

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

Tuesday 25 October 2011

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area

TRANSPORT

The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. N. Maclaren-Jones (Chair)

The Hon. J. Ajaka
The Hon. N. Blair (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. C. M. Faehrmann

The Hon. Hon. A. R. Fazio
The Hon. P. G. Sharpe
The Hon. G. J. Donnelly

PRESENT

The Hon Gladys Berejiklian, *Minister for Transport*

Transport for NSW
Mr Les Wielinga, *Director General*

Transport Construction Authority
Mr Chris Lock, *Deputy Director*

RailCorp
Mr Rob Mason, *Chief Executive*

State Transit Authority
Mr Peter Rowley, *Chief Executive*

Sydney Ferries
Mr David Callahan, *Chief Executive*

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**

CHAIR: I declare the hearing for the inquiry into Budget Estimates 2001-2012 open to the public. I welcome the Minister for Transport, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, and accompanying officials to the hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Transport. In accordance with the Legislative Council guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photographs. In reporting the proceedings of this Committee, the media must take responsibility for what they publish or what interpretation is placed on anything that is said before the Committee. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available on the table by the door.

I remind everyone that any messages from attendees in the public gallery should be delivered through the Chamber and support staff or the Committee clerks. I remind the Minister and the officers accompanying her that they are free to pass notes directly to their advisers while they are at the table. The Committee has previously met and resolved that there will be a breakdown of time allocation, which will be divided equally between the Opposition and crossbench, followed by the Government. The Committee has also resolved that the portfolio allocation of times for questions will be broken down: Transport from 2.15 p.m. to 3.15 p.m. and Rail from 3.15 p.m. to 4.15 p.m. followed by a break from 4.15 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Questions on Ferries will be from 4.30 p.m. to 5.15 p.m. and State Transit from 5.15 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Transcripts of the hearings will be available on the web as at tomorrow morning. The House has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided within 21 days. I also remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones. All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn in prior to giving evidence. To save time all witnesses will be sworn at the commencement of the hearing. I remind the Minister that she does not need to be sworn in as she has already sworn an oath to her office as a member of Parliament. For all other witnesses, they will be asked in turn to state their full name, job title and agency and swear either an oath or an affirmation, the words for both of which are on the card in front of them.

ROBERT FRANK JAMES MASON, Chief Executive, RailCorp, and

DAVID JOHN CALLAHAN, Chief Executive, Sydney Ferries, affirmed and examined:

LESLIE ROBERT WIELINGA, Director -General, Transport for NSW,

CHRISTOPHER DECCLAN LOCK, Deputy Director-General, Department of Transport, and Chief Executive Officer, Transport Construction Authority, and

PETER GREGORY ROWLEY, Chief Executive, State Transit Authority, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Transport open to examination. As is there are no provisions for the Minister to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questioning I will go straight to the Opposition.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has economic modelling been undertaken within RailCorp in conjunction with Treasury about the cost of an average trip per passenger once the North West Rail Link is completed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I acknowledge that the North West Rail line is one of the Government's major and key infrastructure priorities. As you know, we expect that area to expand rapidly. By 2036 an estimated 394,000 extra people will be living in the region and obviously placing a huge demand on rail services, which is why we are absolutely delighted at the pace at which we have embarked on this project. For the benefit of members, it is 23 kilometres long, the biggest expansion of Sydney's rail network since the 1930s. We are proposing at this stage to have six stations along the new line, including three major park and rides—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is specific. You have indicated that Government members will be asking questions and I am sure they will be happy to get the detail of what is in your answer. I refer to economic modelling that has been undertaken between RailCorp and Treasury in relation to the cost per average trip of the North West Rail Link.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to provide the Committee with some context. I want to establish that there is a huge demand for services. Obviously in the first six months of our Government we have done a lot in relation to that project, and I am getting to the thrust of your question as I continue. As the Hon. Penny Sharpe would know, we have allocated \$314 million for the North West Rail Link this year. This allocation will allow the project team to substantially progress essential design and planning work and to finalise the project's scope and approvals. Obviously once you do that you can determine exactly the nature of services you are running and how often you are running them and, therefore, you can actually deal with the issues that you have asked me about. This substantial amount of money, in addition to allowing us to do that detailed design and planning work, will also allow us to significantly acquire land. The point I make to your question is that we are currently undertaking all that design and scope work now. The project team is undertaking that and certainly the activities of the project team are confined to what I have just spoken about.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you say that modelling does not exist?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly all the fares on the new rail line will be consistent with the CityRail fares across the network.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I show you an email dated 29 July from Rodney Forrest from Treasury to Peter Crimp who I believe is at RailCorp, which states:

In 2021 the CityRail network is forecast to have approximately 391 million trips ...

If the assumptions are sound the NWRL may carry only an addition 9 million new rail passengers ... representing only about 2.15% of total forecast rail patronage. The cost per trip may be around \$80 per new passenger (or \$30 for every passenger), compared with the 2010 average cost per passenger of \$10.61.

Are you aware of this modelling and are you able to provide it to the Committee?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am certainly not aware of the modelling as detailed in the email and I am not sure who the individuals are. Are you suggesting we should not build the North West Rail Link? The issue is, and I want to make this clear—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I asked whether you would provide this modelling, which, given the email, I have every reason to believe exists.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I stress that this is an important project for the future of public transport in our State. Hundreds of thousands of people who live in the north-west do not have access to a mass transit system. We are very pleased to have undertaken extensive work on this project since we came to office.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I know you are very proud of the project, but I asked whether you are prepared to provide to modelling to the Committee.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: With all due respect, I would like the member to consider the point I made that the work the project team is currently doing is being undertaken to progress the essential design and planning work, and to finalise the project scope. We will be completely up-front with the public on all aspects of the project, including—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Then why will you not be up front with this Committee about the modelling that has been done and which indicates that it will cost \$80 per new passenger?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not aware of the modelling and I have not seen it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you take the question on notice and provide it if it exists?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am more than happy to take on notice questions about modelling. However, I make it clear that at every stage of the project and every time a milestone is reached this Government will be up-front with the public—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So that is a "yes"?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would like to finish my sentence.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to be clear—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would like to finish my sentence.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I will let you finish.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As you are aware, Sydneysiders have been told that a north-west rail link would be built since the 1990s. It was announced, reannounced and then axed. When the Coalition assumed office it made a commitment to build the line because we were disappointed about the previous Government's lack of progress on the project. I am very pleased to say that in our first six months in office we have already awarded 15 tenders relating to detailed scoping and design work. I have always said that by the end of this year I would be able to give the community cost, time frame and other details about the project.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But will you provide this information—which I assume exists—to the Committee on notice?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not aware that the information exists. If it does exist, I will obviously ensure that public information is made available—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you provide it to this Committee within 21 days of this hearing?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will not provide information to this Committee that is not accurate and that has not been the subject of thorough research.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you will not provide it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have been extremely up-front and said that any major project milestones will be made public. At the end of the day, commuters have suffered enough. Sydneysiders want to have confidence that this project will be built on time and on budget, which it will. After 16 years of being promised these rail lines, the public wants this Government to get on with the job, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Wielinga, given the disparity in these figures for the projected cost per passenger for the North West Rail Link, is RailCorp or Transport NSW under any pressure from Treasury to find other cost-recovery mechanisms to pass on to passengers?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There cannot be a disparity in figures that have not been released. There has been no public release of any of that information.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The figures obviously exist within your department and discussions are obviously being held. Whether you are aware of them, Minister, is a different matter. My question is directed to the director general. Are discussions being held between Treasury and your department about a requirement to address the cost disparity for projected passengers?

Mr WIELINGA: I should explain the way the project is being implemented. There is extensive interaction with Treasury and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure NSW. I will first distinguish between economic modelling and financial modelling. You are talking about financial modelling. Economic modelling looks at the costs of the total benefits of project and creates a ratio. The figures you are talking about cannot be constructed in isolation from the work being done by the North West Rail Link team at the moment. To be able to calculate that number one needs not only the full details of the scope, costs and benefits of the project but also the operating plan. That work is now being done by the North West Rail Link team. Even if someone in RailCorp has done that calculation, without the work that is being done by that team it has no relevance.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: With respect, it clearly has relevance to Treasury, which is obviously looking to RailCorp to confirm those figures. However, I am happy to move on. The budget indicates that the Government has decided not to proceed with the relief line and answers to date seem to indicate that issues of capacity will be dealt with in the Transport Master Plan. Can you give me the time frame for the release of that plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Transport Master Plan will be the subject of an extensive process and the Government will make the time frames clear to the public once that process is commenced. We are very serious—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the time frame for the community to have input?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I would like to be able to finish my sentences.

CHAIR: Let the Minister answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was answering the question as directly as possible. I think I started by saying "The Transport Master Plan". I do not know how much more direct I can get than that, but I will try. There is a lot of talking but not much listening. The Government will be very public about the Transport Master Plan and it is important to have adequate community consultation. We simply do not want to present a plan that is seen as a *fait accompli*. We want to ensure that experts, all levels of government and community organisations are involved in the process. I will be very pleased in the near future to outline the time frame.

The Government has had to make difficult decisions about deferring some projects. However, planning is continuing to support decisions about the Government's long-term transport plan. It will provide us with a proper understanding of the options available to increase capacity through the CBD, which is an important issue. The result will be major input into decision-making about our corridor protection within the CBD and obviously about other projects. We have outlined that the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link are key public transport priorities for this Government, and they will remain so. Beyond those projects, we will embark on a planning process that will involve communities, experts and stakeholders. Again, the Government wants to ensure that this process is done properly. Over the 16 years that the Labor Party was in government it issued

nine different transport plans. When I had the honourable member's job, I read all of them. They were all conveniently released just prior to an election and were abandoned shortly thereafter. I think the public wants transport to be above politics. We are hoping to engage everyone around this table, including the Opposition and crossbenchers, in that process. We want it to be above politics and to ensure that the rail projects and other significant transport projects—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you cannot give me a time frame.

CHAIR: The Minister was still answering the question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: She has been answering it at length. So it is a case of watching this space for the release of the Transport Master Plan.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is not what I said; you did not listen.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I did. You cannot give me a time frame.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I said that we do not want to provide a transport master plan to the Opposition and the community as a fait accompli. We will announce the process for the master plan. You said that I will not provide a date for the announcement of a transport master plan. No, I will not because we will announce the process that will be undertaken to arrive at the master plan. There is a very big distinction. I know the Opposition is used to announcing plans, but we want to announce a process so that everybody who needs to be involved can be involved.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Let us not forget that when you were the shadow Minister you also went to an election without any transport plan. Let us not get too excited about that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will not go there.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I refer to Barangaroo—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to finish my answer. I was at a local government conference yesterday and one of the burning issues was certainty about the planning process and involvement in that process. I have taken that feedback on board and I will be pleased in the near future to announce the milestones and how everyone—including the people around this table—can have input into that process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you aware of the taxi application called goCatch?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: A number of taxi applications are available. I am unaware of their status at this stage, so I will refer that question to the director general because he has delegated authority to regulate that industry.

Mr WIELINGA: The goCatch user app, as they are commonly called—there are two that we are aware of. The features of those are that they try to give priority to people catching taxis by encouraging them to pay an additional fee on top of the normal taxi fee. Under the Passenger Transport Act it is appropriate that people be charged the actual fee for the taxi. The other issue that we are concerned about is that we need to make sure that they are accredited taxis with authorised drivers to minimise risk to customers.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am aware that the Taxi Council has written to the Minister about this matter. Have you sought legal advice about the status of hail-and-ride as opposed to a separate booking system, and how that fits with the legislation?

Mr WIELINGA: It is more than just legal advice. We have not sought specific legal advice because we have in-house people who work with us all the time on this. What we are looking for is the recognition that this new technology is coming, and how it could be applied and utilised to better service our customers. We are taking a customer focus point of view. If it can make life easier for our customers, we will have a look at the framework associated with it. It is still under consideration.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, do you have a view about the use of third party apps in relation to improving taxi services?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If I could make a general comment about apps, one of the reasons why we established the Customer Experience Division in our new Transport for NSW is to recognise the fact that customers are craving more information about the options they have with public transport. They are craving more information not just about the service itself but for their pre-journey planning as well, and we are aware of that. When Transport for NSW commences on 1 November one of the first things the director general and I will be asking the new head of the Customer Experience Division to do is to look at better ways of providing information to passengers and customers. Obviously, there are a lot of legal issues around those things. There are a lot of issues around protecting timetable information and security issues, and we have to find our way through that, but I want to make the general point that this Government appreciates and accepts that providing customers with better information is something we need to look at.

We also appreciate that a large proportion of people who catch public transport have some form of hand-held device, so people can make decisions about their journey not only before they leave home but whilst they are on the journey, and from time to time when services are halted—for whatever reason—or we are encouraging people to alter their patterns, obviously communicating with them at that time is very important. We are looking at better ways in which we can provide customers with information and we will certainly look to speaking to any third party that wants to talk to us about doing that. We have to negotiate the complex web of legal arrangements as well as intellectual property issues, but the general principle is this Government is keen to engage in innovation and technology to improve the information that customers have, and that is one of the main reasons why we established the Customer Experience Division. For the first time in our State's history, we will have a division within Transport for NSW that is focused on the customer experience. A large part of its activity will be about providing customers with better information, planning during the journey and—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You are not necessarily opposed to third party access to data?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, that is why I qualified my comments. We have to protect the State's information, we have to protect information we have regarding timetabling and we also need to protect information regarding security issues. We are cognisant of those issues, and my responsibility is to protect the State's information in relation to those issues, but at the same time we want to keep the door open to looking at options that make the customer experience easier and that allow technology to be used to provide information to customers.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you aware of the taxi inquiry that was chaired by your now Parliamentary Secretary?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Am I aware of the inquiry?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The inquiry that was held in 2009.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: He was an exceptional Chair and I have read the recommendations.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Has he briefed you on the inquiry and the outcome of it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: At the time, not in government. I was the Opposition spokesperson—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to tell me—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I finish my sentence, please?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: The Minister has been very forthright in her answers and I believe that she deserves the courtesy of being able to finish those answers rather than being constantly interrupted by the honourable member.

