and Gwydir—not all trees.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: No. But how many? Do we know?

Ms NELSON: We could try to find out.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Could we? Do we have a range?

Ms NELSON: I am not sure. We could find out.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How much has been spent?

Ms NELSON: Ten million dollars.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How much do you anticipate—

Ms NELSON: Sorry, \$10 million has been spent additionally this year on vegetation management, but it is not—because we have gone through a process and are taking out—these are very large trees but we have been very careful around habitat, all of those.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: How many private landowners' land do you have to enter?

Ms NELSON: That has not gone onto any private land.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So do you need to enter any further private land to continue with this policy?

Ms NELSON: At the moment we do not have intentions to, but it might be something that we do look at in the future. As I said, this is a program and this vegetation management part is just one part of what we are doing. There is a fuller program of other things that we are doing around corridor resilience.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I presume, Mr Regan, this is all occurring because this direction is still valid.

Mr REGAN: This is work, as I said before, that we were already undertaking. We had been looking at the challenges on the road and the rail network particularly acutely due to the severity of the bushfires during 2019 and 2020. We have ongoing vegetation management programs, but I think the scale of the impact had already changed the level of urgency around this approach. We are continuing to work to reduce the risk around existing corridors and to make the transport corridors more resilient going forward.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Ms Nelson, in Mr Staples' letter of 31 July he says to the Minister that if he has any further questions you are the person to call and that you would be pleased to take his call. Did the Minister ever call you?

Ms NELSON: I have had many conversations with the Minister and his office, as well as Minister Toole's office, about the corridor resilience program. We have also provided regular updates to them. As I said, it is not just around vegetation—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: But after Mr Staples sent this letter on 31 July, did the Minister call you to discuss the contents of Mr Staples' letter?

Ms NELSON: I do not recall him calling me immediately after that, but I have had calls and had meetings with him around corridor resilience. Absolutely.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did the Minister express dissatisfaction with the three-point strategy that Mr Staples had laid out in this letter to you in any context?

Ms NELSON: We have had conversations about it, but not particularly.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To be fair, the Minister told us last week that he was not satisfied with the department's response. It is not really disputed that he was not satisfied with the department's response. He said it himself. Did he express that view to you as to why he was not satisfied with the strategy that was laid out here?

Ms NELSON: I do not think, in the meetings, that he did express that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: This reply came on the same day that the bushfire royal commission report was handed down, on 31 July. I cannot help but notice that the three-point plan that you lay out is effectively what the bushfire royal commission called for. Is that a fair rendering as to how you interpreted the royal commission's findings as well?

Ms NELSON: We did certainly make a submission to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and participated in that. As I said, the program was initiated as a response to and with feedback from a lot of different sources, including the bushfire inquiry. We were a big part of the response on the ground and a big part of recovery.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Of course you were, and we appreciate the department's efforts.

Ms NELSON: And we were very engaged with the bushfire inquiry, with Resilience NSW and with the RFS all the way through this, so it was not sort of a surprise to anyone. We crafted the program with the feedback from all of those different agencies to try to make sure that we got it right.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: But as you understand the bushfire commission's recommendations, it never called for the establishment of a clearance zone around all State-managed highways by ensuring trees

UNCORRECTED

within 40 metres either side cannot obstruct vital road access. It called for a risk-based approach—the one that the department adopted. That is fair, is it not?

Ms NELSON: Sorry, what is the question?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The royal commission never recommended the establishment of a blanket clearance zone within 40 metres of either side.

Ms NELSON: I do not believe they did.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: They did not. What they actually called for was the strategy that Transport for NSW ended up implementing. Is that a fair rendering or interpretation of the bushfire recommendations?

Ms NELSON: Yes, I believe the inquiry did recommend—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The strategies that you adopted.

Ms NELSON: Correct.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: And not the strategy that was initially outlined in the Minister's letter.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Listening to that, I want to make it clear that the letter from Secretary Staples and the position that is outlined there looks eminently reasonable. That is a reasoned, rational, risk-based response to a desire to deal with this. The question is whether the directive itself is legal and what its standing is, not the strategy that the department has outlined. I think that is important to put clearly on the record, because it is quite a clear risk-based strategy that, as my colleague said, was endorsed by the bushfire royal commission. Has this written ministerial directive been withdrawn?

Mr REGAN: No.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So it is a standing—

Mr REGAN: We are continuing to work, as I said, to implement what was requested in terms of the intent of reducing the risk.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, but listening to the Minister talk about it, this is more than reducing the risk. He expressed significant frustration at the estimates hearing. He also used that example of the clearing that happens under powerlines. That is not a large tree out every kilometre; that is razing four kilometres—a significant patch of forest. That is what the Minister has in mind, clearly. Would you agree with that? That is his starting point.

Mr REGAN: That is a question you would either need to refer to the record or speak to the Minister. I think we described the process that the department has gone through and continues to go through—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Regan, I think that is fair.

Mr REGAN: —in continued discussion with the Minister and with Minister Toole.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to return to that question, though. This is a standing ministerial directive, which is still in force. The department is taking its actions about this but there is some other context, which is that the secretary of the department of transport has been sacked without reason. That is also part of what is sitting behind these questions from us. This is a standing ministerial directive and the Minister is frustrated with the way that the department has behaved. In your view, is it legal in its original form? Or is it outside the power of the agency to be able to carry this out in the form the Minister originally intended?

Mr REGAN: We have worked through and, as Ms Nelson said, looked at what could be achieved immediately and what can be achieved over time. Some of those things would take longer to achieve and others were more immediately available to us, so that is the process we took.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is a very rational way to respond. That is as Secretary Staples put it. He is no longer with us. The Minister expressed some frustration with that approach. Minister Toole was very upfront. He said, "Look, this would be impractical." He agreed with me that this would be impossible to implement to the full extent of that written directive. To me, that sounded fair enough. That is just a practical assessment of what it would mean to actually take 40 metres of trees on either side of every highway in New South Wales. Do you agree with Minister Toole's assessment that this is impractical or impossible?

Mr REGAN: I think we have explained that there are challenges there. We look through it. I do reinforce that we also took significant note that the letter—the original letter from Minister Constance—asked for our advice

UNCORRECTED

and additional recommendations as to what we can do, and that is what we have provided. So I think we have actually responded to that aspect as well.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I agree with that. But the issue here lies with Minister Constance, because he has not requested advice; he has issued a ministerial directive. He has not yet withdrawn it in writing.

Mr REGAN: Actually, his letter does. It says he welcomes any additional recommendations—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, I think that is fair.

Mr REGAN: —around ensuring that trees do not obstruct roadways, and that is what we have done.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I can agree with that. But he has issued a standing ministerial directive, which he has yet to withdraw, that goes well beyond what the agency has done so far. What would be the cost of fully complying with the directive that the Minister has given?

Mr REGAN: I do not think the directive is clear enough to be able to answer that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But it would be many, many more tens or hundreds—

Mr REGAN: I cannot speculate on that. I think we explained that there are a number of steps that you would need to go through over time, and we have not done that calculation.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: On the question I asked you at the start of proceedings about how long are the State highways in total, can you give us a ballpark figure?

Mr REGAN: I have not got that yet.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I do have one, but I would much prefer yours.

Mr REGAN: Let us hope they are the same.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I certainly hope so.

Mr REGAN: I am sure somebody is adding it up at the moment.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Very good. I am relieved to hear it.

Mr REGAN: I will give it to you as soon as I have it.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But you are less than 400 kilometres into what are thousands and thousands of the State's highways.

Mr REGAN: Yes. But, clearly, different parts of the highway network have different risks. One of the things that we have also been doing is looking at where alternative routes are available so that there are options for access and egress—not necessarily on the highway, but on an alternative route—if there is a challenge in a particular section. It goes to the risk-based nature of looking at the overall issue and the intent of what Minister Constance asked us to look at, which is to improve the ability for people to get in and out and for goods to get in and out.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, I have to pull you up there. He did not ask you to improve the risk; he asked you to clear 40 metres each side of every State highway. He asked Secretary Staples to do that, and then Secretary Staples was sacked. I think the department's view has been very reasonable, but I cannot accept the position you have just put then.

Mr REGAN: That is the approach we have taken.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, and that has been commendable. Ms Nelson, what sort of special permits might have been required?

Ms NELSON: What do you mean?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You referred to special permits that might be required for some of this clearing to happen. What sort of special permits might have been required?

Ms NELSON: Might have been required or were required?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To implement the Minister's direction—his original direction.

Ms NELSON: I would have to go back and have a look at what that specific advice was.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Great, if you could take that on notice that would be useful.

UNCORRECTED

Ms NELSON: Sure.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: To fully carry out the Minister's direction, what legislation would have been required to be changed?

Ms NELSON: I can have a look at the advice that we provided but we did not quite ask it in that way. We sort of asked what could we do, what envelope do we have to work in if I want to get things happening very quickly because we were really cognisant of preparing for the next bushfire season. We are really cognisant of that both from making sure we were ready for the next bushfire season but also from the community's perspective that we were visibly ready for the next bushfire season. There are a whole lot of things that we did within the department to get the network ready for that. The advice we sought was very much about, "In the next sort of six to nine months I have got a window. What is possible? Tell me the quickest way home here."

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Just to turn to some of the practical problems that implementing this might create, Minister Toole put a couple on the record. He said at Jenolan Caves, clearing on the slopes there might destabilise the slope. That would be the case in a range of places but that is a very prominent example. He talked about the Explorers Tree. It is being removed but had it not been removed it would have to be cut down and moved in any case.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: It was concrete.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is a tree though. A lot of these highways go through sensitive koala habitat, often that is near the State's highways. There are places in the State like the mid North Coast or the south-west of Sydney where that would be very sensitive. They are the sorts of practical problems that you would have been trying to navigate. Is that correct?

Ms NELSON: Yes, I guess we took a slightly different approach. Our approach was very much to try to understand the outcome we were trying to deliver.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is possibly why the secretary is different, but go on.

Ms NELSON: The conversations had around vegetation management and around corridor resilience and how we prepare ourselves for the next bushfire season were very much around, "Talk to me about what problem we are trying to solve here." It was twofold. It was: We are concerned about the ability for people to quickly evacuate and we are really concerned that, with some of the transport network and some of the real strategic corridors, it took such a long time to return them to traffic. When we understood that then I went and talked to a lot of the people that were involved in those bushfires to really try and unpack that.

For example, I actually went and talked to some of the staff that were involved in clearing the Gwydir Highway; it was closed for a number of weeks. They were talking to me about some of the very large trees that were down on the road that could just not be pushed off it and they had to start cutting up, and that days and even a week later they were cutting into those trees and reigniting fires. That was the kind of feedback that we were getting. Then it was, okay, this is the outcome, this is the feedback, this is the advice from legal environment. Okay, now what do we do? First thing is: Let's step back; we cannot do everything at once. We cannot do everything between now and the next bushfire season, so how do we prioritise?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Really, you are putting a stronger position than that. You are really saying, "We cannot do everything." Are you not?

Mr REGAN: Cannot do everything immediately.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Okay, so to that point, at what point will the Minister's directive that all State-managed highways be cleared 40 metres either side happen? Is there a point where that will happen, Mr Regan?

Mr REGAN: I think there has been a lot of further dialogue and discussion since then and the response from Mr Staples to Minister Constance and Minister Toole set out some key aspects of where we were going in those three areas and we have continued to work down the path and continued dialogue. I am not sure that—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Why has this not been withdrawn in writing then?