CHAIR: The Minister may continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: From memory—and if my memory does not serve me correctly, I am sure the member in question will correct it—the inquiry was very robust and there were 58 recommendations and I read all of them. Is that the correct number?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Close—there were 59.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I discussed the inquiry at the time, but I have not formally sat down since that time. The recommendations were well received and we are going through all of those issues regarding reform in that sector as well as other parts of public transport.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you would be able to take on notice how much progress has been made on those 59 recommendations?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There were 58 recommendations—or is it 59?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, 59.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sorry, I stand corrected.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In particular, I am interested in the plans—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have not answered that part of the question yet. What was the question?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is whether you will take on notice how much progress has been made on each of the 59 recommendations and provide that to the Committee?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In particular, I am interested in the recommendation from the committee that was to increase the number of wheelchair accessible taxis from 11 per cent to a minimum of 50 per cent in New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Accessibility to public transport is something that I feel very passionate about because not only does public transport offer opportunities to make us all more productive, but social inclusion and quality of life are very important, and accessibility—whether it is wheelchair accessibility for taxis or other parts of public transport—is a key priority for this Government. I appreciate that a few of the recommendations of that inquiry relate to that issue—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you will get back to us?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think it is linked to the previous question and I will definitely take that on notice and I am happy to provide the Committee with an update on the action I have taken to date.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, can you confirm that the call centre for the North West Rail Link information centre is located in Victoria?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I tell you a bit about the North West Rail Link call centre, and also the North West Rail Link community information centre? Since its opening, on the most recent count, the information centre has had about 2,000 people who have walked in the front door, sent emails or gone to talk to staff—and I believe the member was one of those people who went in and said hello and talked to the staff—and I understand that the call centre is a national company. When setting up the information centre and the contact phone number, the project team was unsure of the number of calls that would be received because we were not sure how well the community would receive this information centre. I am pleased to advise that the information centre has been overwhelmingly well received by the community.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you provide us with a breakdown—

CHAIR: The Opposition time has expired, but the Minister may continue her answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, I would like to finish the answer, if that is okay. As I said, when setting up the information centre and the contact phone number, the project team was unsure of the number of calls that would be received. To ensure that all calls were answered from day one, the North West Rail Link project team employed the services of Link:Q. Link:Q is a national company that has administrative offices in

Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. In fact it has an administrative office in Crows Nest, which is not far from my electorate office. The North West Rail Link project team provides frequent updates on the project to Link:Q so inquiries about the project can be answered correctly and quickly.

If you have not tried the system, I suggest you do because the service it provides is fantastic. Every person who has walked in the door or rung the call centre to make enquiries has been very satisfied. Should a customer require assistance with a complicated issue regarding the project, the Link:Q staff forward an email to the project team with the customer's information and query. The project team then calls the staff member back. If someone has a complicated question that the call centre person cannot answer, that information is passed on to the person in the office and that person is then given a personal call. In the future, North West Rail Link phone enquiries will be handled by the information centre staff themselves.

We engaged the call centre initially through the transition phase. Now that the centre is up and running, that service will be required less and less. The suggestions that the project team has received from the community via the information centre, the phone or email will continue to be vital to the ongoing development of the project. The North West Rail Link project team hosted eight community information sessions at various locations along the proposed alignment during July, August and September, and I am pleased to update the Committee on that.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I am not exactly sure who was responsible for the recommendation to the Minister that works on the GreenWay project in conjunction with the inner west light rail extension be deferred. Who should I address my question to?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will make some comments initially and then pass it to Chris Lock. Mr Lock is the head of the Transport Construction Authority but he is also now head of a new division team in Transport for NSW, so I will make some preliminary comments and pass on to him, if that is okay.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Recently the Government blocked a call for papers that I had made in Parliament. The call for papers asked for any report or advice relating to the construction of the Greenway being built in conjunction with the inner-west light rail extension. It also asked for any document that outlined projected costings. As the Government blocked my costings request in the Legislative Council I was hoping to get some indication of what information the department had. For example, how much was the Greenway component of the inner west light rail extension? Who did the cost estimates?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will provide some context and then Mr Lock will give his response. I note that I have met with two very large delegations of councils and stakeholders in relation to the Greenway project since the Government took the decision to defer it. I want to thank those members of the community who attended those meetings. Mr Jamie Parker hosted one of the delegations, and the other delegation was headed up by one of the councils. The Government made the difficult decision to defer the Greenway project. The Government is committed to extending the light rail service to the inner west from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill, for which design construction is underway. Nine stops will be built: at Leichhardt North, Hawthorne, Marion Street, Taverners Hill, Lewisham West, Waratah Mills, Arlington, Dulwich Grove and Dulwich Hill interchange. The Government made a commitment before the election to complete the inner west light rail extension, and it wants to keep that commitment in as timely and as efficient manner as possible. The budget includes funding for the inner west light rail extension but the associated walking and cycle path component—the Greenway, as outlined by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann in her question—has to be deferred.

The Government is also carrying out further geotechnical soil investigations along the inner west light rail corridor. The information gathered will provide further input to assist with the design of the project. Under the Government's direction a number of milestones will be achieved in the year ahead on the inner west line. The New South Wales—

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, would you restrict your remarks to the Greenway?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Sure.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I particularly want to know what information the Government had on costings of the Greenway and who did those cost estimates.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to make a couple of comments and then I will pass over to Mr Lock. The Department of Transport has examined the Greenway proposal, which was announced by the previous Government as part of the inner west light rail project. I asked the department to do that. Labor announced the Greenway before any engineering design work was properly done. That was our issue. I understand that the department's recent work has benefited from additional technical information, such as surveying and geotechnical investigations, that was not available when the original strategic concepts for the Greenway were developed. So additional information has been provided which substantiates the Government's reason for deferring the project. Based on this work the department has identified that without modification to the design construction could cost significantly more than previously estimated. This is due to the complex engineering work required to construct the shared-path component of the Greenway. For example, excavating through five existing road bridge abutments, building retaining structures in rock cuttings and narrow sections of the corridor, building elevated support structures for the shared-risk path in a number of locations, and for the safety of users of the shared path relocating a large portion of the current high voltage overhead power lines that run through the corridor.

The deferral of the shared-path component of the Greenway will allow the inner west light rail to be delivered, while the proposal for the Greenway shared path itself is reassessed as part of a broader active transport plan. When confronted with these additional issues that would not only cause the Greenway project to be delayed but would also impact on the inner west light rail extension the Government took the decision to pursue, very efficiently, the inner west light rail extension and defer the Greenway until further work was done on an integrated active transport plan. The deferral of the shared-path component of the Greenway is not a decision that the Government took lightly—and I say that in all sincerity. I have met with representatives from several councils who feel passionately about the issue, as well as with members of the community. However, the Government believes this decision is made in the best interests of delivering the inner west light rail extension as soon as possible. The Government is keen to get people onto that new mode of transport. The Government wants to build the accessibility of people to light rail. One of the first decisions taken by the Government was to extend light rail accessibility to pensioners, and the take-up of light rail has been substantial. The Government wants to build the inner west light rail as soon as possible so that light rail becomes part of a truly integrated transport network.

Mr LOCK: To understand your question as to where the Government gets pricing information from it is helpful to understand the whole of the light rail deal as it stands at the moment. The light rail is a private-sector project, owned and operated by the private sector. That contract, which has been in place for many years now, gives the private sector the right to continue with any further light rail extensions. The department went to the private sector—Metro Transit Sydney—and asked for a price for developing the whole of what is now called the inner west extension. Metro Transit Sydney used its engineering firm to determine specification and to detail the scope of the works, and it used another private sector firm to quantify and price those works. It then bundled that up into an estimate, which the department received, reviewed and advised the Minister of the contents of.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Can you provide that information to the Committee on notice?

Mr LOCK: Given that that is information given by the private sector as part of a commercial deal that is currently being negotiated—because it is wrapped up in the whole of the inner west extension—I would take advice on it but my strong preference would be not to at the moment.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, can you explain why the Government blocked my request on the Greenway—for projected costings and any recommendations the Government had before it about the Greenway—when I made that request in the Legislative Council?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not presume to understand or appreciate what went on in the upper House that day but I can certainly tell you that the Government has been completely upfront in its decision-making process on the Greenway. It has been upfront as to why it took the decision it did. It was a tough decision, and one I did not take lightly for a number of reasons. Firstly, I strongly believe in the benefits of active transport. I want to see more people cycling and walking around the community—not just for work but also for recreation. Secondly, I appreciate how important it is for those inner-city people who otherwise may not have space in their own homes and who rely on public space to undertake recreational activity.

The reason the Government progressed the way it did—as I said earlier, and as I have said in Parliament on quite a few occasions—is that it is serious about building a transport network that is integrated and that people want to use. The Government knows how passionately people feel about the inner west light rail

extension. The initial information we had about the timeframe of when the project would be completed was not what we found when we came into office. The Labor Government had told us that the line would be operational by 2012. That is not the case, and I have said that in Parliament. My first and foremost priority in relation to integrating inner west public transport is to complete the inner west light rail extension. That does not mean the Greenway will never happen; it means that it is deferred. It also means that the Government will look at the Greenway project in the context of a broader transport master plan.

For the first time in the State's history we will have a transport master plan in which active transport is a part and not an afterthought. I have had the great pleasure of speaking to many communities representing cyclists and pedestrians and I have given them my personal assurance that active transport will be part of the master plan process. No doubt when we come to the table to discuss the needs of the inner west in relation to integrated transport that issue will be raised. We will then be able to have a proper discussion about timeframes and costs and when projects will be delivered. That is something I have said on the record, and I will continue to say it. But certainly the Government has been very upfront with information. The Government has been very upfront as to what it can do. It is important to be honest with the community. It is important to explain to the community why something has had to be deferred and why the Government wants to build something at a particular time. That is the Government's position.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Is New South Wales on track to meet the 2012 milestones for accessible train stations in Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Clearly this is an important issue for me, as it is to most people. The Government strongly believes that it needs a whole-of-agency disability action plan. Transport for New South Wales will undertake a whole-of-transport plan in relation to access to the network. In developing the disability action plan the department is moving towards a broader definition of accessibility with a focus on customer experience.

That is so important because we need to ensure that when you are talking about accessibility you are including things like social isolation. A lot of people who live in rural and remote places in our State do not have access to public transport. There are many issues that need to be dealt with at a whole-of-transport level and that is what we will be doing. Currently there are 128 CityRail stations and 42 per cent of the 307 operational stations are independently wheelchair accessible. The Government has made \$30 million available for the Easy Access Program in the 2011-12 State budget.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: How many stations does that \$30 million upgrade per year?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: For the first time in many, many years this Government has given a boost to the Easy Access Program. So over four years we have boosted the funding by \$60 million. The \$30 million includes \$7.5 million of new additional funding. I am pleased to have obtained that. In relation to the stations that we will be earmarking, I have asked the department to undertake a comprehensive review because I want to look at exactly how many stations we can make accessible. In the past, for example, when a station was made accessible, it was taking, in my view, too long. Also, in some instances some stations are better with a lift; for other stations a ramp is the more appropriate first course of action.

I have asked for a comprehensive review of the number of stations we can upgrade with that money over four years. Once that review is complete I will be more than happy to announce the stations that will be getting an upgrade. But I want to make the point clear to the Committee that I feel passionately about accessibility. That is why we fought to make sure we secured that funding. I am pleased that we received that extra funding for accessibility at our railway stations.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: As I understand it, under the disability discrimination Act 55 per cent of train stations need to be accessible by 2012. That is the agreement. You were saying 42 per cent. Do you commit to still reaching that target by 2012, which I think would be significantly more than perhaps the six to seven upgrades per years?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will certainly work hard to make as many stations as accessible as possible. I will not be able to give you a definite response until the review is complete. Once the review is complete I will be able to tell you. But I can tell you that the previous Government managed to upgrade two stations in four years. From memory, Eastwood and Burwood were the only two stations that were upgraded. I stand to be corrected but I am just going by my memory. That is why we committed extra money to easy access.

When I was the Opposition spokesperson I worked out that it would take 93 years to have all of our rail stations accessible if we stuck to that program. That was something that I could not live with, and that is why we have boosted the funding for easy access. Once the review is complete I will be able to tell you exactly how many we hope to achieve. I want to work, and will continue to work, with all groups representing people with disability about accessibility issues, whether it is taxis, railway stations or lowering platforms on buses. We need to make public transport as accessible to the community as possible, especially to those people who are less advantaged.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: How will the transport master plan created by Transport NSW interface with the infrastructure master plan created by Infrastructure NSW?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Obviously, Infrastructure NSW has an important mandate to progress the State's infrastructure needs across the whole of government. Infrastructure NSW looks not only at transport but also at health, education and all the sectors across government. The plan that we have put together in transport will be subject to making sure that we have a strong land use strategy behind that planning process. We will be working closely with relevant departments in relation to putting forward the transport master plan through that process but the role of Infrastructure NSW is to oversee the priorities across whole of government, not just in transport. I look forward to its input. I also look forward to what is an exciting time for this State. To have a body that is above politics assisting the Government in determining priorities across whole-of-government infrastructure is a positive because for too long public transport was often the afterthought. Often things were announced without thinking about the associated infrastructure needs of the community. For example, it is difficult to get in and around hospitals. Public transport should be considered when we are building a hospital, for example.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Sure. It is my understanding that Infrastructure NSW is to prepare implementation plans for major infrastructure projects, and that that figure is more than \$100 million. Therefore, what role is there for Transport NSW, given that I would think many projects involve more than \$100 million?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Transport for NSW has the important role of assisting the portfolio Ministers, whether it is in transport or any other portfolio, with our major projects. At any time we can seek their advice and support to help us with major projects. Obviously, there are a lot of projects over that amount, which are within the responsibility of transport, as there are in other portfolios as well. The role of Infrastructure NSW is to drive that whole-of-government approach to major projects. With the major projects in the area of transport Infrastructure NSW will have an important role in assisting us with things like funding models and innovation. But at the end of the day their role is whole of government. The whole point of that is to make sure—

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: They will get the private sector partners in. Do you think that that is their major role in terms of funding?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Their role is to keep this State's infrastructure priorities above politics. What has happened in this State previously, as I alluded to in a previous answer, is regrettably plan after plan was announced in transport, plan after plan was dumped, and, understandably, the community and stakeholders felt that there was no plan and no vision for this State. We needed to turn that around, and we have turned that around; and we have turned that around by forging ahead with those self-evident projects, namely, the North West Rail Line and the South West Rail Line. We have forged ahead with those self-evident projects, and I am pleased with the enormous progress we have made on those projects in the first six months of being in government. But for any future decisions about major projects Infrastructure NSW will and should have a role because the public needs to have confidence that any new major projects announced, apart from the self-evident ones, have been thoroughly investigated, the research is being done, the homework has been done. I am glad and relieved that a body like Infrastructure NSW is there to make sure that the Government is accountable and that the State's interests are put ahead of any other party interests.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What has been the cost to government of the decision to subsidise fares at Green Square and Mascot train stations on the airport rail link?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to advise the Committee that the removal of the access fee from Green Square and Mascot stations was initially estimated to cost \$4 million per year, to be paid by the Government. That was the initial estimated cost, which I believe was announced by the previous Premier in January of this year. It could have been January-February of this year. Projections of cost in future years included an allowance for an uplift in patronage of 6 per cent. With the subsequent significant growth at these stations of approximately 70 per cent the annual direct cost has increased to approximately \$7 million per

annum. We were told it would cost \$4 million when in fact it is costing us \$7 million. So the costs were way out. As members would know, there is a range of ways public transport can be delivered. The airport rail link is a public-private partnership that has delivered a nine-kilometre rail line with four stations, including two that give access to the international and domestic airport terminals.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: The Government estimated it was \$4 million, but it was \$7 million, which is good because obviously more passengers are now using the service. Would it not be a better use of taxpayers' money to consider buying the line outright and allowing all passengers access to the stations, including the domestic and international airports?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: We have undertaken to continue to work with the airport to look at improving access to the precinct. We will look at a whole range of issues at that precinct but we need to ensure that we do our homework before we take any steps in public transport. Clearly, the previous Government did not because the estimated cost it gave the community was half what it is actually costing us. That is not a good way to manage the portfolio, which is why the Government inherited a mess in public transport. It is not good enough, in my view, to tell the community something is going to cost something and then have it nearly double in reality. That is why we are absolutely keen to ensure we improve the options that commuters have in all parts of Sydney. That is why we will continue to work with relevant agencies in relation to those issues, but I would certainly not put forward any suggestion unless it had been properly considered, properly costed and our State could afford it. [*Time expired.*]

CHAIR: Questions from the Government?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Minister, could you please update the Committee on the establishment of the new integrated transport authority to be known as Transport for NSW?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: Certainly. Thank you for the question. The Government is committed to real and achievable improvements in public transport for the people of New South Wales. To make this a reality we have instituted real reform in the organisational arrangements for transport. The new organisational arrangements were recently legislated as part of the Transport Legislation Amendment Act 2011 and I know were subject to intense debate in the upper House.

The Act ensures that public transport agencies will for the first time in our State's history have common objectives and will exercise their functions in a manner that promotes them. To improve public transport performance in New South Wales it is critical that all the public transport agencies are working to the same objectives. This will ensure consistency and clarity of approach across all modes and aspects of transport delivery in New South Wales. The transport agencies will be performing as one team with every person across the transport portfolio playing an important role in shaping the results that are delivered for the customer. The customer will be the key focus, and the main objective for the transport agencies will be to concentrate first and foremost on the needs of their customers.

It is very important for us to ensure that all operators in the transport portfolio are focused on better customer service. To this end the transport system will be designed around the needs and expectations of the customer. The focus will be on coordination and this will mean that the simple things—like ensuring train and bus timetables provide seamless connections, and that integrated projects are delivered on time—will be properly coordinated. Transport for NSW will bring together the coordination, procurement, policy and planning functions currently performed by the Department of Transport, RailCorp, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries, the Maritime Authority of New South Wales, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority.

Transport for NSW will be the driving force for transport reforms. It will host the policy, strategy and regulatory components, guide our investment decisions and be accountable for delivering reforms to the people of New South Wales. The objectives for Transport for New South Wales will include: to enable the transport system to support the ongoing development of the State, with a focus on freight systems; to ensure that good planning informs investment strategies; to promote coherence and integration across all transport modes and all stages of decision making; to provide a focus on performance and service delivery based on a strong purchaser-provider model with clear accountabilities for outcomes; to achieve greater efficiency in the delivery of transport infrastructure projects, through improved coordination of freight, maritime and ports operations and their integration into the transport system and by eliminating duplication of functions and resources; to promote the delivery of transport services in an environmentally sustainable manner; to contribute to the delivery of

social benefits for customers, including greater inclusiveness, accessibility and quality of life; and to provide safe transport services in accordance with the safety regulatory framework.

Policy and planning experts will be brought together from all transport agencies to improve public transport services and ensure a world-class transport system that people want to use. Whether you catch a train, drive a car or truck, ride a bike, hop on a bus or ferry, Transport for NSW will be responsible for making your trip as easy and as comfortable as possible. This will free up the operating agencies to focus on what they do best, providing safe, clean, reliable and efficient transport services to customers. Transport for NSW and the operating agencies will work in partnership with the operating agencies providing expert advice to Transport for NSW to inform its strategic policy and planning decisions.

This Government wants to improve public transport so that more people use it. The Government's decision to create an integrated transport authority has already generated widespread support from all sections of the community, including businesses. The level of integration proposed for the new transport administrative arrangements is groundbreaking for New South Wales. Such integration, however, has been alive and well in cities such as London, Zurich and Vancouver for some time. Transport for London, Zurich's ZVV, Vancouver's TransLink, and even the Victorian Department of Transport and MetLink all operate using an integrated type model.

Transport for NSW will have six divisions to drive this improvement. To ensure that the new organisation's culture is focused on the customer, Transport for NSW will have a division specifically dedicated to identifying customer needs and improving customer experience. The Customer Experience Division will champion the customer, ensuring that their needs are a driving force in the management of transport services and in the delivery of transport infrastructure. A key role for the division will be to ensure that the top priority for transport is to identify and satisfy customer needs.

The new division will be charged with understanding our customer's realistic expectations and ensuring our transport services will deliver to those expectations. Most importantly, the new division will provide the point of contact for customers of the transport system. The Government is committed to working closely with passengers and listening to what they have to say in order to better understand where improvements can be made. We will demand that front-line staff and services are focused on the needs of our customers and we will align the Government's resources to our customer's priorities.

The Planning and Programs Division of Transport for NSW will bring together the planning of all modes of transport into one division and establish close links between planning and the development of transport investment programs. It will identify transport needs and produce integrated transport plans and manage the overall investment budget of Transport for NSW. The Planning and Programs Division will work with the New South Wales Government, the community and transport customers to develop integrated strategic plans linked to land use. It will also manage and coordinate Transport for NSW's submissions to Infrastructure NSW and Infrastructure Australia.

The Transport Projects Division will be the new integrated transport authority's developer and deliverer of major infrastructure and fleet asset projects. Consolidation of the Transport Construction Authority and the Transport Infrastructure Division of the Department of Transport will provide an expanded and integrated project development and delivery capability. This will allow the operating agencies to focus on delivering transport services and maintain transport assets. The Transport Projects Division will be accountable for delivery of major public transport projects, including the strategic procurement of rolling stock and freight. The division will have a focus on delivery planning, including accurate estimating and close monitoring of construction delivery. It will also create a centre of excellence for expert services that support projects including, among others, rail engineering, commercial procurement and project management.

The new Freight and Regional Development Division will ensure New South Wales supports prosperity and productivity—particularly in the regions—with an efficient and effective freight transport system. The Freight and Regional Development Division will be the central point of coordination for the New South Wales Government's role in freight transport distribution and servicing in New South Wales. I am very pleased that for the first time New South Wales will have a coordinated freight strategy. It will also for the first time consolidate the coordination of key freight system components such as road, rail, marine, port and intermodal terminals and will provide a single point of contact for industry. The Freight and Regional Development Division will ensure the New South Wales freight network supports regional development by connecting to the key locations where freight is generated and delivered.

The Policy and Regulation Division will drive strategic policy for the transport portfolio. It will drive the development and implementation of customer-focused policy solutions in areas including procurement and performance of public transport, bus, rail, light rail, ferry, taxi, regional airlines and hire cars, national transport reforms and initiatives, transport network and service access and pricing, driver and vehicle licensing and registration, roads, maritime, boating and public transport safety. The Policy and Regulation Division will be Transport for NSW's interface with industry stakeholders on policy matters and reform processes. It will shape the New South contribution to the national agenda.

The Transport Services Division will plan and procure the best possible transport services for New South Wales. To deliver on Transport for NSW customer strategy and standards and to deliver value for money to the New South Wales public, it will procure transport services from the operating agencies, including RailCorp, the State Transit Authority and the new Roads and Maritime Services. The Transport Services Division will develop and manage performance contracts with those agencies and work with them to plan and deliver a seamless transport system. The key tasks for the division will be service planning and development and improvement, service procurement including contract development, ticketing services including an electronic ticketing system, and integrated timetable development.

In summary, I assure the Committee that the Government is committed to ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of public transport in New South Wales. This commitment is demonstrated by the Government's reorganisation of the installation of public transport to introduce an integrated system to ensure that planning for our future transport systems will be strategic and multimodal. The Government wants to focus on transport agencies giving the customer as seamless a journey as possible, irrespective of the mode they choose. This includes making sure that vital transport projects are delivered on time and on budget.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Minister, can I take you to electronic ticketing systems? Can you please update the Committee on the status of the development of the electronic ticketing system?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. Greater Sydney's Opal electronic ticketing system will begin rolling out late next year, in December, and will make travelling on public transport easier and simpler for people living, working in, and visiting the greater Sydney area. The new ticket, or smart card, will transform travel for customers who use our trains, buses, ferries and light rail, and for which they have waited far too long. Customers will be able to load money onto a plastic card and use it to pay for their travel on Sydney Ferries, CityRail, and Government and private buses. It will give them the freedom to explore Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Illawarra, the Hunter, the Southern Highlands, the Central Coast and everywhere else in between, using the same card as their ticket.

It will start with the Sydney Ferries network first and then the CityRail network, and then on Government and private bus networks in the greater Sydney area. This system will use proven technology and back office systems comparable to London's Oyster card; it is future-proof for mobile and credit card payments as well. We will continue to monitor other emerging technologies. The Oyster card has been a huge success since its introduction across the Transport for London network in 2003. More than 80 per cent of all public transport journeys in London are made using an Oyster card and it is the world's most popular travel smart card, with more than 43 million issued since 2003. I am pleased to say that the Department of Transport is in contract with the Pearl Consortium to develop, design and implement the new system to suit the unique requirements of greater Sydney's transport system and environment.

The lead contractor is Cubic Transportation Systems, which has delivered many similar systems across public transport networks around the world, including London, and is currently implementing the Vancouver system. Our system will make using public transport easier and will be a real drawcard to achieving the Government's commitment to increase patronage and get more people to leave their cars at home and use public transport more often. More public transport journeys means less road congestion that costs businesses money, and it probably will result in fewer road accidents and certainly less environmental damage. Between now and late next year the department is focusing on many important tasks to bring Opal closer. There will be a phased implementation across our networks so that we can properly prepare our customers, wharves, stations and buses to be Opal ready. We are focusing on finalising the detailed design of the system, and continuing with the preparatory works at ferry wharves, which includes the installation of new ticketing gates, and on train stations, buses and bus depots.

We are testing the system and completing the rollout of MyZone and Opal compatible bus driver consoles and back office systems across private bus operators, and preparing documentation and information for the public and transport operators' staff to ensure a smooth start to the phased rollout, starting with Sydney Ferries in December next year. After a suitable period of testing, Sydney Ferries customers will travel using the Opal smart card first, with the rollout schedule to begin from December 2012, and progressively it will be rolled out across each of the services. As that continues, rollout to CityRail customers will begin from mid 2013 and there will be a progressive rollout to bus customers after that. We are working with the private operator of light rail to formally include it in the Opal delivery schedules so that the thousands of people who now enjoy travelling on light rail, using their MyZone ticket—which I am pleased to say was introduced in June this year—can do so under the Opal card.

We will be talking to our customers to make sure that smart card systems are easy to use and understand. We will give customers plenty of time to obtain their smart card. Customer information will be widely accessible. Our Government's smart card ticketing project is imperative to providing a modern, efficient and appealing public transport system for our customers. Everyone who travels by the Opal smart card, whether they are students, pensioners, tourists, daily public transport users or occasional users, will benefit from this technology. We need it for many reasons, and I want to list some of the benefits that this will deliver: an improved overall travel experience by making the system easy to use and easier than the current MyZone system; the set-and-forget principle, which means that there will be no more fumbling for change or wondering about the price of the ticket; customers will be charged the cheapest fare for their journey; and it will take the hassle out of calculating the cheapest time or way to travel.