Mr REGAN: I think we are continuing to work on the issue and the outcome that is trying to be achieved.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: While that is a rational position, it is just not where the Minister was at when he turned up on 25 February. He said:

... if we do not pull the trees back off those roads in advance of the next round of firestorms, then we could end up with a very serious tragedy.

UNCORRECTED

He also said:

I am not going to ... stand by. I do not care who is in the way.

That is his view, not "This might happen at some point down the track." He wants this done. That was the view he put to us and I feel certain he has put to you. There is not really a point in your description, though, where this is finished, this is complete, this is done on the timetable you are outlining, is there?

Mr REGAN: As I said, we are working in the context of the outcome that was sought and to reduce the risk, and we do not interpret that in the way that you are. We are trying to reduce the risk of the corridors being blocked or being blocked at length, which is what the Minister asked us to do.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Secretary, in addition to the comments that Minister Constance made to us in estimates, afterwards in the media he has made the same point that he expects the trees to come down. Did you have discussions with him about this after estimates prior to him making those further comments?

Mr REGAN: We have had some further discussion. As I said, we are working with both Ministers' offices around continuing the program on both trying to reduce the risk and to make the corridors more resilient, and those discussions I presume will be ongoing.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Sure. Mr Regan or Ms Nelson, insofar as the advice about the environmental concerns or factors that may require consideration in implementing either the Minister's original direction or the strategy pursued by the department, did Minister Constance seek any advice about environmental impacts from the department prior to 27 February 2020?

Mr REGAN: I am not aware.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Is that you are not aware or?

Mr REGAN: No, I am not aware of any being sought, but I am not aware. I was not in the role at the time and Ms Nelson was not employed by us.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Can you take that on notice to inquire into whether any environmental impact advice was sought by Minister Constance or his office prior to 27 February?

Mr REGAN: I presume you mean sought from the department.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Yes.

Mr REGAN: Yes, I can take that on notice.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Ms Nelson, did you have any meetings with DPIE in the process of developing this strategy?

Ms NELSON: I did not but one of my team did. So one of my executive directors who has carriage for this program, he did meet with DPIE, yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: What was their advice to him in terms of the original instruction? Was that the matter that advice was sought on?

Ms NELSON: The conversation with DPIE was around the fact that we were developing this program and we would like to work with them. It was more around that. I do not think it was specifically—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: In order to implement the Minister's original instruction, were you required to undertake an environmental impact statement or did it require an environmental impact statement of any legal form?

Ms NELSON: As I have said, our approach was very much around sitting down with Minister Constance and Minister Toole, understanding their outcomes and then putting together a program that we thought would address those outcomes. Vegetation management was a part of that but there are a series of other initiatives that we have put forward to them.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Sure. No, I get that.

Ms NELSON: And we are providing regular updates and we are refining that as we go. As Mr Regan said, I do not think that this is a program that will have a sort of absolute end date. It is something that we are developing and that we will incorporate into lots of things that we do in the future, including things like how we design major projects moving forward, the material that we use to build different things, how we think about alternate evacuation routes. We are now looking at projects that we have got coming up. Can we include laydown areas for emergency helicopters, for emergency vehicles? All of these are kind of part of this program.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: This program legally derives its authority from the Roads Act 1993. Is that correct? What head of power are you relying on?

Mr REGAN: It is not a specific program. There are a series of activities that are going on here and they have different aspects. It depends on a number of factors along different routes. I do not think there is any single head of power in that regard.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Let us be very specific about this. After the triage process that you just described about a tree, if you decide that the tree needs to come down, under what authority are you taking that tree down?

Ms NELSON: I would have to double-check, but I think it is under the Roads Act.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: It is under the section of the Roads Act that allows you to manage safety risk, is that presumably correct?

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: When Mr Staples says he has limited power to establish a 40-metre clearance zone, he is interpreting that section of the Roads Act, I presume?

Mr REGAN: We cannot speculate on that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To be fair, I am not asking you to speculate.

Mr REGAN: No, but you are asking Mr Staples' view.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did you help Mr Staples prepare this letter on the twenty-seventh, Ms Nelson?

Ms NELSON: I would have provided advice to him around the program.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did you help draft the letter?

Ms NELSON: Not that I recall.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: But you would have seen the letter before it was sent?

Ms NELSON: I cannot be sure, but I definitely saw it after.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I presume that before Mr Staples had told Minister Constance his view that Transport for NSW has limited power to establish a 40-metre clearance under the Roads Act 1993, that would have been informed by some legal advice?

Ms NELSON: As I said, as part of the development of the program and as part of the conversation with both of the Ministers' offices and the other agencies that we engaged, we sought all sorts of advice to put together the program and to work out what we would deliver, how we would deliver it, how we would resource it.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I do not doubt you, Ms Nelson. But I am asking you specifically: Did you seek specific legal advice about whether or not clauses of the Roads Act could be used to implement a 40-metre clearance zone?

Ms NELSON: As I said before, that was not how the question was asked to legal. It was asked in the context of: We would like to do some additional vegetation management to assist in the outcomes that I have talked about, improving evacuation routes and resilience of network. I have a window between now and the next bushfire season, tell me what I can do inside that window, what is legally available to me without starting to then trigger other requirements that take longer.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Would the introduction of a 40-metre clearance zone either side of the highway require a legislative amendment to the Roads Act 1993, Mr Secretary or Ms Nelson?

Mr REGAN: It may do, and I think that what Ms Nelson is referring to, that longer term you can achieve different outcomes if you can—

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Change the law.

Mr REGAN: —change some of the constraints that are there. It is not just a legal issue. That may relate to property acquisition or to other consents, and in certain areas you probably would require other consents and further environmental consents. I think that is what was set out in the letter Mr Staples sent to the Ministers, that there are other activities that could take place going forward that would take longer in time. I think that is the key

UNCORRECTED

issue, that we were trying to address this in steps around what could be achieved in what order. It does not say it cannot be achieved, but you would need to take additional steps in order to do that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Insofar as the Minister issued you this instruction, do you know which authority the Minister was relying upon to issue this instruction to the department?

Mr REGAN: No. The context here is that clearly we interact with both the Ministers on a daily basis and there are all sorts of communications that come between the department and the Ministers and discussions, whether they be the signing of briefing notes, whether they be requests or instructions or directions, there is a spectrum of interactions. I think you are sort of putting a specificity on that that is not the way that we interpreted this.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Where do you interpret this on that spectrum?

Mr REGAN: As we said before, that we took this as a request for us to reduce the risk around trees blocking the corridors and we are working to do that. We have taken the intent of what we were requested and Mr Staples was instructed to do and worked to achieve that and set out the constraints in a series of steps that would need to be addressed in order to achieve it.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I have a couple of questions around the non-disclosure, going back to the Eden-Canberra railway. I understand that you are essentially trying to tidy a mess that was not your making. What mechanisms do you have in place if these people who viewed the documents refuse to now sign the confidentiality agreement, post obviously viewing the documents? How do you propose to put the genie back in the bottle?

Mr REGAN: We would hope that people would understand that if they have been shown a document that they should not have, they will agree to keep it confidential.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Is there anything that you can do to—

Mr REGAN: I would have to look whether there is any further kind of action we could take, but we will certainly have those discussions. I do not think it is something I can really speculate on but I am happy to take it on notice.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: That would be good.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I ask Ms Nelson, when you took that advice, what threatened species did you have to take into consideration as you then adopted that risk-based approach to this?

Ms NELSON: I am not trying to be cute or anything, but I guess we took the view—at that time you have got to remember within Transport this was such a big issue. I walked into this department—the issue of bushfires—we had hundreds of staff involved right on the front line a little bit traumatised by the whole activity. We were very much keen to engage with as many people as we could to understand what we needed to do better for next time. We very much focused on what we could do. I know it sounds sort of strange but rather than focusing on what we could not do, we were really focused on what we could do, and where do we need to focus our attention.

We did that by taking lots of inputs and lots of advice and then taking a very much risk-based approach to say what can we do and what can we do between now and the next bushfire season. That was stage one. Then we have continued to do things. As Mr Regan said, we continue to update the Ministers' offices and we continue to liaise with those other groups and our staff about what we are doing—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is useful context, but I am asking a specific question: Which threatened species did you have to take advice about that might be potentially impacted as you adopted your risk-based approach? I am happy for you take that on notice.

Ms NELSON: I might have to take it on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: There have been 350 kilometres dealt with already, the Princes and Gwydir highways. When will we get to the State's other highways—soon, never?

Mr REGAN: It is an ongoing challenge that we are working through. We do not have a time frame as to highway by highway; we are working that through. Clearly, there are challenges. It is weather dependent in some respects and we are trying to get what we can done on a risk-based approach before we end up in another situation. Hopefully, we do not end up in a situation as severe as we were in before.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: At the rate you are going I estimate it will probably take about 35 years to complete the program. Do you want to take on notice how long?

UNCORRECTED

Mr REGAN: We have not done an estimate of how long it will take because it is very case by case and you have different types of vegetation. There are State highways where there are no trees on either side. Simple maths is probably not the right approach.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So it may be quicker?

Mr REGAN: That part would be definitely quicker. There might be other issues there, but that part would be quicker.

Ms NELSON: I think it is important to recognise as well, though, we do have an ongoing vegetation management program.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I agree with that.

Ms NELSON: That is now informed by this process that we have gone through as a very specific initiative. What we will be doing moving forward is looking at the State again, see where the vegetation load is, see where the bushfire risk is, to understand what our vegetation management program is for the year ahead. But I think moving forward it will be—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That program will roll on at an undetermined cost and undetermined time frame. The Minister is frustrated but at no point are we going to see 40 metres on either side of these highways all the trees razed as they would be under the powerlines? That will not happen under the program that is being directed, Mr Regan? That is a fair statement, is it not?

Mr REGAN: It is not the approach we are taking that we have been describing to you just now because we are working through that risk-based approach. I would note though that in some cases—you see the challenge here is that where we are building new infrastructure, new State highways, it is clearly a very different situation because we are often clearing the path and we are putting in place the environmental protections on the way through. That is why I say it is not a matter of simple maths. The challenge is always much higher where we are retrofitting into an existing network. It is not just roads. We have got similar challenges, particularly, for example, on the Blue Mountains where we have rail lines. We are actually trying to work out how to make it more resilient. It is really a balancing act and a judgement call. So that is what we are working through. It is not a matter of there being a sort of closed date on a program because we have, and always have had, an ongoing vegetation management aspect of road and rail maintenance.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to finish on this. I accept that you do not want this to be about simple maths, but I am working with a solar calculator and you are working with an entire department. I encourage you to take the total cost and the total timeline on notice.

Mr REGAN: I think we have explained the steps we are going through at the moment. The total timeline and cost is not something we have calculated.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can you give us the total cost within these forward estimates? You must have a figure for that?

Mr REGAN: No, we have not calculated that yet.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Mr Staples' letter mentioned the figure of \$30 million. He said that Transport for NSW intends to initially direct \$30 million over two years. That is just one of the aspects.

Mr REGAN: That is right.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: We also understood there was an additional \$10 million. Is that \$10 million from that 30?

Ms NELSON: Yes. This year we are spending \$10 million additionally on vegetation management. But that \$30 million will be across all of the initiatives over two years.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: So we know at least \$30 million over two years is the cost of this strategy?

Mr REGAN: That is the estimate you refer to. As I say, we do not have a figure calculated at this point and a forward program over the forward estimates at that level of detail, but we will continue to work on that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Accepted. Have you put any budget bids in to assist with this?

Mr REGAN: I think it is something that will be addressed as part of the broader budget process each year.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Just alongside those questions, what cultural impact would the original instruction result in, in terms of disturbance of Indigenous sites or otherwise? Did you seek advice? Did you obtain advice as to whether this would impact on the cultural—

Mr REGAN: Clearly the impact on significant sites from an Indigenous perspective is something we consider, whether it is on a new build or on any piece of work. It is something that we always look through. That would have to be assessed again. Very much it is case by case, location by location. I do not think a sweeping answer does that justice.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To be fair, I am not really asking for a sweeping answer. Ms Nelson, in so far as the strategy that has been adopted, what cultural impact is that having? What steps have been taken to consult with Indigenous communities and others who are impacted?

Ms NELSON: As part of the teams that were involved in doing the vegetation management, the high-risk trees that we have talked about, we have Indigenous advisers inside the department as well as environmental advisers who have helped us through the process. We have also engaged external arborists. There was a team established with all the different disciplines who have been working through those, so we have been really careful.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You consulted with the internal department's Indigenous advisers. What about external advisers?

Ms NELSON: I would have to check.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Will you that on notice?

Ms NELSON: Yes, sure.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Is this work being performed by Transport for NSW staff or have you procured others to do it for you?

Ms NELSON: I believe it is a combination. We have some of our staff working on it but we have used some external providers.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You went to tender to implement this?

Ms NELSON: I would have to check exactly the procurement method that we used.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: You have let contracts to presumably arborists and others?

Ms NELSON: I am not sure. We may have used panel arrangements already in place. I suspect we used panel arrangements but I could not be 100 per cent sure. I am happy to double-check.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Presumably you entered into contracts with them or did you hire them on a job-by-job basis? What exactly have we procured?

Ms NELSON: Again I would have to check what procurement method we used.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am not asking about the method. I am asking you what type of arrangement was entered into. Are they working under a master service agreement, for example, that is already in place with the department? Are they specific contracts for specific work? Is it a rate card?

Mr REGAN: We would be happy to take that on notice. We have arrangements, as Ms Nelson mentioned—panels, individual contracts. Some of these people are internal, some external expertise. It is not dissimilar to the same advice that we get when we are in the planning and implementation of new projects. So some of this resource we have available to us internally and externally. There may or may not be individual arrangements but we can take it on notice and revert on that.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Will you take on notice the number of contracts that have been entered into as part of this program and with whom they have been entered into, what the contract duration is for each of them?

Mr REGAN: We will look to see the extent to which they are individually identifiable purely under this program. I think some of them are going to be broader based than just associated with this particular aspect because it is a similar piece of advice around impact.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am very happy for you to provide it at a general level. Perhaps what we can use is whatever contract you would otherwise have to disclose on the Government Information (Public Access) Act register under the GIPAA requirements. Perhaps they are the ones we can start with as being threshold. I presume you are complying with the GIPA Act.

UNCORRECTED

Mr REGAN: I presume we are as well.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Yes. To be fair, the Information Commissioner criticised you guys the other day about that so you might want to check. Either way, can we get the list on notice?

Mr REGAN: We will take on notice what we can provide about that.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The Secretary of Transport was removed. Mr Regan, was there concern expressed either from Secretary Staples or from other departmental staff that if this written ministerial directive was not followed there could be implications for the department, there could be consequences?

Mr REGAN: Not that I am aware of.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Ms Nelson, did you have conversations about this with Mr Staples?

Ms NELSON: Yes, many.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I presume that that was part of your reporting arrangements?

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: At any point did Mr Staples express to you that the department could not implement the Minister's original instruction?

Ms NELSON: As I said, the conversations were very much about what our response would be to bushfires, and what the program of activities would be around that. So the interactions we had were building up what that program was, and then reporting back to him about how we were going, what support he could provide. That was the nature of the interactions.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Did he pass on a view to you that the Minister's office was dissatisfied with the department's response?

Ms NELSON: No.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: When did you first learn that Minister Constance was dissatisfied with the department's response?

Ms NELSON: I did hear his estimates comments the other week. I have been in meetings with him around this and he has not expressed any sort of significant dissatisfaction.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: The first time you heard about his dissatisfaction was when we asked him?

Ms NELSON: I think, it would be fair to say that in some of those conversations we have had with him there were lots of questions and lots of, "Why can't you do this? Could you do that? What about this?" But we tried to focus very much—and my approach generally is very much around, "Let me understand the outcome you are looking for and then you help you find options and ways to get there." I sort of go to the glass half-full all the time and say, "What can we do? Here's what we can do. Let's give that a try and then let's see." So we have sort of taken the approach as well to say, "Okay, we have done this now. What do we do next? Where do we go next?"

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: To be abundantly clear, Ms Nelson, no-one is implying anything to do with either your professionalism, Mr Regan's professionalism or the department's professionalism in this matter whatsoever. The question was, the first time you understood Minister Constance to be dissatisfied was when he told us in budget estimates?

Ms NELSON: In any sort of significant way, that would be correct.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Ms Nelson, earlier you talked about the vegetation management program. One of the substantial fuel-load issues during the fires was actually woody weeds. Does the eradication of woody weeds such as lantana and blackberries come under that program?

Ms NELSON: Under this corridor resilience program?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The vegetation management program you were talking about earlier.

Ms NELSON: The vegetation management program that is in the bushfire resilience work is really about those high-risk trees and because the purpose of that program is really around some of those key activities, like evacuation routes and restoring the network as quickly as possible. Then we have a separate vegetation management program, as I am sure you are aware, that looks more generally at vegetation management and vegetation control. But this program was very much some new activity around really thinking it through, with the experience of having gone through those bushfires and having quite a different experience than previously. When

UNCORRECTED

I talked to the staff previously it had been very much, "Oh yes, trees have always come down but in the past we get a front loader and we just bulldoze through and the road gets open pretty quickly." Whereas the experience this time was quite different. So the work in this program was to address that quite different experience that we had.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am probably one of the few MPs who bang on about this all the time, and I have been for many, many years. The agencies have a responsibility for weed management. When people talk about fuel loads in bushfires it is not just tree growth. It is actually substantially woody weeds. I would suggest that after the bushfires one of the lessons we have learnt is that we actually have to do more with government land in the eradication of woody weeds such as blackberries, briar bush and lantana. I guess if you could just take it on notice and tell me how much we have increased the funding for weed maintenance and the agencies, Mr Regan, that would be really good.

Mr REGAN: Yes, we will take on notice what our funding and expenditure is.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, and not just for roads but the rail corridors as well. I know some of the corridors are managed by someone else.

Mr REGAN: Yes, we will look at what we can provide you on that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you very much.

Mr REGAN: I do not think we have anyone here with us who has got that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That would be good if you could take it on notice.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: The blackberries have gone nuts after the fires.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Oh, they are unbelievable.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: With all that rain.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: After the fires and rain they are back to where they were. I want to go back to this Deloitte document that I was talking to the Minister about this morning. Being upfront, I am pretty gobsmacked that a document that was delivered to the Government on 17 January 2020 finds its way to the Minister's desk the same week that I get a GIPAA result back with the document. Mr Regan, when was the Deloitte report on the Transport for NSW block grant and repair programs commissioned—I suspect you might have to take it on notice—but when was it commissioned and when was it actually received into the agency?

Mr REGAN: I will take on notice the exact date, but I would note that the report, which was received and written in 2020—our priority last year was bushfire resilience and stimulus. I think we actually increased the level of funding to councils around roads through stimulus packages during last year. It is not uncommon for the agency to get advice on reports that are not shared immediately or ever with the Minister's office. You would imagine that with the size of the business that we are operating in there are lots of reports.

The Deloitte report that you refer to is an external consulting report. No decisions have been made around block and REPAIR grants. The Government has not asked us for detailed advice or decisions. To be absolutely clear, there have been no decisions made around either of those programs. The report was assisting the thought processes and looking at options. A lot of that work was put on hold because our focus was switched to stimulus and other measures. There is currently no decision or proposal to change block and REPAIR grants.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Was this report mentioned in any way in the annual report?

Mr REGAN: I am not aware.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You can allay my cynicism, but was this report provided to the Minister's office because of the GIPAA?

Mr REGAN: I am not aware of that, either.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I just find it coincidental.

Mr REGAN: But to be clear, no decisions have been made in that regard.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The Minister made it clear that he has not had a chance to read it yet.

Mr REGAN: That is right. We have not given the Minister recommendations, either.

Ms NELSON: And we have not been asked for recommendations. I think the other thing in the last 12 months to note is that this year we are forecasting to more than double our distribution of funds to councils. The biggest issues that we are facing are really around working with them to help them spend that money.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But that is not the block and REPAIR grants; it is money coming from other programs.

Ms NELSON: As you would be aware, with councils there are a number of different funding streams to them—quite a significant number. Certainly over the past 12 months our focus in working with council has been really around that stimulus funding and working with them as a key delivery partner on how we get those small jobs happening as quickly as possible to create jobs. I think, in general terms, both us and the councils have done a really fantastic job. We have seen some great projects delivered tout de suite, delivering some local jobs on the ground.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Regan, I just want to now go to the BCR process for the River Street bridge. Can you explain to me what the catalyst was to revisit the BCR for the River Street bridge? Originally, in the response to the question on notice there were actually two BCRs for River Street bridge: 1.3 and 1.5.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: This is in Dubbo?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In Dubbo, yes. There were BCRs of 1.3 and 1.5. What was the catalyst or the reason to revisit the BCR for the River Street bridge and not the other projects?

Mr REGAN: My understanding is that those two BCRs that you refer to reflect different cost estimates for the River Street bridge option.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They are substantially different. There is a period of time between one and the other.

Mr REGAN: Yes, and they reflect a different view on cost.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But I guess I am trying to get to the bottom of what the rationale was for having two BCRs?

Mr REGAN: Because further work was undertaken and the cost estimate was firmed up, the BCR was recalculated based on a revised cost estimate.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The revised BCR then arises once the decision has been made to progress the project past the first gate, I suppose you would call it. It is then reassessed?

Mr REGAN: In that development process on a project there are a number of gates and levels of iterative development. We go through a process of a gate zero, a gate one—strategic business case, a gate two through to the final business case. Generally, during that process there is a broad-based options analysis that looks at a range of options or solutions, which sometimes could even, depending on the project, look even across modes or across ways to achieve the same outcome. What we are trying to achieve is to, at that strategic business level, identify broad-based solutions that would achieve a particular outcome.

At a final business case level there is a lot more detail. You have looked at the individual constraints, challenges or opportunities of a smaller number of options, and sometimes that will then narrow down to one or two options on which you have done a more detailed analysis. The benefits associated with different options will potentially vary, as will the costs. We would normally, at a minimum, calculate a strategic business case BCR and then a final business case BCR. Then after a project is developed we also look at sort of a post-delivery benefits realisation, where we seek to look back in time, with the benefit of further knowledge, to reassess that. Where the scope or the cost estimates change during that time we would look at different BCRs. I think, in the case of the River Street bridge in Dubbo, that is what you are referring to.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. I can take, then, from your response that it is not an unusual process to have followed—to have a second BCR?