It will be more convenient than paper tickets as the Opal smart card will be an easy-to-carry card. We will be increasing the number of outlets from which customers will be able to obtain them. Travelling by using an Opal smart card will mean greater flexibility. Customers will be able to reload money automatically by using a credit or debit card online and save more. Customers will be able to check their journey history online or by calling the customer contact centre, or at a cashless load machine. More protection and security is built into the Opal smart card as customers will be able to register it so they can protect their money on the card, if the smart card is lost or damaged. It will also ensure faster overall bus travel times because the Opal smart card will make boarding quicker. It will significantly reduce, and in many cases eliminate, queues. Of course we are catering for the thousands of visitors who visit the greater Sydney area. The Opal card will be easy to obtain before even arriving in Sydney, leaving more time for visitors to enjoy their visit. Instead of buying a paper card, visitors will be able to work out how often they will use public transport in Sydney and top up their Opal card accordingly.

The pay-as-you-go money on the card is timeless, so visitors can use any money left over for future visits to Sydney, or give it to someone else who is visiting Sydney. As part of the ongoing reform and construction of an integrated transport authority, there are benefits for the administration and operational arms of our transport network. For public transport operators, the Opal smart card is expected to reduce maintenance cost, fare evasion and revenue leakage. Most importantly, the new system will provide more consistent travel data to better help us plan our services and improve the customer experience. We will be able to plan and timetable services more accurately using improved data, showing where customers get on and off the services. Once and for all we will know exactly what types of services are needed and the number of people using those services. We will be able to run services to the places that customers need to travel to. We will be able to truly understand demand and alter the supply of services based on fact. Our bus drivers will be able to focus on driving and keeping buses running rather than handling cash, which means a safer working environment as well.

We anticipate that many operators will experience increased patronage as fare payment is made easier. The delivery of ticketing systems is complex, and problems with time frames and costs have been experienced around the world—indeed, in Australia as well. Even the world's best system, the Oyster card in London, was impacted by the complexity of the system it had to deliver. However, we have benefited from learning the lessons of other jurisdictions, including the area of emerging technologies. Our system will be the right one for Sydney and for Sydney's current and future transport needs. Our system can adapt and will adapt to new developments. The department will deliver a system that can migrate to emerging account-based technologies. The new Opal smart card reader is being installed and will be capable of migrating to an open payment system. In summary, I am pleased to report that the rollout of smart card ticketing should begin late next year—in December next year on Sydney Ferries—and is on track and within budget.

All transport workers have an important role to play in the successful rollout of the system, as do the transport operators who are working closely with the department. I thank them for that. They will be part of

what will really change the way all of us travel. Between now and the rollout of smart card ticketing, there is a lot of work to be done. Work is currently happening across the whole network. RailCorp continues to prepare its CityRail stations and is in a tendering process for the preparatory works that will need to be completed over the next two years. Equipment will be installed at our wharves between now and late 2012, including smart card readers at un-gated wharves and new gates at Circular Quay, Manly and King Street wharves. There are new bus driver consoles currently being tested and installed for the sale of MyZone cash tickets for some private bus operators so these operators are ready for the later installation of smart card equipment. A more integrated public transport network in greater Sydney increases the long-term prosperity of the entire State by reducing the cost of travel and congestion on the economy. The Opal system is another example of how we will get our customers around our city more efficiently.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Earlier the Opposition asked about the North West Rail Link. Will you advise the Committee on the Government's progress to deliver the South West Rail Link?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government has made the South West Rail Link a priority and I am delighted residents and passers-by are seeing the results of this focus as the new rail line and upgrades take shape. The Government is delivering concrete results and real progress. Its commitment is clear to any local resident or rail passenger travelling through Glenfield, in particular. The need for the South West Rail Link is clear and obvious. No-one, not even the Opposition, would dispute the need for increased rail services for the existing residents of Sydney's south-west, and to provide for the planned population growth in the region. These residents made it clear to me and to the Government the need for improved rail services and transport solutions that are integrated with development.

It is estimated that 110,000 new homes will be built in southwest Sydney's growth centres over the next 30 years. The population of the area is estimated to increase by 300,000 people, around the same population as the Australian Capital Territory. We must work hard now to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to cope with this growth. We will not repeat the mistakes of the past and we are committed to ensuring that the south-west growth centres are planned, delivered and integrated with all modes of transport, including rail. That is why we have committed to delivering the South West Rail Link as a priority. That is why, after just months in the job, local residents can see concrete results of our focus as construction forges ahead and the first sections of track have been laid.

The South West Rail Link comprises an 11.4 kilometre rail line between Glenfield south and Leppington, major rail upgrades at the Glenfield junction, including the construction of the rail flyovers to the north and south of Glenfield Station, and a major upgrade to Glenfield Station. The new rail line between Glenfield and Leppington will provide two new stations at Edmondson Park and Leppington, 1,250 commuter car spaces, bus interchanges at each station and a new train stabling facility at Rossmore. The new line will provide capacity additional capacity, providing essential links to employment centres in the Sydney central business district, Liverpool and Parramatta. Planning for the new rail line and the new stations involves close co-operation with other agencies delivering critical infrastructure in the region and those planning for the new town centres.

It is important that the people of south-west Sydney have a say in the development of the project. It is their community and it is their rail line. I am pleased that a recent community information session at Narellan, more than 200 local residents took the opportunity to meet and talk with the project team. But it is not just the new residents of the south-west growth centres that will enjoy real benefits from this Government's commitment to delivering the South West Rail Link. Residents from across the region who access Glenfield Station will enjoy the improved customer facilities from 2013. The new station concourse is taking shape and will feature easy access lifts. A new platform is being provided to allow for the new track being delivered as part of the project.

The major rail works underway at Glenfield Junction will deliver improved services for residents across south-west Sydney, even before the new line between Glenfield and Leppington commences operations. The works at Glenfield Junction are on schedule to be complete and operating in 2014. These essential rail works include the construction of a rail bridge, or flyover, north of Glenfield Station that removes a significant constraint on the efficient operation of the junction. The junction at Glenfield serves passenger trains travelling on the south line, Cumberland line, and Airport and East Hills line as well as freight train services. The construction of the rail flyover north of Glenfield separates out much of this rail traffic, removing the need for many trains to have to cross in front of each other and across lines.

This improves the capacity for the junction to handle more trains per hour and will reduce the impact of train service interruptions flowing through to the rest of the network. This is a clear and significant benefit for commuters across the system, including the existing residents of south-west Sydney, whether they are travelling along the south line through to the city on the Airport and East Hills lines or travelling through Liverpool and on to Parramatta or the central business district.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Chair, can we ask that the Minister to table the rest of this lengthy answer because the Opposition was hoping for another quick round of questions in the Transport section. The Government asked this question very late in the piece and this answer has now taken up four minutes.

CHAIR: All members were able to have extra time for the Minister to answer their questions when they were asked very close to the time limit.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Chair, it is 3.15 p.m. and we should move on to Rail. If the Hon. Penny Sharpe is correct, it might be best, with the permission of the Minister that she incorporates the rest of her answer in *Hansard* so we do not delay the start of question on Rail.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to do that. I seek to have my answer incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

To support the introduction of South West Rail Link services in 2016, the Government is delivering a new train stabling facility at Auburn. The new stabling, together with stabling at Rossmore will improve the network's efficiency and allow for an increased number of trains to service Sydney's inner-west and south-west.

I am also pleased to report that the project team is making a contribution back to the local community in which it is working.

The member for Camden Chris Patterson and the project team were recently at Leppington Public School planting trees with the students as part of a National Tree Day initiative. I understand that the project team has also met with the school's principal and parents group and is looking forward to a building a great relationship with the school over the coming years.

CHAIR: It now being 3.15 p.m. we will deal with Rail.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I have one question I want to ask in the Transport section.

CHAIR: We have now moved on to deal with Rail. I will start with Opposition questions for Rail.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, given your earlier statements on the role of Infrastructure NSW and transport delivery, is it true you have been sidelined by Nick Greiner, the man who you claim is putting infrastructure delivery above politics?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I hate to say this but that question demonstrates why nothing got built in New South Wales for 16 years. We are committed—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: So you are not going to deny that you have been sidelined by Nick Greiner?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am going to suggest that that is a pathetic question.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Your non-answer is not much chop either.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have had five seconds to answer the question and I am getting into it so can I answer the question?

CHAIR: Please allow the Minister to answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When such a question is asked the Hon. Amanda Fazio should expect a lengthy and robust answer. As I said in an earlier answer—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: It does not matter what question we ask—

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: My first point is that we are now on the Rail section of the inquiry. I did not hear anything in that question that relates to Rail. My second point of order is the Minister is trying to give an answer and is being constantly interrupted by members opposite.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: To the point of order: The Minister indicated earlier that Infrastructure NSW would have a role in any project costing more than \$100 million. My understanding is that all of the major rail projects will cost more than \$100 million.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Further to the point of order: I do not want to take up the time of the Opposition. The Opposition is not allowing the Minister to answer the question. The Opposition is continually interjecting simply delays the proceedings and takes away from their time. I would think they want the Minister to answer their questions.

CHAIR: I do not uphold the first point of order. The Minister can answer the question. On the second point of order I remind Committee members to allow the Minister to answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I was attempting to answer the question before the Hon. Amanda Fazio kept interrupting me, regrettably the tenor of her question explains why nothing got built in this State for 16 years. That is because regrettably the Labor Party was more obsessed with the politics of the day than providing good infrastructure outcomes for the people of New South Wales. That is why we welcome—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Thank you. I will now hand over to my colleague, the Hon. Penny Sharpe.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have not finished my answer.

CHAIR: The Minister is still answering the question.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I am satisfied with that answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, I am still answering the question. I would like to again repeat the fact that we welcome the Premier's decision to establish Infrastructure NSW. Infrastructure NSW plays a very important and critical role in assisting the Government to determine the infrastructure priorities of this State. I also want to publicly thank them to date for the support they have provided my department in our major projects, especially in relation to the North West Rail line. This is a major project and we look forward to Infrastructure NSW having a continuing role in determining future projects for our State and also to ensure that every single decision that is made in public transport is above politics and is in the best interests of our State.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Since becoming a Minister have you received advice from RailCorp about the anticipated replacement date for the XPTs?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have received advice obviously from RailCorp on a whole range of issues. I will hand over to Rob Mason to provide an answer on that issue.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Mason, have you provided advice to the Minister?

Mr MASON: Clearly the XPTs are now approaching 25 years. They have done a lot of kilometres compared with their United Kingdom equivalent. We have certainly been looking at what the next generation of CountryLink long distances could be and we have provided draft reports to the director general on XPT and other things as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you provide those to the Committee?

Mr MASON: I will take advice on that.

Mr WIELINGA: A submission is being put together for Cabinet on this issue. It will be subject to Cabinet-in-confidence and I need to take advice on that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But if you are able to, you will?

Mr WIELINGA: I will take advice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is one of the options the replacement of all CountryLink services with coaches?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you guarantee that that is not an option?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Absolutely not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will you guarantee that no CountryLink rail services will be replaced with coaches?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will extrapolate on that question because it is interesting that it was asked by a member of the Government that closed the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Let us talk about your side, which closed half the rail lines across the State.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Can the Minister be allowed to answer the question?

CHAIR: Please allow the Minister to answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have said repeatedly that this Government is about improving frontline services. I have made it a point to travel extensively on the CountryLink network to experience what customers experience.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you provide a list of when and where you have travelled on CountryLink services?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I do not think that is in the public interest.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you are not prepared to provide that information?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to tell the Committee that I have slept overnight on the Sydney to Albury service and that I have been to Dubbo and a number of other places.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: How many CountryLink services have you travelled on since you became a Minister?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to provide that information, but I will—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you will provide it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Can I finish the first answer and then—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But you never commit to do it.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I make a point of using public transport as often as I can. If you do it regularly I do not think it is something that should be advertised. The most important thing is to give the community an assurance that you appreciate the difficulties—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am not asking you about the future—

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Point of order: The Minister is clearly not being allowed to answer the question.

CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Coalition put enormous pressure on the previous Government to abolish the ridiculous booking fee it imposed on pensioners who wanted to use CountryLink services. The fee was announced by one of my predecessors in March 2006 and it took the Labor Government three or four years to abolish it. It had an enormous impact on patronage. I followed that issue very closely. As the shadow Minister for Transport I regrettably witnessed a government that had little interest in CountryLink until you, as Parliamentary Secretary, did a tour of country New South Wales a few months before the election. CountryLink was ignored for 16 years. This Government is reviewing how it can improve CountryLink services. We know that a review and reform process should be undertaken.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When will that take place?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is ongoing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When will it be completed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government is about making important decisions. The most frequent feedback that I received from people who rely on CountryLink services related to the timetable. For example, passengers travelling to Wagga Wagga from Sydney arrive at 3.00 a.m. and passengers travelling from Sydney to Albury arrive at 4.00 a.m., which I did. That timetable is not convenient and it is very old. This Government undertook to look at those issues and that is what is happening.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the time frame for the completion of that review?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Let me finish the answer. This Government appreciates the public transport challenges facing regional and rural New South Wales and it is committed to addressing them in a meaningful and ongoing way, not just before an election.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Mason, obviously there is some advice, but we do not know whether we will see it. However, can you tell the Committee what advice you have provided about the expected life of the XPTs and when a decision will have to be made about their replacement?

Mr MASON: As I said, the XPTs have done many more kilometres than their derivative HSTs in the United Kingdom. We recognise the need for further refurbishment or replacement in the future, but there is no recommendation about when they will need to be replaced.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you provide an estimate?