Mr REGAN: No.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Actually, I think in the question on notice it is an FBC or something, or FBR—

Mr REGAN: Yes, it is not unusual. In fact, most of our projects would go through an iterative development, so you are looking at different options but also a level of development of each option. At different points in time—particularly strategic business case and final business case—the BCR would normally be refined.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the same thing would happen, for instance, with something like the Singleton bypass?

Mr REGAN: Yes, I would imagine so. I do not know for sure, but I would imagine so.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is another example of where that would go.

Mr REGAN: Yes. What you are trying to do in that regard is look at the relative benefit and cost, and how that changes over time.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: We have had Mr Allaway sitting there most of the day.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: I was just thinking that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you do not mind, Mr Regan, through you I might just help Mr Allaway fill in the next 10 minutes or so.

Mr REGAN: I am sure Mr Allaway would appreciate the opportunity to answer your questions.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Hopefully these are the questions for Mr Allaway. Are you actually responsible for the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor?

Mr ALLAWAY: No. NSW TrainLink is the passenger transport operator on that line, so that would be owned by Australian Rail Track Corporation [ARTC].

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: ARTC have got that. What about the Maldon-Dombarton railway line corridor?

Mr ALLAWAY: They will all be managed by other rail infrastructure managers.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. The Hunter—

Mr ALLAWAY: I can eke this out for longer than 10 minutes on something else, though.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, we have got a few more. That is okay.

Ms NELSON: The Lower Hunter Freight Corridor, we have actually got \$13 million allocated for planning and community consultation later this year.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: For later this year?

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: As in the second half of the year, or just later in the year?

Ms NELSON: Later this year.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, that is all right. It is not a trick question.

Ms NELSON: Preservation of that corridor is an action out of the NSW Freight and Ports Strategy and the State Infrastructure Strategy.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Who is responsible for the Hunter-Orana fuel pipeline project? Does that fit anywhere?

Ms NELSON: I do not know about that. We might have to take that on notice.

Mr REGAN: Yes.

Ms NELSON: We might have to take—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Has the research been released, essentially, on that project?

Mr REGAN: Okay. We will take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, thank you. And, Mr Allaway, the new train—what are they called, the regional passenger trains or IPTs?

Mr ALLAWAY: Is it the regional rail fleet?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. So, the delivery dates and the documents—we explored this at the last estimates so essentially it is pretty much the same questions. What is the status update on the delivery and commissioning of those?

Mr ALLAWAY: I might be able to pass to my colleague on the delivery, on the infrastructure elements. As far as the rail operator is concerned, we are still on track for the ultimate delivery in 2023. We have also undertaken user acceptance testing on the regional rail fleet, which is a pretty good example of where you take a mock-up, which is at Bathurst at the moment, and you run staff through that particular cycle of it. They can see different types of aspects of the particular train, are able to give comments on it. We have moved disability groups

UNCORRECTED

as well through to have a look at what is happening with that particular train and then they can look at the amenities that are on it, they can look at the comfort and ride, the quality of the seats, for instance. They can look at cab layout, if it is a member of staff, and we are going through an iterative process of that at the moment. But the ultimate delivery—I am sure my colleague from Infrastructure and Place can answer better on the delivery aspects to that—but from an operator stance we are still basing it on 2023 for a launch.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can I just clarify, so I can get the terminology right? You say delivery in 2023, but is that when they will be commissioned for service as well? That is the operational delivery date.

Mr ALLAWAY: Yes. That is when you will physically see a train in service, the first one.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: Just before March.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is okay. I was going to ask that question, Mr Mallard. You are all over it.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: The ribbon-cutting.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So then the infrastructure adjustments are going to be required to run this fleet.

Mr REGAN: Yes. I can certainly answer in regards to the key piece of the infrastructure that has been developed for the regional rail, which is the maintenance facility in Dubbo. The manufacturing of that is progressing as we speak and is on target.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is on target. Okay, thank you. So there are a number of other—I have started this process. The school bus seatbelt contract or tenders went out late last year. Are we using New South Wales-made seatbelts retractors and seatbelt mechanisms? Are they made in New South Wales or have we sourced them from somewhere else?

Mr REGAN: I think this one is for Ms Wise.

Ms WISE: Yes, certainly. I would have to take about the specific seatbelt mechanism on notice. We are using throughout the program a range of suppliers and installers and retrofitters. Some are New South Wales-based, some are just over the border in Queensland, but there is a range of service suppliers that we are using as part of the program.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And is one of the requirements of the tender or the contract that has been put in place with those providers that they use New South Wales labour or can the Queensland operators take the buses interstate to fit the seatbelts?

Ms WISE: As I understand it—so some of the companies would have operations in both States, so they would be both in New South Wales and in Queensland. In terms of when the program was initially set up, that was some years ago and I was not involved at the time so I am not sure what the specific requirements would have been at the front end. But I can say that the suppliers that we use, both in terms of the people doing the work to fit the buses out with seatbelts, there is a lot of them in New South Wales and, from memory, there have been some in south-east Queensland as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And what is the completion date for this existing contract that is in place? I think there are five or six providers.

Ms WISE: In terms of the program, we are due to have all the buses retrofitted with seatbelts by the end of this year.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So December 2021. If you could take that other element on notice.

Ms WISE: I will see what we can provide.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do not rush to get it by the end of the day. Unlike my colleague I have a little degree of patience for some of these matters. Now I want to go to Milton-Ulladulla. I was down there talking to some of the local people and they have raised a number of issues about the Milton-Ulladulla bypass. Initially there were some concerns raised about the preferred option survey, which I have with me. The concerns are particularly at—I said it is Burrill Lake but I got chipped down there: It is "Bur-reel" Lake, I think they say. Anyway, I will say Burrill Lake because that is what everyone knows. That community, for instance, is quite concerned about the proposal. It cuts to a bit of what was said earlier today by the Minister about some of these communities on the South Coast having one road in and it is the same road out. The issues were highlighted during the bushfire. What they are saying is this is a real opportunity to fix that as we do that bypass construction. Is that the type of thing that will be included as a part of this project?

UNCORRECTED

Ms NELSON: Sorry, is what going to be included?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Providing these communities that currently have one road in and the same road out off the highway. During the bushfires this was a serious issue for these communities and they are saying to me they think that this is an opportunity, with the construction of the Milton-Ulladulla bypass—in fact, that whole highway down to Batemans Bay is a real opportunity to fix that long-term issue, a lesson arising from the bushfires. Are we going to do that as a part of this exercise?

Ms NELSON: So, as you have been aware, we are currently—consultation around the different options for Milton-Ulladulla has been out with the community over the last couple of months and it closed on 14 February. We received circa 2½ thousand submissions, which is a very large number. So I agree with you: It says it is a very engaged community down there with a lot of views. So we are currently working through those submissions. Obviously community consultation will be part of our consideration and you are 100 per cent right: Part of our consideration in developing that project down there, and certainly the project team down there are very aware of the bushfire experience of those communities.

As I said previously around the corridor resilience, it is now something that we are much more consciously aware of and think through as we plan out these projects. So it certainly will be one of the considerations. The community consultation will be a consideration, bushfire resilience will be a consideration, traffic studies will be a consideration. You know, there will be lots of things that are considered but we are very well aware that certainly there are a lot of different views down there. It is something that we are going to have to carefully step through with the community.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. I accept that there are a lot of different views down there that may have been conveyed to me. So have we locked in the actual corridor?

Ms NELSON: No.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So we have not even locked that in?

Ms NELSON: No.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the people who are engaged in the consultation process can genuinely feel that their input is being considered in determining whether it is the existing corridor through to any number of other options that were put to me, including one that was a greenfield site in the Far West.

Ms NELSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So that is all part of it, that is still on the table.

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What is the time frame then for this next phase? You have got the consultation—

Ms NELSON: So we will go through the consultation process. We are looking to commence a lot of construction on all of these different projects on the Princes Highway by the end of 2022 so we do have a fair way to go now in considering the consultation. Then we move to detailed design, you know, so there will be a number of straps before we get to construction, with the target of construction being the end of 2022.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. So I can convey to that community that there is still a way to go.

Ms NELSON: Absolutely.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Nothing has been locked in yet.

Ms NELSON: That is correct.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. Thank you. I think I might actually go to the Community Road Safety Fund.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Okay. Very good. Just before we do that, Mr Regan, I might just check if you have that letter at this point.

Mr REGAN: I do not at the moment.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No worries. Okay.

Mr REGAN: It is coming.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Very good.

UNCORRECTED

Mr REGAN: And I have various numbers around lengths of roads in New South Wales.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am all ears.

Mr REGAN: But I do not have the precise answer for you in that we have the length of the New South Wales road network: 185,000 kilometres, but that includes local, Federal and State. There are about 18,000 kilometres of State roads but I do not think that is the number you are after, either, because you are after State highways.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, exactly.

Mr REGAN: So I am going to continue to see whether I get it this afternoon. If not, it will come more precisely on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. And, as I have indicated, I am happy with a general number.

Mr REGAN: So it is south of 18,000.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, agreed.

Mr REGAN: We are just working out exactly what to include—and, to confirm, I presume you are looking at outside of metropolitan areas?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, I am looking at the State's highways. Just that State highway figure. Although, I think that is a fair point you are making. Over to you, Mick.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Carlon, after the meeting on Monday—and thank you for your attendance—I printed out a couple of documents that you pointed me to. I would like to go through, if I can, and start with a number of the expenditure items from this year. In our discussion with you and then this morning, I gave the Minister a chance to say about the black spot funding and the other funding that is being used. Do you have anything to add to what was said this morning about that program and the quantum of other funding streams?

Mr CARLON: Yes. I think it is probably useful to give a bit of context for the issues that were raised at Minister Constance's session. There were documents which were cited indicating that over a series of years there were decreases in the allocation for the black spot element of the Safer Roads Program. I would like to just start by pointing out that over the past decade there has been a significant change in the way in which we are funding the reduction of trauma in terms of infrastructure for the road network itself. I highlight the document that was produced in 2018 by Austroads, which provides a review of the way in which we now fund for management of risk across the network.

The rationale for that is that the trauma is actually distributed right across the whole of the road network. The traditional approach of black spot funding around clusters of crashes served Australia pretty well over the past 30 years. But certainly in the past 10 years, where we have now a significant reduction in the number of fatal crashes in particular—as we have just heard, we have about 180,000 kilometres of road network in New South Wales and around 300 fatalities. The distribution of those is quite infrequent. You would find, for example, a study which demonstrates that for intersection fatality crashes, 79 per cent of those intersection fatality crashes did not have a fatality crash happen at that intersection in the previous five years.

So we have moved now to funding for the prevention of trauma on our network. Corridor approaches, where we, rather than treat an individual black spot where a cluster of crashes might occur, are now rolling out audio tactile across a length of road, or we are putting wire rope barrier across a length of road, or widening shoulders, or treating specific high-risk curves. We have new models for assessing the risk on those high-risk curves and prioritising them. You will see on the lists that you had, where it was indicated what the level of funding was for the black spot program, that all of those other programs, in fact, totalled a significant amount more over time. I point out—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the black spot numbers are going down.