Mr MASON: You can keep a train going for as long as you like if you spend a great deal on maintenance. It is possible to refurbish the bogies and to reupholster them to keep them in service.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Mason, you would be familiar with documents like this which provide information to customers, which is very good. This newsletter was provided to customers in the Hunter on the Newcastle and Central Coast lines in September. It states that the upgrade of Cardiff station is expected to be completed towards the middle of 2012. I note that you have recently provided advice to the member for Wallsend indicating that that date has now blown out to late 2013. Given that the funding and planning was already in train and ready to go, how do you explain the 18-month delay in the upgrade of the third biggest station in the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This was one of the stations that the Labor Party promised to upgrade before every election but never did. This Government is actually delivering. I remember when I was in Opposition hearing numerous election promises about the station. If I am not mistaken, there are about 53 steps to the top and I have walked them with local residents. I took carriage of a petition about the station on their behalf and I assured them that a Coalition Government would honour the commitment that previous Labor governments had broken on numerous occasions. I am therefore very pleased that the upgrade will be delivered by this Government. Of course, delays are regrettable.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why were you telling people in September that it would be commenced by the end of this year?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Point of order: It is unacceptable that members must repeatedly take this point of order. I am interested in the answer and I am sure the honourable member who asked it is also interested. The Minister should be allowed to conclude her answer before another question is asked and members should cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I recall the correspondence addressed to the local member detailing the reasons for the delay.

Mr WIELINGA: A couple of weeks ago I became aware of the difference in the two dates. I then met with representatives from RailCorp. I have instructed RailCorp to put a dedicated team on the project and to accelerate its completion date to meet the 2012 deadline. I am expecting them to come back to me shortly with a revised schedule.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you have indicated that you are aware of the report done last year about CountryLink that obviously involved a great deal of input from the public. Your most recent advice indicates that commitments about additional services are unlikely to be fulfilled. Will you implement any of the new services mentioned in that report?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I said, this Government is always looking to improve CountryLink services. As the Committee knows, CountryLink carries almost two million passengers every year to more than 365 destinations not only in New South Wales but also in Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. It operates a fleet of 102 carriages and power cars and provides 20 separate daily rail services and four weekly rail services and a number of coach services.

We know the status of existing services and that we have work to do to improve them. Everyone would agree that a defining feature of CountryLink is the excellent service provided by the staff. Anyone who has travelled on a CountryLink service would appreciate how far the onboard crews, the booking staff, the station staff and the maintenance staff go to provide that service. They do a brilliant job and we must support them in their role. When I became the Minister for Transport I made it clear that the customer must be at the centre of everything we do. Of course, that applies to the services provided by CountryLink in the same way that it applies to every other transport service provided in this State.

Increasingly, rail travel, including long-distance rail travel, is seen as an environmentally responsible travel choice, especially when rail capacity is used to its fullest extent, and we want to support that. It is the intention of this Government to ensure that CountryLink provides a reliable service to its customers in order to operate a viable alternative to private motor vehicle usage, however, there is still—and I acknowledge this—a significant amount of work to be done to improve reliability.

I note that when I took office CountryLink reliability had not been met for a number of years, since 2002-03. When I became the Minister for Transport I looked back and since 2003 the previous Government had not been able to meet reliability in CountryLink services. Reliability and on-time performance are important parts of the customer experience. Poor reliability is a barrier to people making a decision to use the service. Over time, CountryLink has faced challenges to meet customer expectations about on-time running and we are looking at that. CountryLink also faced a number of challenges because of poor decisions made by the previous Government, such as the pensioner booking tax, which had a huge impact on patronage.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, Minister, you have told us about that. Are we able to move on at this point? You have already gone into your views at length on that matter.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: In relation to light rail—it is rail, so I am assuming I am allowed to ask this—can I ask a question of Mr Lock? You mentioned earlier in this hearing that there are negotiations with the current light rail provider. Is there any requirement in relation to the incorporation of MyZone into the light rail system in negotiations of the contract around the extension to the inner west?

Mr LOCK: MyZone is incorporated.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When you were putting MyZone into the light rail system, has that required any changes to the contract that is currently being negotiated?

Mr LOCK: I cannot answer that because I am looking after the infrastructure, not the service brief. Maybe Mr Wielinga could answer.

Mr WIELINGA: Yes and yes, to the MyZone system if it is required and to integrated ticketing. Both of those discussions are in progress with the light rail company to incorporate that into the contract.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, I am not being clear. The question I am seeking an answer to is whether there was any quid pro quo around the incorporation of MyZone into discussions around the GreenWay and the extension of the light rail to the inner west?

Mr LOCK: No, there was not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, you have recently indicated that there is a delay in relation to some of the recommendations coming out of the Waterfall inquiry, in particular, the installation of internal emergency door releases. Given that that was trialled successfully in 2010, why is there a delay until 2015?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will refer that answer to Rob Mason, the Chief Executive Officer of RailCorp.

Mr MASON: You correctly point out that the in-service trial for the internal emergency door release system took place in July 2010 on the Millennium train. This is a complicated piece of equipment and, since then, we have been negotiating with our two main train manufacturers, Downer and United Group, to design and fit the final version on both the Millennium and the OSCar fleet, and the Tangara fleet as well. At the moment we are very close to the final design for the Millennium fleet and it will be rolling out subsequently. I am pleased to say that the Waratah fleet, of which we have three trains in service at the moment, does have the internal emergency door release fitted and operational at the moment.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is going to take until 2015 to get it everywhere else, or are we just waiting on the rollout—there will be no retrofit?

Mr MASON: There will be retrofit to the modern fleet, but not to the very old fleet, which will be progressively retired as the Waratah fleet comes in. The Waratah fleet will be installed in the network over the next few years.

CHAIR: The Opposition's time has expired. We will move to questions from the crossbench.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Mr Wielinga, is it appropriate for senior bureaucrats to negotiate with the private sector regarding unsolicited public private partnerships [PPPs] for infrastructure delivery prior to any Government announcement identifying the role of the private sector in any project?

Mr WIELINGA: The Working with Government guidelines that have been issued by New South Wales Treasury specify a process for unsolicited proposals to come to Government. Under that process, they normally go to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Occasionally, they will approach individual departments. They are then referred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet for a decision on how they are going to be looked at. Some of them require cross-agency work, or a group of agencies, and some are relevant to individual agencies, but the call is made in the Department of Premier and Cabinet on how they are going to be dealt with.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: This is if bureaucrats within a particular organisation are discussing a particular project where, if it has not been announced publicly and it is Government policy to involve the private sector, that goes to the Premier's Department, does it?

Mr WIELINGA: No, Government policy is defined in the Working with Government guidelines for dealing with these circumstances and it starts and finishes with the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Is it the department's working assumption that the North West Rail Link will drain most technical and financial resources until it is delivered in around 2019?

Mr WIELINGA: No, that is not correct. There are a number of other projects that are going on in both the capital works program and our operation and maintenance programs. It is a large project, but it is not a large share. From the budget papers this year, it is not even 20 per cent.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Not even 20 per cent of the department in terms of resources?

Mr WIELINGA: As far as the Transport budget goes, yes.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What is the proposed height of the tunnels for the North West Rail Link. Do you have that information?

Mr WIELINGA: No, I do not have it with me; we would have to come back to you on that. That is still being finalised as part of the scoping process at the moment. In relation to the size of tunnels, it depends on whether they are lined, it depends on the shape of the tunnel—there are a number of factors, and it is still being finalised.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Can you confirm whether converting part of the CityRail network to single-deck higher frequency operations is one option that is being considered?

Mr WIELINGA: What is important to appreciate with rail is that you try to get the maximum amount out of each rail line. Those sorts of options—

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: So you are considering it?

Mr WIELINGA: Those options have been looked at in the past, but we are in the process of developing our master plan and all options are usually considered as part of those in coming up with the best plan for developing our transport system.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: So it may be a consideration for the North West Rail Link that existing double-decker trains may not be suitable for those tunnels?

Mr WIELINGA: We are building a heavy rail system on the North West Rail Link. The Government announced that they would be doing that. You can put both singles and double-deckers in that sort of environment.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Mr Mason, how many times in the last five years have rail services to the North Shore line been impacted due to service disruptions on the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

Mr MASON: Numerous, I suspect. There were two major ones in 2007 and one subsequent to that, so there have been three major ones in the last five years I believe, but there are occasionally ones that occur on a day-to-day basis. We had a signal failure last night on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, late in the evening.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What alternative arrangements does RailCorp have in place to operate the North West Rail Link if a similar incident on the Sydney Harbour Bridge were to occur when the North West Rail Link would have only an underground connection at Epping linking to the North Shore line?

Mr WIELINGA: Those operating plans are being worked out at the moment. When you are looking at those north-south movements, when you look at the rail network—and you can do this by looking at your plan—you can also go towards Strathfield, if that is necessary, or people can catch trains at Epping and head to Strathfield as an alternative route to the city. You cannot just think about a rail network in terms of what is happening today; it is also heavily influenced by the long-term development of that network. If you are talking about the degree of flexibility or alternatives going through the harbour, I have mentioned that we are looking at options for the rail network going forward, and that is another thing we will be looking at as well.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Where is your thinking on the second harbour crossing at?

Mr WIELINGA: We are in the process of developing a transport master plan, and doing the background work on those sorts of things. It is not for me to speculate about which option will be getting a guernsey or anything. I simply cannot do that.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you envisage that a second harbour crossing will be planned for in that master plan? It will be an eventuality at some stage. Surely the master plan should plan for it.

Mr WIELINGA: What I should be talking about in regard to rail is outcomes. We are looking at matching our rail system with our land-use development in Sydney. A number of land-use scenarios are currently being looked at and different scenarios for the development for the rail system will be looked at as part of that. In the long term it is likely that additional capacity will be needed there as well, but you must appreciate when looking at these different scenarios that that is one of the options we will be looking at.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: My next questions relate to the Port Botany freight line duplication. In an answer to a question I submitted on notice in August this year about the Port Botany freight line duplication I was informed that the project submission to Infrastructure Australia by the former Government included component planning funding of \$30 million, which would form a detailed cost assessment. It was said that this planning, if provided, would cover detailed project cost estimates including engineering feasibility, confirmation of the appropriate alignment and securing the planning approvals. Considering no detailed cost assessment had been done at that time—the submission was clearly after component funding to undertake that detailed cost assessment—how did the Government come up with the figure of \$210 million for the three kilometres of Port Botany freight line duplication and the additional \$120 million for the General Holmes Drive level crossing?

Mr WIELINGA: They were Federal Government allocations and they put broad figures on those. There are a couple of small projects on that line that it was funding and that is being managed by the Australian Rail Track Corporation—the Federal agency.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: But it was a Transport NSW funding submission to Infrastructure Australia.

Mr WIELINGA: We put a submission in for the development of the container strategy for Port Botany.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Yes, and that is the one I am referring to.

Mr WIELINGA: That is a broader strategic thing. You are talking about some separate Federal Government funding. The \$200 million is out of the Nation Building Program.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: The \$210 million for the duplication of the freight line was in the Transport NSW document that went to Infrastructure Australia. My question is: If part of that submission was to receive \$30 million to undertake a detailed cost assessment how was that \$210 million for the three kilometres of track determined within the department?

Mr WIELINGA: It was done by the Australian Rail Track Corporation. It was going to undertake the work on that particular part of the network. We used the Federal Government allocations for that in the submission because it was allocating the money for it. We asked for money to develop a long-term strategy to make sure that we appropriately serviced that port precinct. Part of that allocation was to undertake the investigation work and to do the modelling et cetera to determine what would be needed in the medium and long term. The two projects you are talking about with the \$210 million were projects to be done in the immediate future to help improve the capacity on that line: a grade separation down near Mascot and some additional duplication of the line.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Are you saying that the Australian Rail Track Corporation came up with the figure of \$210 million? Is that correct?

Mr WIELINGA: To the best of my knowledge that is where that came from. But I will confirm that and come back to the Committee.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What will be the Government's response if Infrastructure Australia rejects its latest request for funding of the Port Botany freight line duplication? Do you think it is your responsibility to ensure that it is duplicated?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This is an important issue. The new Freight and Regional Development Division of the newly created integrated transport authority, Transport for New South Wales, will look at this. That is why the Government established the division. For too long freight issues have not been adequately considered as part of a strategic framework. The Government is keenly aware of the nationally significant role that Port Botany and its infrastructure play in supporting an efficient freight network. Container trade through Port Botany currently stands at around two million twenty-foot equivalent units per annum. It is forecast to be 3.2 million by the mid 2020s but it is likely to be achieved sooner than that. The Government is working to increase the proportion of containers in and out of the port by rail to manage the growth in freight trucks on our roads. Currently around 14 per cent of containers are moved by rail. Our target is to double that proportion. The Government is keenly aware of the challenges it is facing.

The Port Botany rail line forms part of the metropolitan freight network. It is a dedicated freight network nestled with the RailCorp network in Sydney. In 2004 the former Labor Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Commonwealth to transfer ownership of the metropolitan freight network to the Australian Rail Track Corporation through a long-term, 60-year lease arrangement.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What was the figure you quoted in terms of the freight target?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Currently about 14 per cent of containers are moved by rail and our target is to double that proportion.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Is that out of Port Botany?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Out of Port Botany. We also have specific targets in our overall State Plan as well. But it is the Government's aim to double the 14 per cent of containers moved by rail.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you know whether that is less ambitious than the previous Government's freight target out of Port Botany?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will have to take that on notice. Previous targets like that have been made and not achieved. I am keen to ensure that we move a greater proportion of our containers by rail.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: The previous Government identified—it is included in the Transport NSW submission to Infrastructure Australia—that track duplication is required by 2016 to meet any type of target whatsoever. If you are suggesting the doubling of freight targets by 2020 out of Port Botany—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am saying that our target is to—

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you have a year by when it is to be doubled?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No. Our target is to double that proportion.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: It is strange for a target not to have a completion goal.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am happy to elaborate on that point, but I want to make the point that many freight reports and strategies have gathered dust in the past decade in this State. That is why one of the two new divisions to be established in Transport for New South Wales—which takes effect from 1 November—is our Freight and Regional Development Division. That division will be looking at these issues to ensure that we meet these targets and it will also explain to the community what staged-approach we have for each of these targets.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you agree that duplicating the three-kilometre track is essential to meeting the freight targets you have talked about—even though you are not sure by what date?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If I could just finish my answer, it is important to have the right context.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Yes.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In 2004 the former Labor Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Commonwealth to transfer ownership of the metropolitan freight network to the Australian Rail Track Corporation through a 60-year lease arrangement. Sections of the track have already been transferred, including the Botany yards. In finalising the lease agreement New South Wales is seeking to ensure that the port traffic retains sufficient priority on the network, and we are working to secure a commitment from the Australian Rail Track Corporation to this effect. Work is being undertaken to identify the level of service required to meet the needs of the forecast port task. This work is important to ensure that rail plays a prominent role in moving containers in and out of the port and is intended to facilitate a dialogue with the Commonwealth on funding requirements for the line. In answer to your question, I am also pleased to report that the doubling of the proportion target is due by 2020 and it is part of our New South Wales 2021 Plan.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you therefore agree that in order to meet the target of doubling freight coming out of Port Botany by rail—which would then be 28 per cent by 2020—and considering the increase in twenty-foot equivalent units coming out of Port Botany during that time, the duplication of the freight line is essential to meeting that target?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There are a number of initiatives we can look at to undertake meeting that target by 2021.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: On freight though?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: On freight. I do not want to pre-empt the work that will be done by the freight and regional development team, and I certainly do not want to pre-empt the outcome of negotiations—the director general has been in heated discussion—with our Federal counterparts in relation to the freight challenges in New South Wales. I accept completely that it is an important issue, and it is a critical issue for us to consider. That is why I repeat: We established our freight and regional development division because for too long the freight task in New South Wales has not been adequately addressed. We are keen to meet these targets, and I am pleased that the director general has recently been advocating on behalf of our State in relation to the arrangements we have with the Federal Government and the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you have a time line for when New South Wales will finally get its long-awaited freight strategy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We intend our freight strategy to be concurrent with our transport master plan because never before have we looked at the freight challenges in the context of an overall transport master plan. As we know, there are some dedicated freight lines but there are also other freight movements that occur on commuter lines.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Are you doing a freight strategy or does Infrastructure NSW do the freight strategy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In relation to transport we need to make sure that when we have the transport master plan process we consider freight as part of that process. We are participating in the activities of Infrastructure NSW in this part. The director general is directly involved in the activity of Infrastructure NSW. Freight strategy involves a number of government agencies and departments, which is why Infrastructure NSW is coordinating the part of that task in relation to Port Botany. In relation to our master plan process, we do not want freight to be a separate plan in that process; we want to ensure that we look at freight planning as part of our transport master plan process as well.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Can we expect that master plan some time next year?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will be letting the public know in due course about the process involved in the master plan.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: That includes consultation and venues?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Absolutely because it will not be, "Here's our master plan." We will announce a process because we want engagement. We want to make sure that important government agencies

are involved, whether it is the Department of Planning or Infrastructure NSW. Everybody needs to be involved in that process, including stakeholders and community groups.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Returning to the \$30 million for the cost for the feasibility study into the duplication of the Port Botany freight line, that seems like a lot of money, considering that it cost about \$20 million for the feasibility study into the very fast train at the Federal level. Can you give me an indication of why the feasibility study figure is \$30 million?

Mr WIELINGA: We wanted to take the project well into its life cycle, including scope development, some design work, some engineering investigations to get the project ready to deliver. That was the thinking. We would develop a strategy; we would then work on a preferred direction and we would start getting documents and specifications and environmental assessments undertaken so that we could go straight into proceeding with the project.

[Time expired.]

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Can you advise the Committee on recent changes to the rail, bus and ferry timetables, which begin to deliver new services to the people of Sydney?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: Significant timetable changes are being made across the network in October, this week, to improve services and improve coordination between the modes of transport. They include significant changes to rail and ferry services, with changes to buses largely centred on maintaining the right connecting services. That is important and it is part of our strategy to integrate all our modes of transport. Changes to RailCorp services came in a few days ago, on Sunday 23 October. This follows changes that were implemented in May 2011 and June 2011 to take advantage of new infrastructure and refine operations. These timetable changes have delivered an extra 63 rail services each week.

On the western line there are an extra 20 weekly rail services—I am pleased about that—15 of which are in peak periods. This will address crowding at busy times and help make rail a more attractive option for the people of western Sydney. The changes will also see the commissioning of the new Schofields station. One of these new peak services will depart from this new station and the timetable will be changed to reflect this. In the Blue Mountains the timetable changes deliver eight new weekend services and 600 extra seats in the peak periods. The extra weekend services will provide higher frequencies to and from the Blue Mountains at busy times, with half-hour services now available at these peak times. More streamlined use of rolling stock is being introduced by RailCorp for the Blue Mountains line on weekends. This will see the consistent use of four-car trains. So, apart from improving frequencies, these additional services will spread loads more evenly to make rail travel more comfortable for Blue Mountains locals and visitors.

The northern line gets five extra weekly rail services. The eastern suburbs and Illawarra line receives an extra 15 weekly services, while the North Shore line receives an extra 15 rail services per week. Other changes to the rail timetable which have been introduced relate to off-peak and early morning services and include adjustments to standardise or improve stopping patterns. Bus operators were advised in advance of these changes to enable connecting bus services to have their timetables modified where necessary. It is important to have this integration and coordination. Ferry timetable changes are now in place. These changes see the implementation of a Government election commitment and demonstrate our commitment to improving ferry services.

A total of 140 weekly ferry services have been restored under the new Sydney Ferries timetable, which came into effect on Monday, yesterday. These 140 restored services now provide 30-minute frequencies on daytime, weekday services on both the Neutral Bay and Mosman ferry routes. This is a great improvement on the previous Government's October 2010 timetable, which reduced these services to hourly frequencies. The previous Government cut services; I am pleased to say that we are reinstating services. In addition to the 140 weekly services on the North Shore, an extra 25 weekly services will also be introduced along the Parramatta River, ensuring more frequent ferries for commuters and day-trippers. So these ferry timetable changes will deliver a total of 165 more services a week for ferry passengers. Key elements of the new timetable are a new weekday service from Rydalmere to Darling Harbour at 7.25 a.m. during the morning peak period—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Point of order: We are not supposed to be dealing with ferries until between 4.30 p.m. and 5.15 p.m., pursuant to a resolution of the Committee. Therefore, the Minister's answer is out of order.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: To the point of order: The Minister is talking about the link from the rail system to other services. Earlier the Chair ruled on a point of order concerning a link from infrastructure into other areas. Therefore I believe the question and answer are well and truly in order as they show the link from the rail section of the inquiry into other areas of the transport network.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Further to the point of order: The Committee, I believe foolishly, decided to break up this estimates hearings into four discrete areas: transport, rail, ferries and State Transit Authority. That was not supported by the Opposition, because this is the sort of problem you create when you establish these artificial barriers. You have created these barriers and you should be prepared to live by your own decisions. This part of the answer is out of order.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Timetables between rail, which is what the question relates to, and buses and ferries clearly relate to each other. Unless the Opposition is seriously trying to say that the rail timetables have no connection with buses and ferries and have no interconnection at all, which may be how Labor ran its Government, this is clearly in order.

CHAIR: For the sake of time—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, further to the point of order: I have a different point to make.

CHAIR: I will make a ruling. The Minister is being generally relevant. However, I would ask that the bulk of her answer relate to rail.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. As I said, Madam Chair, specifically in relation to rail, I am delighted that we have delivered an extra 63 rail services each week.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Which railway line matches up with the Neutral Bay ferry, tell me that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Clearly the Opposition needs to appreciate that when you introduce a new rail timetable you need to make sure connecting services meet those timetable changes, which is why I spoke in my answer about the need to ensure connecting bus services, but also connecting ferry services where applicable. This State is craving for an integrated transport network where timetables are aligned with all modes of transport. We cannot adopt the silent mentality that existed previously but I will, for the benefit of Opposition members, reiterate the specific rail services that we introduced into the system just last Sunday. As I said, we have delivered an extra 63 rail services each week and I am delighted that many of these are on the western line. There are an extra 20 rail services on the western line specifically, 15 of which are in peak periods. This will address overcrowding issues and help make rail a more attractive option for people in western Sydney. We want to encourage existing travellers to keep using the rail network, and obviously to encourage new customers to come on board as well. I am pleased to say that in addition to the extra services on the western line the timetable changes will deliver eight new weekend services on the Blue Mountains line, which is an extra 600 seats in peak periods.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Point of order: The Minister is now being boringly repetitious. She has already advised us of the timetable changes to the Blue Mountains.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. The Hon. Amanda Fazio will come to order. The Minister will continue.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I do not want to come to order. I am bored. I have heard this before.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is regrettable that new services to western Sydney are boring for the Opposition.

CHAIR: We will be taking a break shortly. The Minister will please continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I did feel the need to highlight those issues and I regret that the Opposition thinks extra services to western Sydney are boring.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Point of order: My point of order is that the Minister has already read out the list of new rail services once in answer to this question. Now she is reading them out a second time. That is just over the top.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. The Minister can continue her answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you, Madam Chair, but I had just concluded my answer, thank you.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Minister, what is the Government doing to facilitate access to Barangaroo and the Wynyard project?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: A significant amount of work is underway to cater for the future growth on the CityRail network and in particular to get people to work in the central business district. Our Transport master plan will consolidate this work and New South Wales transport agencies are working together on initiatives to enable Wynyard—which is a rail station, for the benefit of Opposition members—and the Barangaroo development, when it opens—

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Point of order: I take exception to the rudeness of the Minister: I am well aware of the fact that Wynyard is a railway station. In fact, Minister, it has been a railway station for a very long time and there is no need for you to be so facetious as to point it out.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. The Minister will continue.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you. I highlighted that point only to ensure that the Committee was aware this was a relevant answer to the question. As I said, the new transport agencies are working together on initiatives to enable Wynyard and the Barangaroo development, when it opens, to meet the expected increase in transport passengers and ensure they can use the station with ease. This is a very important issue.

I am pleased to say that \$51 million was committed to start building the Wynyard Walk, as we call it, in the 2011-12 budget. A project team has been established, passenger survey work commenced this month and completion is scheduled to coincide with take up of office space at Barangaroo South. Designs for the Wynyard Walk are being prepared by the Department of Transport in collaboration with the Barangaroo Development Authority. The project will involve the construction of—and this is very important—a new western entrance to Wynyard station, the Clarence Street portal, to provide direct access on to the station concourse. It will also involve a new 3.5-metre high by nine-metre wide pedestrian tunnel from Wynyard station to the north of Westpac Plaza at Napoleon Street. It will also involve a bridge over Sussex Street, with lifts and escalators connecting to the Barangaroo development. Without an appropriate pedestrian connection to Wynyard station, access to Barangaroo would be significantly constrained—especially for people with a disability or those who have their mobility impaired. Completion of Wynyard Walk is aimed to coincide with the take up of office space at Barangaroo.

The New South Wales Government is fully committed to ensuring a very high level of public transport use for workers, residents and visitors to Barangaroo. Barangaroo is expected to accommodate around 23,000 workers and residents, with up to 33,000 people expected to visit Barangaroo each day, once completed. This is why the New South Wales Government has committed \$51 million towards delivery of Wynyard Walk in this year's budget. The allocated funding will allow early works to commence on the road and footpath along Margaret Street. This will provide additional capacity for pedestrians at street level to enable construction works on the main Wynyard Walk tunnel to get underway later in 2012. Other works for this financial year will include finalisation of concept design, tender for contractors, site investigation for the tunnel and bridge components and property acquisition.

New South Wales transport agencies are working together in a master planning process to consider the future use and design of the Wynyard station precinct. This will be an area of major growth for train and bus passengers and for property development at Barangaroo. The master planning process covers all transport modes, including rail, and will identify staged development options for increasing the capacity of passenger flows within the Wynyard precinct. This project is called the Wynyard Precinct Masterplan and is being managed by the Department of Transport. The plan is looking towards the future and will consider ways to improve public spaces, including the surrounding areas. It will look at options to make the precinct work better, not just for train passengers but also for bus passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, taxi operators, people making and receiving deliveries and businesses in the area.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Minister, can you please advise the Committee of the Government's progress on improving commuter car parks and interchanges for the travelling public?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: I am pleased to say that in 2011-12 the State budget committed \$76 million to deliver commuter car parks and public transport interchanges, including delivery of four new car parks and seven interchanges currently under consideration. Since March 2011 commuter car parks have opened at Wyong, Woy Woy, Revesby, Seven Hills and Blacktown stations, providing approximately 1,700 additional parking spaces. An upgrade of transport interchange facilities at Allawah was completed in August and at Narwee in September 2011. A number of commuter car parks and interchanges are currently under construction, including Mt Druitt, Schofields station car park—which will open very shortly on 29 October 2011 as part of the Richmond line duplication—and stage two of the new commuter car park at Tailby Street, Macarthur, which is due for completion before the end of this year. A new car park is also under construction at Penrith by Penrith City Council, as part of the program. Upgrades to transport interchange facilities at Werrington, Kogarah, North Strathfield, Panania and Kingswood stations are currently under construction. They are three main programs that will improve rail stations, commuter car parks and associated infrastructure across the metropolitan network.