Mr CARLON: I indicate that this year the black spot program—it is all relative to the total amount invested—or the past two years, it actually has gone up. It was \$20.8 million the previous financial year and \$35 million this financial year out of \$258 million. Compared to five years ago, that is around \$226.6 million more this year that we are investing.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Great. Can you just clarify those financial years because these figures have not been public up until now? You are saying the budget for the 2021 black spot funding is \$35 million. Is that correct?

Mr CARLON: Yes.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So that is the budget figure.

Mr CARLON: Out of \$258 million for Safer Roads.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So \$258 million total.

Mr CARLON: Which was announced in the budget announcements for road safety this year.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. I agree with that. And then the other figure—\$20.8 million—is the 2019-20 figure.

Mr CARLON: Yes, out of \$182 million, which, again, was distributed across a whole range of both root based and specific—for example, over the past five years we have improved our evidence base around where intersection crashes contribute to 40 per cent of our serious injuries. We did not have that information previously since we have now got matched data with hospitals and also a much more robust evidence base for serious injuries. So we now have an intersection model where we actually are assessing the risks of intersections. We have a program to fund the sorts of treatments that would reduce the risks and, therefore, the crash outcomes and intersections across the State.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. Sponsorships.

Mr CARLON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The first question is: How do we determine which A-League team, which National Rugby League [NRL] team is sponsored out of this fund? Is there a process for determining how that occurs?

Mr CARLON: Absolutely. There is a really robust methodology for assessing the benefits associated with sponsorships for the exposure and, in particular, the audience that those areas that we are sponsoring might have—in particular, the focus on the sorts of behaviours that we might want to focus on in those particular areas as well. We have had a very longstanding sponsorship arrangement with the New South Wales cricket—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: SpeedBlitz Blues.

Mr CARLON: SpeedBlitz Blues a long time ago, but now Plan B Blues. We are constantly assessing where is the benefit and assessing the investment based on principles that are well understood in terms of the sponsorship benefits for those programs. For example, we also now have, over the past couple of years, developed a sponsorship arrangement with New South Wales Rugby League. We can see a very relevant audience for us in terms of young males and middle-aged males in regional areas across New South Wales where they have a high reach into those communities. People like Brad Fittler and Greg Alexander have talked about their particular story with Ben Alexander's death. That resonates very strongly with that audience and the community. They have been going out in regional areas and actually engaging in those communities, running clinics, and also talking to schools and getting those road safety messages out into the community. They are all assessed in terms of the reach for those messages and the salience at particular target audiences

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you for that. Basically, what you are saying then is you would select a particular rugby league team or A-League team based on where they are located and if there was accident history or something there or a particular road safety matter you want to address, or would you provide the funding to the NRL as a whole, or the Country Rugby League as a whole, to do more broad—

Mr CARLON: These days we have many people come forward suggesting that they would be an appropriate organisation to sponsor.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So it is quite competitive.

Mr CARLON: Each one of those is actually put through a very rigorous process to determine the salience and whether or not there is value for dollar in terms of the reach for the target audience for our particular road safety messaging. That assessment is done by marketing professionals associated with, and sometimes externally verified. The investments are managed in order to achieve the sort of outcomes that we need in terms of education around particular road safety behaviours.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: These sponsorships are then evaluated at the end of each financial year, or at the end of a season if it is rugby league or soccer.

Mr CARLON: There is continued evaluation going on of the outcomes, but at renewal of any contract there is a reassessment of the value and a renegotiation of any contract based on that independent—sometimes, or internal expertise—evaluation of the outcomes.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What is the success of these programs measured against? What is the outcome you are actually after when you evaluate the program? Do you actually go, "We have exceeded our expectations here, we have done well" or "That didn't work so well, we probably need to target this in a different way". What is the outcome you are after?

Mr CARLON: We are after reach for the messages around road safety messaging in the same way that we would for advertising messaging and the reach that we would be looking at for that for a particular audience and demographic. Those measures are included in the agreements that we have with those organisations. Many of them are using their own social media platforms as well, and so there are good metrics about the responsiveness in terms of their social media engagement with people. That said, just as an aside, our road safety Facebook page actually reaches 1.2 million people a week.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Wow.

Mr CARLON: We have very robust metrics around the engagement level. So in terms of that reach, we have around 88,000 positive engagements as a result of that reach in New South Wales around road safety issues. I would also point out this is in a much broader context of the whole education and communications framework, which is outlined within the Road Safety Plan, around creating a stronger culture around safer behaviours and connecting with particular communities that are either most at risk or are high-level influencers in terms of people's attitudes and behaviours with regard to road safety.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are those evaluations—let's just say the sponsorship. I understand you would undertake evaluation of other elements of this fund as well, but let's just say the sponsorship. Are they publicly available or are they kept in-house?

Mr CARLON: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You can take that on notice.

Mr CARLON: I understand that they are certainly in-house.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr CARLON: I will take that on notice, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My next question relates to the risk in sponsoring the NRL or the A-League, for instance. Players from time to time may commit an indiscretion that is alcohol related or they get picked up for speeding or whatever else. Is that part of the evaluation, the damage that sort of activity may create for the State Government through this fund?

Mr CARLON: Absolutely. Over many years, there was not an approach which supported—because of those potential risks—the sort of level of engagement that we currently have with the NRL. It was actually Minister Pavey who, at that time, asked us the question: If this is an audience that is high risk, are they not the part of the community that we most need to engage and actually work with? We would agree with that proposition. In relation to managing those risks, we have a safe-systems approach which is internationally recognised. It recognises that people will make mistakes and people will break the rules, but in doing that they should not pay for those mistakes or breaking the rules with their lives.

So a shared responsibility for the whole of the community—including institutions like rugby league, businesses or government—means that we need to then have accountability within the agreements that we have about what sort of action might be taken. We did have a circumstance where—I am sure he would not mind me mentioning this because it was public knowledge at the time—the CEO of Cricket NSW was caught on his mobile phone. As a consequence of that, the board did a session with him and a series of road safety experts. He actually then did a series of presentations with all the staff within Cricket NSW.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So it was the catalyst for him learning.

Mr CARLON: There was a range of make goods for accepting that a mistake or an offence had been part of that problem, and there were ways we could take that and turn it into a stronger response within the community. We have many people who break the law or make mistakes, and moving people through a process of preventing that from happening again is exactly what the Road Safety Plan is all about.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You have taken on notice whether or not the evaluations are available. I notice that you also conduct program evaluations. In the most recent report—2019 is the most recent one that I could find. I do not think there is a 2020 one yet.

Mr CARLON: I know there has been a question about the framework for reporting. It would be really useful if I could give you a very quick summary of that.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, go for your life. That would be very good.

Mr CARLON: We have a Road Safety Plan New South Wales 2021. It was developed in consultation with 4,000 people across the community, including stakeholders, experts, community and individuals. The reach of the consultation, including surveys, was 20,000 people in terms of developing this plan. The plan very specifically lists all the actions that the Government will take for the five-year period and the Community Road Safety Fund—a commitment of \$1.9 billion at the time of the launch of the plan—was committed to delivering those outcomes and activities in the plan, like the Local Government Road Safety Program officers, the education program within schools for road safety, or the infrastructure programs. So that is articulated in the plan.

Every year the Government then committed to, at the end of the year for the road toll, have a summary document that would be tabled in the Parliament to give an assessment of the trauma outcomes for that year and the financial investment year investment that had happened and completed during that calendar year. So every following year, there should be a report and there is a report that it has been done on 2020. The trauma results and the investments at the end of the financial year 2020, similar to the ones that have been tabled in Parliament each year since the fund was created, will be delivered in this quarter.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In this quarter?

Mr CARLON: Yes. So it provides a summary of the investments and specific examples of the projects, from education through to enforcement through to the infrastructure—as you have got there in the progress report 2019. Meanwhile, in every budget respectively there is an announcement about road safety investment for the year ahead. As I said, on our Facebook and websites we publish all the projects that are happening in the financial year as well. You will see a list on our Towards Zero site of every one of the infrastructure projects that are current. We promote and publicise all the activities from the plan through our Facebook and website, and community engagement activities across the State.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am looking at this report. Let's be clear, it is the *NSW Road Safety Progress Report 2019*. Can you direct me to where the financials are for the expenditure?

Mr CARLON: There is a summary of the financials at the back of each report each year. That was the document that I think you were referring to previously.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So that is the summary.

Mr CARLON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is on the very last page: "Community Road Safety Fund expenditure 2018-2019", but that is just the broad numbers, Mr Carlon. It is the headline numbers, it is not actually a breakdown of the expenditure. Would that be true?

Mr CARLON: You will see a breakdown of the expenditure of every infrastructure project on the Towards Zero website for this year and every individual project and the dollar value for every project.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But they are not tabled as part of this document in the Parliament.

Mr CARLON: No. They are part of our normal budgetary processes in terms of the Transport for NSW budget process, and they are accredited as a normal part of our budgeting and reporting processes internally.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the Auditor-General gets to then peruse these as part of a normal audit for the agency. Is that what happens?

Mr CARLON: Yes, that is the case.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And so the Auditor-General would then provide some sort of statement around the expenditure of the funds?

Mr CARLON: Not specific to the Community Road Safety Fund. However, the Auditor-General has done specific audits on particular programs—for example, an audit of the mobile speed camera program and the recommendations that led to the recent changes to the mobile speed camera program.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But not on the road safety fund itself?

Mr CARLON: No.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In this 2019 progress report on page 30, you talk about the heavy truck safety research, which I think is probably relevant to a lot of the questioning today. In there you talk about that "attitudinal research was undertaken in February 2019 to better understand attitudes and behaviours of heavy truck drivers and other road users". Then it says "Unpublished Research". It goes on: "Taverner Research (2019) Heavy

UNCORRECTED

Truck Safety", and then there are the findings from the research. But if I wanted to look at that research in more detail, is there a link that I can go to to find that more detailed research?

Mr CARLON: Yes. Again, I will take that on notice. There are a number of research reports which are published on our website around the evaluations and research conducted, and I will just take it on notice and double-check whatever is there.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Again, if this is the progress report and there is a body of research there, the link or something there would be beneficial for people to go straight to that research, as opposed to getting out of this and going somewhere else. It would flow for the purposes of what we are trying to do.

Mr CARLON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you take that on notice, that would be—

Mr CARLON: I will take it on notice.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can I chip in briefly. Can I get you to clarify those other numbers for 2019-20, 2020-21, because that is useful. This is the most recent report. Because of the way you have described it is linked, it is a bit of a lagging indicator. What was the total expenditure for the road safety fund, including the camera revenue and the Government revenue in 2019-20?

Mr CARLON: I do not have the exact split for 2019-20 here in front of me. However, it was around 50 per cent. That has been pretty much on average since the fund was actually initiated.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will come back to the split, but I want to know the total for 2019-20. What was the total?

Mr CARLON: My understanding of the total—just give me a moment. I do have that. Do you have another question?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: What I am interested in for 2019-20 and then for the budget for this financial year, what was the total? How much of that was camera revenue and how much was government top-up for those two years?

Mr CARLON: I might take that on notice, if that is okay.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, that is pretty important.

Mr CARLON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If we could get those, that would be good. Mr Carlon, the evaluations of all the other programs, I have spent a bit of time on Black Spot and the sponsorship. For instance, the fatigue program. Would there be ongoing evaluations as in each year you evaluate the program, the outcomes of that particular line item?