This State budget delivers \$268 million to upgrade our rail stations and associated infrastructure. The pot of money available to upgrade our stations and car parks is \$55 million higher than what was spent by Labor last year, so this important work is a boost. This includes \$76 million towards the delivery of commuter car parks and transport interchanges across the CityRail network—very important for our rail commuters. The State budget also delivers \$30 million for upgrading stations under the Easy Access Program, including an extra \$7.5 million, which I alluded to in a previous answer, for the additional \$60 million this Government has committed over the next four years to the Easy Access Program.

In addition to this, a further \$69 million is allocated to CityRail's station upgrade program. This money has been put aside to upgrade the facilities that rail commuters rely on every day. These funds will be used to complete the upgrades that are under construction at Central, Picton and Windsor, and to continue the easy-access upgrade at Sydenham station which is due to be completed at the end of 2013. We will also complete four car parks under construction at Mount Druitt, Macarthur, Schofields and Penrith, and we will finish seven interchanges under construction at Allawah, Kingswood, Kogarah, Narwee, North Strathfield, Panania and Leppington. Our Government is committing hundreds of millions of dollars into upgrading our railway stations, car park and interchange infrastructure. We are very pleased to be able to do that. We have record funding set aside for the station upgrade programs, including commuter car parks, and we are determined that the money will be spent in the best interests of taxpayers and commuters.

Regrettably, Labor's program for determining which stations got priority was not transparent. Our Government is determined to make our public transport system one that people want to use. Therefore, we are now undertaking a review into the way stations are selected for easy access upgrades, commuter car parks and interchanges, and general station upgrades to ensure the best possible outcome for public transport customers and taxpayers. We are obviously not reviewing the funding allocated towards these programs. That is at a record high. I want to emphasise that the funding for these programs is higher than what Labor spent last year. This record amount of money remains and will be spent on upgrading train stations and car parks as well as interchanges. The selection process has not been recently reviewed, which is why we are doing it. It is important to make sure that spending is targeted for the maximum benefit of our travelling public.

After the review is completed of the location of easy access upgrades, commuter car parks and interchanges, general station upgrades of course will be determined and will be made public. The Government will then be in a position to announce new and additional rail station upgrades based on the updated criteria, and in addition to the upgrades I have already announced that we will complete. Additional commuter car parks and interchanges will be announced. There is \$93 million available in that fund and in the parking space levy fund, which will also be drawn on to deliver new car parks and interchange projects. I want to make the point clearly that not only are we spending more money on station upgrades than was spent last year, but we will ensure that upgrades are done to benefit the maximum number of customers. Our Government is committed to building our transport infrastructure and restoring accountability.

CHAIR: The time for Government questions has now concluded. The Committee will take a 15-minute break and resume at 4.30 p.m.

[Short adjournment]

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Will the Transport Master Plan be presented in a draft form for members of the community to comment on?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The community will have a direct input into the planning process, about which I will have more to say at the appropriate time. We do not believe that consultation means saying, "Here is a plan". That is not consultation; consultation is listening to and receiving information from the many organisations that are expert in transport, including ferries, and then drawing on that expertise. Government is good but we do not have all the answers and we need to ensure that we have input from the appropriate areas. One area from which I am particularly keen to have good input is local government, which spends a lot of time and money on feasibility studies, ports, planning and public transport.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I do not want to interrupt the Minister, but will the process that she just described lead to a draft plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am anticipating that the process will involve consultation at key milestones. I do not want to say too much now as I will be making an announcement at the appropriate time. Suffice to say that when we make that announcement the process will be clear and members of the public, community organisations and stakeholder groups will have an input into it.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: At some point there will be a comprehensive document that people can see—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Obviously it is the intention of the Government to have a constructive document that will serve this State well for decades to come. Irrespective of a government's political persuasion, a Transport Master Plan should be above politics and it should be based on expert advice. That is the process that will be undertaken by this Government.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Mr Callahan, will you provide the Committee with the on-time running figures for Sydney Ferries for the year to date?

Mr CALLAHAN: Last year we had 168,500 services at 98.5 per cent on-time running.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Compared to previous audit periods does that show an improving, stable or deteriorating position in regard to the on-time running of ferries? Do you have those longitudinal numbers to make a comparison?

Mr CALLAHAN: The average of the past three years was about 98.2 per cent.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: In the last period has it slightly increased?

Mr CALLAHAN: Yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Do you have a year-to-date figure for passenger numbers?

Mr CALLAHAN: Year-to-date figures for passenger numbers as at 30 June are the same as the figures I gave in my previous answer.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: That is fine.

Mr CALLAHAN: Last year we had 14.5 million passengers, which was a 1.1 per cent growth on figures for the previous year.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Going back to the year before that, is that growth on growth? In other words, has the figure been growing in the past three years?

Mr CALLAHAN: The year before that growth was at 3 per cent. We normalised the numbers to exclude the JetCats that were removed in December 2008, so the year before that there was 5.8 per cent growth.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Essentially there has been continuous growth over the past three years, is that right?

Mr CALLAHAN: With a declining year prior to those three years.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: What was the decline then?

Mr CALLAHAN: It was 1.2 per cent.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I refer to mechanical failures, which obviously is a cause for concern for the travelling public. Do you have any information or breakdown figures for Sydney Ferries?

Mr CALLAHAN: Last year our number of cancellations was 129 across those services.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: It was 129 across all ferry services for the calendar year?

Mr CALLAHAN: All this information is available on the website.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Do you have the numbers for the preceding two years?

Mr CALLAHAN: On cancellations?

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Associated with breakdowns. Are we talking about the same thing?

Mr CALLAHAN: No, I am talking about services that did not operate. The best way to describe the reliability of the vessel whilst in service would be vessel reliability, which is a measure that is also on the website. Last year our vessel reliability number was 96.5 per cent.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: You are distinguishing that from that figure of 129 which was the actual number of cancellations?

Mr CALLAHAN: Service cancellations, correct.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Do you have the numbers for the previous two years?

Mr CALLAHAN: It was 96.4 per cent the year before that and 95 per cent in 2008-09.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Over the three years there was some improvement. Do you have the figures for the preceding two years relating to the 129 cancellations?

Mr CALLAHAN: No, I do not have them in those aggregate numbers. It is on the web.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Minister, bearing in mind those numbers that Mr Callahan has just given the Committee relating to on-time running, passenger numbers, breakdowns and reliability, why has the Government explicitly forbidden Sydney Ferries from tendering for the franchising process that is underway?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: Interestingly, the issue of Sydney Ferries and the franchising process is what was available and, of course, there was a lot of commercial-in-confidence material that the previous Government was not able to pass on to the incoming Government on the previous franchising process. But one bit of information that this Government was able to obtain is that Sydney Ferries came last in the previous bid process. We did not want to put the organisations and the employees through the stress of bidding for something. Under the previous process—which was quite recent and which cost \$6 million—it cost Sydney Ferries a lot of money to put in a bid. It not only cost a lot of money; it also took a lot of resources, which Sydney Ferries was not able to dedicate to front-line services, to put in a bid. We did not think it was fair for it to be a part of this process. In addition, under this Government's policy, it is in the interests of customer services and ferry workers to have a viable and growing ferry sector. It is also in our customers' best interests to franchise the service.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I understand from your answer that there are two reasons why Sydney Ferries was effectively excluded from participating in the tendering process. Did you consult Sydney Ferries employees directly about whether they wanted to participate in the tendering process?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This was a Government decision based on the work done by the previous Government. The previous Government is on the record as spending millions of dollars on the previous process. A lot of that money was spent putting in a bid for Sydney Ferries. It is also on the public record that Sydney Ferries came last by a long mile, and it is not fair to workers to make them go through that process when Sydney Ferries is not in a position to do so.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: As I understand your explanation, that is a value judgement on the new Government's part. You did not consult with Sydney Ferries employees about whether they would want to participate in a process that would affect their employment arrangements. Did you not think it was appropriate to consult them?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: With all due respect, that is a Government decision. In relation to the last point about consultation, since we made the announcement about franchising Sydney Ferries I have met with union representatives on a number of occasions to consult and to provide them with certainty. In fact, the most recent meeting was this morning. The workers have been kept advised at every major step. I am pleased to say that the Government, the director general and his staff have been involved in ongoing consultations with the workers during this process.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: But you—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I want to say one thing because this is an important point. The employees put a couple of issues to me when I met with them during the franchise discussions. They wanted certainty, they wanted the skills of the workforce recognised and they wanted the process to be fair. We have honoured those requests at every stage of the process.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Except that they have been excluded from participating in the franchise process.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is a decision for the Government and I do not apologise for it.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: You do not apologise—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, I do not.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: —that Sydney Ferries employees have not been able to—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, because it was in the best interests of the organisation and the workers.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So you are saying that you prejudged the tender process.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, your Government did that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We have just dealt with the excellent growing patronage numbers, excellent on-time running and excellent operation of the fleet. You decided to ignore that entirely based on what you believed happened and prejudged the tendering process by ruling out Sydney Ferries' participation in the tender process.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will correct a number of those statements. It is easy to achieve on-time running when ferries travel every hour rather than every half hour. Last September or October your Government slashed 140 weekly ferry services. That meant the frequency of many services went from half-hourly to hourly. The Labor Government spent millions of dollars on a franchise process but at the last minute decided not to proceed. However, it was made public that Sydney Ferries' tender came last by a long shot.

Your Government's Metropolitan Transport Plan: Connecting the City of Cities—the most recent of nine transport plans released over 16 years—which was tabled in February 2010, contained a forecast that

patronage would decline by 5 per cent over 10 years. Your Government told the people of New South Wales that in 2010 there were 40,000 frequent passengers on ferry services and that in 10 years—that is, in 2020—that figure would be 38,000. Your Government was planning for a decline in ferry patronage. This Government did not believe that that was sustainable and it wanted to provide more frequent and more reliable services. It also wanted to provide opportunities for the workers. How would you feel if you worked for an organisation that slashed 140 of the weekly services you provided? That would not make you feel happy about the future of that organisation.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I understand your explanation.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is why we have taken—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: However, I asked a specific question about the exclusion of Sydney Ferries from the franchise process. I think you have answered that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will add one more point.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: No, I want—

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My point is—

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Hang on! I have limited time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have not finished my answer.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I want to ask another question.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: You have plenty of time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Okay.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Given the close relationship between Nick Greiner, Barry O'Farrell and the former executive director of the Serco Institute, Gary Sturgess, what measures have you put in place to ensure that no preferential treatment is given to Serco in the awarding of ferry contracts in New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That process has been at arms length from the Government; it has been undertaken by the department. I have deferred to Mr Wielinga to deal with that process.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My question asked what steps you as Minister have put in place. [*Time expired.*]

CHAIR: The Opposition's time has expired.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As the Minister I have delegated every administrative arrangement or decision about timing and the contracting process to the department. I have not been involved in that process in any way because it is important for the Government to be above reproach in this process. If anyone wants to discuss Sydney Ferries with me, even if he or she is not part of the process, a departmental officer is present during those discussions.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: So your answer is that you have taken no specific steps.

CHAIR: The Opposition's time has expired.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Madam Chair, it is important for me to address this issue. We have taken a number of steps to ensure probity at all costs. That is why all the issues surrounding the process have been dealt with directly by the department. I will ask the director general to comment on that because it is an important issue. My office and I have taken every step possible to ensure that the process is above reproach. I would like the director general to address that issue, given that he is administering the process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I suggest that the Minister take that question on notice and provide a written answer rather than cut into crossbench members' time. The Opposition would be happy with that.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is up to the Committee.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I think it would cut into the Government's time.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: We are happy for that to happen.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If the Committee is amenable, I would prefer for the issue to be dealt with now.

CHAIR: That is fine.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: We are happy for it to cut into our time.

Mr WIELINGA: The first tenet we adhere to in the administration of contracts like this is the appointment of a probity auditor, and that has occurred. The probity auditor is appointed before the tender process commences. The second tenet adhered to is that all tenderers are provided with the same information. A data room is established upfront and everybody gets the same amount of information.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Except Sydney Ferries.

CHAIR: Please allow Mr Wielinga to answer the question.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Will you confirm that Sydney Ferries is excluded—

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: You are now cutting into the Government's time for questions. Please let Mr Wielinga finish his answer.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I am simply seeking clarification.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: If you keep cutting in you will be taking more of our time.

Mr WIELINGA: I will be brief. The third tenet adhered to in administering these contracts is that the selection process and how we use the information obtained to make a decision is spelt out upfront and signed off by the probity auditor before each of the key bids is received. Therefore, how that decision is made is known before the information comes in. The fourth tenet adhered to is the appointment of the right sort of people who understand the business and how ferries operate. We must have capable people who can be informed buyers in these circumstances. We also ensure that we have an appropriate interaction process with all tenderers and that it is managed equally in the presence of the probity auditor. I can provide further detail about how we ensure that with safe rooms and so on. At the end of the day we are looking for a value for money outcome and we will make a recommendation to the Government.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: On notice—

CHAIR: No, there will be no more questions from the Opposition. I now invite crossbench members to ask questions.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: It relates directly to the point he raised.

CHAIR: Mr Wielinga has answered the question that you asked. You will not ask any subsequent questions.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The question was—

CHAIR: You are now encroaching on crossbench time. Unless the crossbench members are happy for you to ask your question, I will start the clock on their time.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I am happy for the Hon. Greg Donnelly to ask a question on notice.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Mr Wielinga, you stated that a certain number of people with expertise would oversee the process. Can you provide a list of the names of those people?