Mr CARLON: What we would normally do, and this is based on the Auditor-General's review of the original Speed Camera Strategy as well, is a process evaluation of the new initiatives in order to see that they are operating effectively. But we would not normally do an outcomes evaluation until a policy initiative or program has been in operation normally for around five years, because of the general fluctuations that you might get and the other contributing factors to those outcomes.

We have done some major evaluations—for example, of the high pedestrian activity 40-kilometre zone, which indicated a really significant benefit in terms of the trauma reductions for that. As programs develop, we have evaluation frameworks for those programs and we then do evaluations once we have—what has been recommended is five years of data in order to determine whether or not it is having an impact. Meanwhile, we monitor programs and report on them as they progress.

For example, the mobile phone camera program, we have been monitoring the impact of that program as it rolls out and reporting publicly around the benchmark of 1.2 per cent of people who were offending during the pilot and now the 0.22 per cent of people who are offending as we have started to roll out the program. We have seen a significant reduction in that high-risk behaviour of holding your mobile phone. We are monitoring that across the State and seeing where different outcomes are being achieved, and then managing our communications and other initiatives in order to target areas to continue to develop that program and improve the results.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you talk us through how you would then develop an idea, work up the idea so that over a period of time it may finish up as one of the items that is being funded out of this fund? I am trying to think of something. Let's use the rumble strips as an example. You are rolling out the rumble strips at

UNCORRECTED

the moment across the State. At the commencement of that program, how do you work that up to be funded from this and other areas, and how do you convince the Ministers of the day that it should be a part of the program?

Mr CARLON: There are international and Australian evaluations of the effectiveness of particular treatments like audio tactile, which reduce fatal run-off road crashes by between 25 per cent to 30 per cent. We look over all the international evidence and our own evidence here in Australia. We then use the fatigue-related detail in terms of the crashes and the crashes that happen on the network where they are attributed to fatigue; fatigue is now the second-biggest contributor to fatal crashes at about 19 per cent. We look at those routes where we see particular high volumes of fatigue-related crashes. We look at routes that then have the same characteristics from a risk perspective and prioritise that investment in terms of tackling those routes for the application of audio tactile.

The packages of work are worked up with our regional colleagues and local government as well, who submit applications. We have a project to roll out 3,000 kilometres of audio tactile as part of additional funding that is coming from the commitment of the Government around any additional revenue from the mobile speed camera rollout. So that is how essentially that happens. It is based on sound evidence and research, a thorough analysis of the crash types within our network and also then the assessment of the network and the road environment where it will deliver the greatest benefit.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In the process of working a proposal like that, independent—I don't know—assessment of what you have prepared, how do you do that? Do you engage colleagues in other States? Are there experts in New South Wales that you can call on to test your proposal for rigour and robustness before it goes into a funding phase?

Mr CARLON: Yes. We have our Safer Roads Program. We have a 10-year business case which has been through the Infrastructure NSW [iNSW] process in order to validate the outcomes for that. We have a Towards Zero business case which is, again, published on the iNSW website, which identifies the BCR benefits of the treatments within that business case. We then fund within that envelope of the business case which has been completed and validated for those time frames for that investment. I think I have pointed out in the presentation that I gave to you on Monday the business case for Towards Zero, which includes these treatments—the audio tactile treatments, the high-risk curve treatments, the flexible barrier treatments on the network. Flexible barrier treatments tend to, on their evaluations, give around 95 per cent reduction in fatal crashes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you were to look at the trial of the point-to-point cameras, for instance, somewhere on a road and pitched that to the Minister, what is the process? You have just articulated a number of places, documents that you work to. Whereabouts would you draw that from?

Mr CARLON: Again, you would look at the international research and have a look at the evaluations of similar programs around the world, have a look at our own programs in terms of the camera programs which we have been running here. As I pointed out this morning, in terms of the camera strategy for New South Wales, there is a range of different automated enforcement methods that are used, including mobile cameras and point-to-point cameras for heavy vehicles, which I think was under the previous Government that that program was initially established. Those routes were established essentially because of a significant increase in fatal crashes associated with heavy vehicle crashes.

We saw before the development of the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 a significant increase in the trauma associated with heavy vehicle crashes in the Greater Metropolitan area, and the Government, as part of the plan, committed to rolling out additional lengths within the metropolitan area. So we have been rolling out average speed cameras for heavy vehicles across the Greater Metropolitan area as part of the plan as well, based on the evidence, again, for the trauma and the fit-for-purpose countermeasure, which is depending on this sort of enforcement. The plan also increased and paid for the 50 additional highway patrol officers in regional New South Wales in order to support an additional impact in terms of policing out on the roads in country areas as well. A whole range of countermeasures were considered in the plan and they have been funded, and they are being implemented over the last five years.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might just hand this document up, if that is okay. While am doing that, I will return to what I thought was good news when the Minister announced it earlier. I was asking him about that principle that as fine revenue rises, will the Government contribution to the Community Road Safety Fund continue to rise as well? I thought he was pretty clear that he would support that principle. He would like that money to increase. From the information that is publicly available, that was about 48 per cent in 2018-19. You have said that it is roughly 50-50 in the 2019-2020 budget. If you could take the specifics on notice, we would appreciate it, but broadly it is roughly 50-50. Is that a fair statement about 2019-20 and the budget for 2020-2021?

Mr CARLON: Look over the lifetime of the fund.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Right.

Mr CARLON: Yes. Since I think May 2013 when the fund commenced, about a \$2 billion investment in total and split about 50-50 from fine revenue, which is hypothecated—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So if we were going to assert that principle, you would like to see that travelling at about 50-50 over time?

Mr CARLON: Again, it is a matter of Government policy really: funding arrangements.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, exactly, but it was a matter the Minister ventured into. I had to ask him a couple of times, but he agreed with that.

Mr REGAN: I am not quite sure that is what he said, actually, that it would rise irrespective.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: What did you think he said, Mr Regan?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Why don't you look at the transcript.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I think we should. I do not want to—

Mr REGAN: Perhaps if I could certainly give some context. My understanding is that clearly the reason for that, I guess what you call, underwrite funding through the budget process is so that there can be a consistency of spending. The fund is funded to a level and therefore you can plan and run these programs. Clearly, in a situation where fine revenue is going up, as far as the objectives of road safety is concerned, that is not a good thing because actually that means that more people are committing offences. So the idea of why the scheme is funded is that there is a level of protection around there being some certainty. It may be that if fine revenue goes up, the overall spending within the fund goes up as well or, alternatively, that funding amount is maintained because of the level of certainty that is provided through the budget process.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So you are saying I should not have been as relaxed about the Minister's answer, Mr Regan, given what you know.

Mr REGAN: Whether you are relaxed is up to you. All I am saying is I think the issue as to how that is funded is a Treasury issue because we are given a certainty as to the minimum level of funding for the fund. It sometimes is higher, and it does flow, but it is a Treasury issue as to whether that underwrite is maintained.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want to acknowledge that that is an important clarification. I certainly do not want to misquote the Minister.

Mr REGAN: Let us check the record because I have a slightly different understanding to you.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But it is not theoretical because on the revenue figures that are coming through, it is true that fines are up. I accept the view that maybe they will decline again but already on those figures the total fund was—just rewinding only slightly—\$250 million. You agree, don't you, Mr Carlon, that we will definitely exceed what was the total amount for the fund in fine revenue from cameras over this 12 months? We are really heading into above \$300 million from camera revenue. It is unquestionably where we will end up, so it is not a theoretical—

Mr CARLON: I suppose—a couple of caveats. The revenue that is published on the Revenue NSW website includes the corporate- and business-related fines, which are five times the face value.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am familiar with the fine life cycle.

Mr CARLON: And over a period of three months, as people nominate the driver, those numbers come down to about 20 per cent to 30 per cent in general terms. The funds that eventually go into the Community Road Safety Fund are the fines that are paid at the level at which they are paid. Just to clarify, the 2019-20 is \$344.1 million, of which camera revenue was \$155.9 million.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am happy with those on notice. If you want to give us the specifics on notice, that is helpful.

Mr CARLON: I have given it to you there.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I want the others as well. Fine revenue is going up and what you are saying, Mr Regan, is that it is still a question we should really be putting to the Government as to whether that 50- 50 split Mr Carlon has drawn attention to will be maintained or not. You have not been given any directive or indication from Treasury that it will be. It is more a Government policy decision.

Mr REGAN: I have not heard anything that the level of funding support is going be reduced.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Sure, but it would have to increase significantly, given that we have had \$160 million in fines over seven months, taking into account Mr Carlon's point about the fine life cycle.

Mr REGAN: Clearly our preference is that fine revenue decreases because there are less offences.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am asking the question I asked the Minister, which is: Will the Government cut the proportion so that as fine revenue goes through the roof, they are cutting back the Government contribution, will it drop from 48 per cent?

Mr REGAN: That is a budget question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes. You have not been given any assurance. There is nothing you would take to the bank.

Mr REGAN: No, more the other way around. I am comfortable that the arrangements that are in place are continuing and there is an underwriting of the level of funding required for the road safety fund.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, but you cannot give me any assurance that the Government contribution will be 48 per cent next financial year?

Mr REGAN: That is a matter for the budget process.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, exactly.

Mr REGAN: I am not trying to be cute one way or the other. I cannot comment either way.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You have usefully cautioned me about what I thought was the Minister's very welcome announcement. Mr Carlon, I have just given you that blackspot funding that I put on the record the other day. I ran through it in the agency session. Again, I am happy if you want to do this now or later on notice, but those are the publicly announced blackspot funding figures. I want you to confirm that they are correct. I am happy for you to do that on notice.

Mr CARLON: That is okay. Yes, I am happy to verify those. There is the budget and there is the actuals, so I will validate that figure. Principally because each year, particularly last year with the fires and floods and other things, there were rollovers of some projects into this financial year. I will validate those figures for you.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Thank you for that. Finally, to go to the principle my colleague was outlining. Our real issue here is the argument that you have made about the different way to do things sounds very rational and an argument that is sensible to take to the community. It is very hard to find, for example, this blackspot funding in the detail that is published at the moment. Do you have any objection that you would like to put on the record or any caution to us as we are putting the view to the Parliament and the community that as fine revenue increases it would be good for the community to know more about where this money is going in order to build confidence for these camera programs, which—I want to be clear—the Opposition has supported. Do you have any caution for us as we say, "Look, there should be, gently, some more transparency here."

Mr CARLON: No, transparency is a good thing. I say that in terms of these programs and the way in which we report publicly and we engage with the community. There is a significant amount of publicly available information that we proactively are giving to the community about all of the programs that are actually funded under the Committee Road Safety Fund, and providing a progress report as well as a report that includes how we are tracking in terms of trauma reductions. The Government set, as part of a 10-year strategy, a 30 per cent reduction target; we are currently at 28 per cent and we are on track.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But, to my colleague's point, if I want to go looking in that progress report to find out if my fine is going towards black spot funding, I could not tell, could I?

Mr CARLON: I would have to say that in order to do a summary report, which was what was intended, if we were to look at every one of the literally thousands of projects and initiatives every year—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, I agree.

Mr CARLON: —and put that into a document, I do not know that that would necessarily improve public understanding or access to the information. The progress report, I think, is an excellent summary of the range of activities that are being delivered. I think there is no other jurisdiction in Australia currently that delivers anything like that in terms of public transparency.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you, Mr Carlon. We will finish that there because the clock is ticking and we have other matters. Particularly, I have other matters that relate to a whole range of highways around regional New South Wales, so this could be a bit rapid.

UNCORRECTED

Mr REGAN: Rapid-fire? I also have some responses for you from questions previously taken on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How about we do the responses and then I will move into these respective highway matters.

Mr REGAN: Okay. Some of these will be very quick, and I will throw to some of my colleagues for a couple of them. There was a question around the cost of the regional seniors card contract with Westpac. The contract is held and managed by NSW Treasury. I believe some of those details are commercial in confidence and we do not have that, so that would need to go to Treasury. We were asked about regional transport costs to the public. First of all, with regards to TrainLink trains and coaches, maximum fares for the TrainLink coach and rail network have not increased since 2007. NSW TrainLink continues to offer concessions and discounts to regional customers, off-peak discounts and seasonal promotions of up to 35 per cent.

In terms of regional and rural bus fares, the maximum fares are set independently by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. In the most recent IPART review in December 2020, maximum fares were reduced by up to 50 per cent for medium- to long-distance journeys. No fare increases were made during the review. In the prior IPART review in 2017, maximum fares were reduced on average by 29 per cent. In both those reviews there was a strong focus on affordable pricing for regional demographics and equity of fares between regional and Sydney locations, which led to significant price reductions for customers. In addition—this is on government commitments—the Opal Gold card daily cap, Regional Daily Excursion and Country Pensioner Excursion tickets remain at \$2.50 for travel in regional areas, and that is in addition to the four free pension travel vouchers for travel within regional New South Wales.

On the fast rail strategy, the McNaughton report was commissioned by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the cost of the report is a matter for DPC. We have a couple of answers—I will get my colleagues to answer—but just to confirm, there was a question this morning and we have gone back to check because I am not sure whether we heard it correctly. There was a question about the \$1.6 million for additional bus services; that is \$1.6 billion, not million. I think that might change the nature of the discussion.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: That might give you a little bit more room to play with.

Mr REGAN: I thought I would get that on the record: It is \$1.6 billion. We can give you some detail on that, if you wish.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: If you could give us an itemised—

Mr REGAN: There is a little more room in there.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: There is a lot more room in there.

Mr REGAN: We will take that on notice to come back with a broader breakdown. I will pass to Ms Geraghty for responses on the Parkes bypass and the Peak Hill overtaking lanes.

Ms GERAGHTY: You asked about the progress of the Parkes bypass. We have been undertaking early works on that project since September last year. There are a number of utilities and, in particular, we have a high-pressure gas main that travels between Brisbane and Melbourne. We cross that about nine or 10 times. A tender is out at the moment for a contractor to install bridging slabs over that gas main. Then we are looking to go out to main works tender in the coming weeks. So we are well and truly on track and everything is going well so far.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Ms Geraghty, can I just clarify? There are two components there. One is the cement deck that will have to go across the gas pipe.

Ms GERAGHTY: Gas main, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That would be one contract, and then the main construction will go out—

Ms GERAGHTY: In a few weeks.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: After that, or are you going to do them—

Ms GERAGHTY: The intent is that the main works will start after midyear. At that point, we will have de-risked all of the early works, including the gas main issue, because all of those works will have been completed prior to then.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And the overtaking lane at Peak Hill?

Ms GERAGHTY: Yes. The Newell Highway overtaking lane project—we have completed 17 of the 40, which is going really well. It is being delivered by an alliance, which includes BMD Constructions and SMEC,

UNCORRECTED

I think. With that particular overtaking lane, I was advised that there was a combination of issues. There is never one particular issue. There was a longitudinal seam where the new works were connected into an old piece of road. That seam actually did have a failure point.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It failed?

Ms GERAGHTY: It has failed. There was also an issue with the design of the cross floor, which also was not quite right for the topography. Finally, there were some quality issues with the pavement that we laid for that section. The combination of those factors led to that section having to be removed and replaced. All of that happened over 12 weeks. That is the only section in those 17 that we have completed that has been an issue.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Because of those matters, I gather, then, there would be no sort of penalties or whatever levied against the construction contract for doing that work because they were matters that would have been outside of their control?

Ms GERAGHTY: Not all of those issues, no. Certainly, the design and the quality of the pavement that they laid were issues that were within their control. Under the alliance model and under the alliance contract, there was a process where the costs of that rectification were resolved.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So the taxpayers did not have to pay for the complete reconstruction of that?

Mr REGAN: That is correct.

Ms GERAGHTY: That is correct.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is where I was heading with that.

Mr REGAN: Ms Nelson has a couple of updates as well.

Ms NELSON: Just an update on Gocup and Batlow roads. The Gocup Road concept design was shared with the community in December 2020, and we are doing detailed design at the moment. Target date for start of construction is late 2021 and completion mid-2022, pending weather and approval processes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It can rain and snow down there.

Ms NELSON: It definitely can. Obviously, that is taken into consideration, depending on how wet and how much snow. Batlow Road—you asked about the speed limit. My understanding is that is a permanent speed limit change.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is a permanent speed limit? Okay.

Ms NELSON: Yes. You also asked about McKanes bridge and we heard about the microbats. The microbat issue caused a two-week delay. Full upgrade is expected late 2021. The first stage of the work started in May 2020 and the second stage in January this year, and completion by end of this year, weather permitting.

Mr REGAN: We have got Jervis Bay intersection.

Ms NELSON: Jervis Bay—that was about the completion date. We do not actually have a completion date at the moment because we still have to do the detailed design. As part of that detailed design process, it will set out what the time frame for completion is but targeting to start in late 2022, and we are on track for that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think in that case the community were just alarmed by—

Mr REGAN: That is right—so coming out of planning into construction, 2022.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They can read the transcript and rest assured that it is occurring.

Ms NELSON: Yes. It is definitely occurring and we are well progressed to start construction at the end of 2022.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There are people who ring my office, and probably the Hon. John Graham's office, who will be very happy to hear that that is occurring.

Ms NELSON: It is good feedback for us around that document that has been put out, which is a draft document for consultation. It has made us really think through because, from the planners' perspective, they go zero to 10—they have planning horizons. So they have just put it in, not thinking that it would trigger a community issue. I guess what we have learnt out of this process is it definitely does raise some issues, so we need to be a bit more mindful about that and what we put into those documents.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Very good. Was there anything else, Mr Regan, to tidy up from today?

UNCORRECTED

Mr REGAN: That is my list.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That's it? Well done. Well, we just will not go into—

Mr REGAN: You might have some more for me now.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I might. I have just a couple of matters on the Sturt Highway. Last estimates I raised this issue around the corridor plan that was undertaken through or promised through Wagga of the Sturt Highway. I think it was promised in the election in 2015. I am being told that it still has not been released. It must have been conducted because there was intersection work being done. There must be a corridor plan.

Mr REGAN: I think that is right—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Take it on notice?

Mr REGAN: —but I will take it on notice, unless we have got something we can refer on that straightway.

Ms NELSON: No, I do think we do.

Mr REGAN: I do not think we do. We will take it on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The other one in regard to this stretch of the Sturt Highway through Wagga, the Marshalls Creek Bridge upgrade, was promised in the 2018 by-election and I am told reliably that there is still no work.

Mr REGAN: We will come back to you on that one on notice as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I guess what I want to know is if it is in the mix to be done and where it is on the list of works, like planning and whatever else.

Mr REGAN: Understood. Yes, we will get you a response on that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That would be very good. I think that is that one. Then could we go to the Newell Highway. I have asked about the Parkes bypass and it is in the budget and I have been provided with some updates there. Can I just ask what was the consultation process that was followed for the Parkes bypass? Was the department responsible for that or was it undertaken, for instance, by the council, which is a very strong proponent for this bypass?

Mr REGAN: Ms Nelson, are you aware?

Ms NELSON: No, it is a State and Federal funded project, so it would have been a process that we ran.

Mr REGAN: It would be State, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So that consultation, as I understand it, would have been done in early 2020?

Ms NELSON: I would have to check the dates. I am surmising, but it is a Federal-State project so we would have used our normal consultation process and it would have been led by Transport.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. Thank you.

Mr HAYES: I will add to that just briefly. Early work started in September 2020 and an industry information session outlining opportunities for local businesses and local suppliers was held just before Christmas in December. A tender for construction is planned to be released in the coming months.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, but that is on track though?

Mr HAYES: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Still on the Newell but back in Dubbo—not the River Street bridge. I am advised that there was a strengthening upgrade work undertaken of LH Ford Bridge, which is the main bridge there. Is the project completed?

Ms NELSON: It is complete.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Did it all go to plan? Have there been any issues arising post that work that have been raised with the department?

Ms NELSON: The project is complete and I am not aware of any issues as a result.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So no-one has raised anything?

UNCORRECTED

Ms NELSON: No.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This has been provided to me. I am just going to read this one. There were traffic lights installed at the Newell Highway in Baird Street, Dubbo. Has the work been completed?

Ms NELSON: Actually, as part of that whole program of works, two intersections were upgraded from roundabout to traffic lights and the work has been completed.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. It has been completed?

Ms NELSON: It has.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Were there any issues around excavations for that work?

Ms NELSON: I am not quite sure what you mean. I know there was a lot of complexity around utility movement, but apart from—that was kind of the only controversy because I remember standing there on the corner.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think this is where this is going.

Ms NELSON: I remember standing there on the corner and there were a lot of issues because there were a lot of utilities around there. But you have been to Dubbo. You know those big roundabouts and the trucks trying to get through them. The move to traffic lights is a big improvement, but there were a lot of challenges around the utility movements.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, was there any asbestos discovered onsite as a part of this issue?

Ms GERAGHTY: I would have to take that on notice. I do not know. I will come back.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you take that on notice? Thank you. And the utility issue has been resolved as a part of the process?

Ms NELSON: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am going to move onto—it is a quick trip through New South Wales—the New England Highway and the highway upgrade at Kootingal.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I do not know where Kootingal is.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Sam knows.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I know them all.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think we might actually wave as we go in other directions because he and I do—

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: We cross paths.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think you are going to try and knock me off as the most travelled MP in the building.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I look for the Mick Stanley Veitch going past.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, you do. So back to Kootingal—this is the 6.7 kilometre section between Sandy and Braefarm roads at Kootingal. Can I just ask what has happened there? Where is that up to? I think it is being funded out of the Saving Lives on Country Roads program.

Mr REGAN: We will have to revert on that one. We will take it on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you take it on notice? I guess I just want to know what is the expenditure to date on that particular program.

Mr REGAN: I just want to make sure we get that right for you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And the same thing for the Namoi River Crossing at Manilla—what it is up to and what is the expenditure to date?

Mr REGAN: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think that one is a joint project with the Tamworth council. I should get Trevor Khan to ask those questions.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: He takes a keen interest.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes. I probably should have done this in a geographic process, so it is a big sweep, shouldn't I have? On the Snowy Mountains Highway west of Adelong there was an overtaking lane constructed and put in place. At that sort of hill through there between there and Mount Adrah, there are a couple of windy bends and it is a bit slow getting in and out of Adelong, particularly for the timber trucks. Are there proposals for further overtaking lanes along the Snowy Mountains Highway, particularly from its commencement at the Hume through to Tumut?

Ms NELSON: I would have to double check.

Mr REGAN: We will check and revert on that, if that is okay.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you come back?

Mr REGAN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If there is not, I think there should be some work done with the local member and communities around just what they require on that particular stretch of road.

Mr REGAN: Yes, okay. That is good feedback. Thank you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The Princes Highway—I should have done these in a geographic sweep. Can I just ask—it goes a bit more about the work down to Batemans Bay. Currently we are doing the Milton Ulladulla—can somebody explain why we are not consulting? We know the highway is going to be duplicated all the way down to Batemans Bay. Is there any reason why we are not doing the consultation for the whole leg rather than phases?

Mr REGAN: Yes. I think Ms Nelson can probably talk in a little more detail, but the key issue there is that there are different segments that are running on slightly different time frames. We are obviously very conscious of the significant community interest and wanting to sort of do that on a fairly localised basis and to do those as soon as we can to be able to make progress on agreements on that road as soon as possible. One of the challenges with the whole length of the corridor is just the different levels of development and different issues in each of the sections. Hence the way that we have been making good progress on the Princes Highway is to do segment by segment. So Milton Ulladulla and the Jervis Bay intersection upgrade, Moruya bypass, the Burrill Lake to Batemans Bay section that we talked about before, Jervis Bay to Sussex Inlet upgrade—we sort of compartmentalised it down so that we can provide each of those and take into account those localised issues and continue to work towards the achievement of an overall corridor upgrade for that section. Ms Nelson, is there anything you wish to add to that?

Ms NELSON: Probably the only thing to note with that is that along that corridor you have got such different communities with so many different sorts of interests and different travel patterns. I think it is a bit different to a lot of our other highways, where you have got a lot more intra-highway travel rather than end-to-end. Whilst the program is looking at an end-to-end duplication from Nowra all the way to the border, there are not a lot of people who actually go from Nowra all the way to the border. It is all of that in-between travel. So the approach has been very much to, as we section up this work, engage with those localised communities. That is kind of the approach that we have taken.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. There is a budget allocation of \$7.1 million, as I see it, for the Nowra to Victoria border planning. It seems like a pretty big job so I would have thought it would take more than seven million bucks. That is a long corridor. How much of that has been spent to date? I understand that is a difficulty.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Can I do a short run and then we will come back to yours?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am going to hand to my colleague.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Returning to that question about the Great Western Highway duplication—is there any update on that? We have obviously seen the public documents—but just any information?

Mr REGAN: Sorry, specifically which area?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Just progress and any change in the timing at the moment or any information you can provide at the moment.

Mr REGAN: As discussed earlier and as you mentioned, there is a \$2.5 billion commitment to the Great Western Highway upgrade between Katoomba and Lithgow—presumably it is the one you are referring to. Again, what we are proceeding to do there is look at that in a series of segments while also continuing to look at the overall program and—

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Sorry to cut you off. I would be happy with something on notice—any additional information you can provide about progress, given we have seen the public information agencies communicating.

Mr REGAN: Yes, we can do that certainly. It is progressing. We believe we are on target for commencing construction in the middle of our section, which is likely to be the first, but we are looking at that in segments. Obviously there is community consultation ongoing, particularly around the different options for what we refer to as the central section, which is sort of the Blackheath-Mount Victoria section. There are upgrades progressing, design work, environmental work is progressing across the corridor for the full Katoomba to Lithgow section, and we are making pretty good progress on that at the moment.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I might return to those questions I was asking, with the benefit of Mr Carlon being here, about the rollout of the mobile speed camera program changes. Mr Regan or Mr Carlon, either of you are welcome to jump in. I was just interested in the extent of the rollout. There are three different changes happening. One of my questions, which you took on notice in the end, Mr Regan, was: Are all the warning signs gone at this point or is that still yet to occur?

Mr REGAN: I might ask Mr Carlon to answer that.

Mr CARLON: On the announcement of the changes to the mobile speed camera program, they were to be rolled out over the 12-month period. The first stage was the removal of the warning signs and that was completed in November, so the warning signs were removed.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So they are all gone across New South Wales.

Mr CARLON: That is correct: There are no warning signs currently being used, in the same way as every other jurisdiction in Australia. We are the last to remove them.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: How many were removed?

Mr CARLON: Previously, there were three signs that were deployed at 250 metres and 50 metres prior and 50 metres past the camera.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, so it is three signs for what I think were 45 cameras.

Mr CARLON: Just to clarify, the contract is to deliver a certain number of hours of enforcement per month. The contractor uses—yes—at the moment 45 vehicles to spare to deliver that 7,000 hours per month. The second phase was to align the livery of the vehicles with the livery used in Queensland which is less livery on 70 per cent of the vehicles and then no markings on 30 per cent of the vehicles. That was implemented in January-February.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: So that is all done to the extent that it is going to be done.

Mr CARLON: That has been completed, yes. Then there is the third element, which is the expansion of the hours of operation from 7,000 to 21,000 hours per month to align to the current state of both the Queensland and Victorian enforcement activity. That tender has closed and the tenders are being reviewed. It is likely that that will be implemented in the second half of this year and that is on track for completing the three changes within the 12-month period.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: And that is consistent with the public comments. Are there any more details? When you say the second half of this year, how are we tracking? When will the contract be issued?

Mr CARLON: We are expecting finalisation in July-August but then there will be a start-up period clearly for whoever wins the contracts and the establishment of those.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: There is no change though currently to the number of cameras used. Is that correct?

Mr CARLON: No, the current provider continues to operate the program and operate at the 7,000 hours per month.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: But will there be more vehicles as we move from 7,000 to 21,000? Presumably there may need to be.

Mr CARLON: Again, that will be dependent on the submissions that are made by the tenderers—

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: On who wins the contract, essentially.

Mr CARLON: —and who wins the contracts and the efficiency in terms of delivery of that 21,000 hours worth of enforcement each month.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Essentially, there might be a range of ways of answering the question the State has put, which is, we want to move from 7,000 to 21,000 hours per camera but calculated on—

Mr CARLON: Sorry, not per camera. It is 21,000 hours of enforcement across the network each month.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Right. Okay, I see. Mr Carlon, I do not know if you can answer this question that I asked Mr Regan. There was a bump in offences and a bump in fines, not when this program rolled out—that of course happened—but on 1 July. Was there any change to the policy or the practice that might explain why there were those increases across a range of offences on 1 July?

Mr CARLON: I understand that was taken on notice at the last one. There is a response being developed.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Yes, I am happy to have it on notice but do you have any view that you would like to contribute?

Mr CARLON: Not at this stage. We are looking at it.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No worries.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Country people drive to Sydney and they get a bit annoyed about having to slow down in close-proximity driving. But it does raise the issue: Is there a measure for congestion on our roads? Is there a metric that we use or is there a set of dashboard indicators the department looks at for each of the State's highways around congestion?

Mr REGAN: I think the answer to that is, essentially, yes. We do look at reliability measures and congestion measures, and certainly they are something we track very closely in the more congested areas like the metropolitan areas. I am just looking to my left.

Ms NELSON: One of the key measures we look at is average travel time. Obviously we have to look at that differently metropolitan versus regional and rural.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, that would make sense.

Ms NELSON: But that is one of the key metrics that we use so that we are trying to focus in on people's experience using the network. How long is their average travel time and is that going up or down over time? I think there are other congestion measures that we use but that is one that I know we do look at pretty regularly.

Mr REGAN: And it is actually a good question because there is that difference. In metropolitan areas, much of the focus is on the reliability or the stability of journey time. Obviously in regional areas, the distances are much further and people's door-to-door average journey time is very important in that context. It is affected in different ways, so we look at those metrics.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Regan, are they publicly available?

Mr REGAN: Certainly, some of them are and we do publish sort of customer satisfaction-type measures as well around road corridors. I am happy to take that on notice and come back to you with what we collect and what we publish.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, because if there was some sort of dashboard you could look at that would just make it a bit easier.

Mr REGAN: Let us see what we have got.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr Carlon, this might be heading towards your direction. On the question I was asking the Minister about the mobile phone detection cameras, I do have a continuing concern about the corporate loophole. There have been multiple changes to the law at once. I will certainly make my own inquiries as to what that has done to the rates but I am interested if there is an agency view about what that has done to the level of the use of this or any anecdotal or quantitative feedback about how those changes are rolled out.

Mr CARLON: Those changes are ready to commence and the system changes, following the legislative reforms that took place, have been worked through. There are significant changes for police in the system changes that are being worked through at the moment. My understanding is that it is just about ready to go and that it should see a significant reduction in the problem that was identified around corporate paying of fines and potentially avoiding demerit points. That will lead to those reforms, but it will also actually lead to the ability for Transport for NSW to issue court attendance notices regardless of whether people pay the fine or not.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: There were a set of changes yet to commence. When will they commence?

Mr CARLON: I think we can give you a time on notice.

UNCORRECTED

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: On notice, a time for that.

Mr CARLON: The system changes were quite significant, and in particular for the police.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Understood. Will there be an education program that runs with that or is this just something that will roll out and people will no longer find this option so easy? Is it more in that latter category?

Mr CARLON: My understanding is that people will be required to nominate the driver. When we are not satisfied that it is feasible that they should have then a court attendance notice will be issued.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Just to clarify, the congestion information you took on notice, are you going to provide us with information around where we can find the list of metrics or the measures you would use to determine congestion?

Mr REGAN: I just want to check what we have got but, yes, I understand the question. Presumably your question is a regional highways question.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is. I am looking at the regional stuff. For instance, as you drive through Bathurst and you come to the set of traffic lights, do we measure how long people have to sit at the lights when the lights turn to green? Is that the type of thing—

Mr REGAN: I am not sure it is that granular. I mean it can be but—

Ms NELSON: At different times we will do different specific traffic studies to see what is happening. We usually do them in consultation with the local council, especially if they have identified some particular pinch points. I think the metrics we were talking about are more general—what is it looking like for the whole corridor or for a specific region? So they are a bit higher level. For that kind of specific location basis we will do traffic studies and they will usually be if we are planning an upgrade or if we have had community feedback on a particular issue or a council issue then we will do a specific traffic study and look at things like that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. I would be happy to see what you have got and what you do.

Mr HAYES: If I can add to that, too, there is a lot of work goes into school holiday periods—for example, when we know there is going to be specific congestion areas, Blue Mountains being a good one. As a result of ongoing congestion and quite clear, lengthy challenges, we introduced a new way of trying to separate traffic through the Blue Mountains through the last holiday to try and help everyone get through more smoothly, and to reduce the number of rear-end collisions that happen as a result of all of the jams.

Mr REGAN: Chair, if I may, Mr Graham I am sure will be very disappointed if I do not table this letter.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am very happy to hear it.

Mr REGAN: If I could table it—for the record, it took me a little longer because the letter is actually undated, but for the record it was received on 16 April 2020.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: And how many highways do we have?

Mr REGAN: I have not got it, I am sorry. I will take that formally on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: He is sweating on it. I think there is a bet going here.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I just want to see how close we got.

Mr REGAN: It's the deduction of the city-based ones just made it more challenging.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: One of the dixer's Mick forgot to ask was the Great Western Highway upgrade at Bathurst, the Kelso to Raglan. Construction has started. It's going to be brilliant.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I know. I drive past it. My daughter lives at Raglan. I see it all the time.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: You were meant to ask the question.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, no. It must be in the paperwork you gave me.

The CHAIR: On that note, does the Government want to ask any questions? As there are no questions from the Government, that concludes our hearing for the day. Thank you very much for your attendance.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.