Mr WIELINGA: We can do that after the tender process is completed. I will take some advice and see what we can do to get that information to you.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Given that the ferry timetable for services to Balmain has resulted in a shambolic situation in that two ferries arrive at the wharf at the same time and that the service is being privatised, will you commit to a review of ferry timetables involving community consultation?

Mr CALLAHAN: That is probably more for the director general and the Transport for NSW network review.

Mr WIELINGA: There is a review of ferry services going on at the moment as part of the transport master plan work. Each of those modes is being looked at.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Can you reassure the community that there will be a review of bus timetables to match ferry timetables to minimise the number of people who daily are parking in the streets surrounding the ferry wharf at Balmain as there are no appropriate bus services to bring people to the ferries?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I was actually precluded from answering this question previously by the honourable members, but I was trying to make the point in one of my admittedly longer answers that when you make massive changes to rail and bring in extra services they do need to have a flow-on effect to buses and ferries. Similarly, when you bring in 140 extra weekly services plus 25 extra services down the Parramatta River you need to look at bus connections. That is something that we are very committed to doing even more prominently in the future and, once Transport for NSW commences on 1 November, one of the key criteria for the person heading up our Transport Services Division is to ensure that all timetable changes, irrespective of mode, are done in conjunction with other modes. No longer can Sydney sustain a situation where each mode of transport is looked at in isolation.

I take the point you make and I think it is an important one. If we want to encourage people to catch ferries, if we want to encourage people to come to wharves, we have to improve bus connections and access to those wharves. Especially where the inner west is concerned, I would like to look at how people might get better access via walking, cycling and other means, because the more opportunities we provide for people to access wharves the less people we have on congested roads, such as Victoria Road. That is certainly an objective of ours and I think the point you make is a valid one.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Will the community be consulted about ferry timetable changes in the process of building a master plan?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have established and will continue to establish an ongoing mechanism whereby feedback is received on an ongoing basis. For example, if somebody writes to or contacts Transport for NSW that feedback is immediately noted and it is considered when we are reviewing timetables. That is the process we undertake in bus network reviews, but also in other transport modes. One thing I get to enjoy as the Minister for Transport is reading feedback from the community—and obviously it is just a very small proportion of what the people in the network get on a daily or weekly basis. That type of input from the community is considered in our timetabling changes.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: That is feedback on existing timetables, but nothing in terms of going to the community with new timetables to get their feedback. Is that envisaged?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In addition to announcing the franchising of Sydney Ferries and having a new operator of Sydney Ferries, what we have done—and the director general may want to expand on this—is put out expressions of interest to the private sector saying, "If there are any routes that you think customers would want to use, which are currently not offered, please come and talk to us and we will help you start those routes." For example, if a small business operator who had a vessel thought that he or she might be successful in taking passengers from one location to another on a route that currently does not exist we have said that we would be happy to support that. There are a number of ways in which the community and business can participate in ongoing issues regarding additional services.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What exactly are the cost savings that your Government expects as a result of privatising ferries?

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Page 6 of the Treasurer's budget speech.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There will be cost savings associated with this process, but I want to stress and put on the record that franchising Sydney Ferries is all about the customer and customer service. That is our primary motivation. Our primary motivation is to increase the value that we are able to give our customers from the services we provide, to increase the frequency of services we are able to provide and also to increase the reliability of services on the network. That is our primary motivator. When looking at Sydney Ferries patronage and some of the other figures which have been alluded to, I would alert members to look at the trend. If we look at the number of people who catch ferries today versus the number four or five years ago we see that the rate of growth on Sydney Ferries is inadequate to meet the needs of Sydney. We need to have many more people on the waterways instead of clogging up roads. The previous Government's attitude was to plan for a decline in patronage in the next 10 years. Our attitude is that this is an area of public transport that we need to grow. It is environmentally sustainable, it is a healthy way to travel and it is a pleasant way to travel. We have the best harbour and river system in the world so we should utilise it.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, with respect, the question was about cost savings in relation to privatising the ferries.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes, and I will refer to my director general because that, in part, is driven by the market. I will ask the director general to comment on that.

Mr WIELINGA: The Minister is correct. We are looking to the market to put up a figure. We have done some preliminary calculations. I do not want to communicate that to the market at this stage, to tell them what we are looking for; we expect the competitive tension process to do that. In relation to costs for ferries, we need to appreciate that there are two moving parts here. We are looking to getting efficiencies in the tendering process but at the same time we are also growing services, which moves costs upwards, so there is a balance between the two. As we do the review of ferry services, as the competitive tendering process takes place, we will be able to put a firm number on it.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: The Government has announced and advertised the franchising process, and you are unclear about the cost savings that the Government can expect. I cannot imagine a government deciding to privatise an asset without knowing what the cost savings will be in the budget.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Government has an estimate but that estimate is not definite until it is tested by the market. What we know from the previous process which was undertaken is that the franchising process will result in a much better organisation and much better value for customers who use the service and for workers who want to be part of an organisation that is growing—not shrinking—and also for the taxpayer who gets better value for their dollar.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I am not sure that the taxpayer understands yet whether they are getting value for their dollar because it is unclear what cost savings will be achieved through privatisation of ferries. Will the Minister commit to being transparent through this process and commit to tabling that information once the process is complete?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will be more than happy to keep open and transparent along every stage of the process, as we have, but because we are at a delicate stage of the franchising process we also have to be careful about commercial-in-confidence. I do want to place on the record that we were very public when we made the announcement before the election and when we made the announcement after the election. When the registration of interest was announced we made publicly available, I think an hour later or the day of, that there were 28 interested parties. During the expression of interest phase we identified and publicly made available very shortly after expressions closed the five consortia that were involved. Now we are down to three and we are getting to a delicate stage in that process, and obviously as a government we need to respect the commercial-in-confidence. As outlined by the member, there is an amount that the Government has accounted for in that process, but again I want to stress that what is driving us is better customer outcome, better value for dollar and a better organisation that is growing rather than shrinking. If we had sat on our hands and done

nothing, if we had adopted the policies of the previous Government, we would have fewer passengers in 10 years time than we have today.

You would have had 165 fewer services this week than under the former Government's regime. This Government is all about maximising the use of ferries and the use of our waterways. That is what is motivating us and we will be upfront and transparent during the process. I wish to thank all stakeholders on the constructive consultations we have had with them. In fact, I met with some stakeholders again this morning. I am looking forward to making further improvements to this important sector of public transport and the Government looks forward to providing further updates.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: What will happen to the existing ferry fleet?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Government has also announced that it will be looking at a fleet replacement strategy. You may recall that Mr Bret Walker, SC, who was commissioned to conduct the Special Commission of Inquiry into Sydney Ferries by the previous Government, from memory made 17 substantial recommendations. A number of those recommendations were about fleet replacement. A lot of the maintenance costs are being driven by the fact that in the number of vessels we have—Mr David Callahan would be able to give you a better update on this—there are many different classes of vessels. This adds to the maintenance costs and limits the ability to put ferries on different routes. In addition to announcing the franchise process, in addition to the expressions of interest for the private sector to run additional routes and in addition to the network review, the Government also said it would undertake to look at a fleet replacement strategy. When we are further down that path the Government will update the community on that. I now ask the director general to comment.

Mr WIELINGA: The ownership of the assets will continue with Government. The competition is for the provision of services. The contract will require them to look after the maintenance yard, the boats and the wharves to a certain condition standard and to prepare asset management plans. They will be required to provide services using those assets. It is a very common model around a number of jurisdictions.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Minister, will you update the Committee on the Sydney Commuter Wharf Upgrade Program, which is designed to benefit the users of Sydney Ferries?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. As part of the Government's commitment to secure improved services, access and amenities for ferry commuters it has allocated an additional \$7.5 million in funding over four years to the Sydney Commuter Wharf Upgrade Program. In 2011-12 an initial allocation of \$2 million has been provided. Expenditure of this additional funding will be informed by the ferry network review—which I have alluded to—that is currently being carried out by the Department of Transport. Since NSW Maritime took control of commuter wharves in 2006, to 30 June 2011—the time under consideration by this Committee—an amount of \$38 million had been expended under this program. Funding for this program over the forward estimates period is now \$59.15 million, which includes an additional \$7.5 million over four years. The Government appreciates how necessary it is to upgrade our wharves in order to ensure more frequent services and it has given that funding a boost. This additional money comprises \$13.4 million in 2011-12 and the program overall will result in \$16.8 million in 2012-13, \$17.9 million in 2013-14 and \$10.95 million in 2014-15. This will deliver expenditure under the program from 2006-07 to 2014-2015. With the Government's boost in funding the wharf upgrade program will be boosted to \$89.7 million, which, together with the additional \$7.5 million, gives a total expenditure of \$97.2 million.

The program has been designed to operate over the long term by progressively upgrading commuter ferry wharves. The increase in estimated total costs for the program of \$19.6 million shown in 2011-2012 Budget Paper No. 4 when compared with 2010-11—which is \$89.7 million as opposed to \$70.1 million—is due to the additional year of 2014-15 being added to the program costs and the inclusion of all expenditure since 2006. This Government has committed to the Sydney Commuter Wharf Upgrade Program by boosting the money available. It recognises that to improve services and have the flexibility to provide additional services you have to make sure that our wharves are upgraded and can cater for additional services.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Minister, you touched on the restoration and introduction of the new ferry services that took effect this month. Will you elucidate further on your answer?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. I am pleased to say that timetable changes for Sydney Ferries were introduced yesterday. These changes will restore the 30-minute frequency during weekday off-peak

periods on the Neutral Bay and Mosman ferry routes. I am also pleased to say that new improved ferry timetable will result in the reintroduction of 30-minute daytime off-peak frequencies for Neutral Bay and Mosman ferry routes on weekdays. It will result in a new weekday service from Rydalmere to Darling Harbour at 7.25 a.m. during the morning peak period—anyone who uses ferries will know the growth in that sector and how important that new service will be. It will also result in a new service from Meadowbank to Circular Quay at 5.38 p.m. on weekdays to fill a two-hour gap in services—the previous two-hour gap in services will now be closed. It will also result in a new service from Circular Quay to Meadowbank via Cabarita at 5.03 p.m. on weekdays. As I mentioned at the time of the announcement, Cabarita and the inner west are showing the largest growth in demand for ferry services. This is being addressed by additional services.

A new service will also depart Circular Quay to Sydney Olympic Park at 7.05 p.m. on weekdays. This will complement the existing services at 6.35 p.m. and 7.35 p.m. There will be three additional late evening services on Saturdays from Cockatoo Island to Circular Quay at 8.06 p.m., 10.06 p.m. and 11.06 p.m. to allow customers to enjoy the island's amenities beyond the current return ferry time. Cockatoo Island is a destination for a number of functions for anyone interested in the arts. As of yesterday the Government has reintroduced the 140 weekly services that were slashed under the previous Government. I am equally pleased that the Government has been able to put on 25 additional weekly services in western Sydney.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Run by Sydney Ferries.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Minister, will you update the Committee on the status of the Government's program in franchising Sydney Ferries?

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: Certainly. I am pleased to advise the Committee, and as I alluded to in previous questions, that the Government's ferry reform program is progressing well with recent announcements providing further evidence of its commitment to improve and expand ferry services. The centrepiece reform of our program does involve franchising Sydney Ferries to find the best possible operator to run the service. The franchising model developed by the Government has received overwhelming support from industry, with 28 companies responding to the initial request for registrations of interest back in May this year. A strong field of five local and international operators had lodged formal expressions of interest as at the end of July. The project has now reached a major milestone with the release of tender documents to the three groups that were shortlisted from the expressions of interest stage. The shortlisted parties are: Harbour City Ferries, which is a consortium of Veolia Transdev Australasia and Transfield Services Australia, Serco Australia, and Transit Systems and Forges Engineering.

Those organisations will have until early next year to submit detailed tender responses as to why they should be selected to operate Sydney Ferries. Those tender responses will be evaluated against a number of criteria including safety and operational and maintenance capability, as well as value for money for taxpayers. In line with the new emphasis that the Government is placing on customer service across the public transport network, the ability of the tenderers to improve the overall customer experience will be a key consideration. The franchising model is consistent with the recommendations made by Mr Bret Walker, SC in the Special Commission of Inquiry into Sydney Ferries, which regrettably the previous Government failed to follow through on. Under this model the Government will retain ownership of Sydney Ferries vessels and the Balmain Shipyard. It will also retain full control over service levels, ticketing and fares. The Government, through the new Transport for NSW agency, will also retain responsibility for all strategic functions, such as longer-term service planning and asset revitalisation.

The development of a fleet replacement strategy, as I alluded to, will be led by the Government, with expert input from the new operator as required. Clearly, we need to engage the new operator in that process. While there is strong public affection for many of the current vessels in the fleet, many are nearing the end of their economic life and are likely to become more costly to maintain as the years go on. The Walker inquiry also highlighted the problems and inefficiencies which arise from having so many different types of vessels across the fleet. The Government is committed to fleet replacement but we will not repeat the mistakes of the past by adopting an ad hoc approach to this. We are talking about significant public assets, and we will not rush into any major investment decisions without getting the planning right.

The design of the new fleet must be driven by service delivery requirements which reflect the needs of our customers. The same philosophy will drive the Government's approach to the upgrading of ferry wharves across the network. We have already delivered on our election commitment to provide additional funding for upgrades, with an additional \$7.5 million for NSW Maritime's Wharf Upgrade Program, announced as part of

the Government's first budget. This program will be considered as part of the network review to ensure that priority is given to the projects which will deliver the most benefit for customers into the future. The new operator will be required to sign a contract with Transport for NSW which includes robust and measurable performance indicators on matters such as reliability, customer service and safety.

The new operator will need to consistently meet these targets to receive all of its payments under the contract. This will ensure that there is a clear commercial incentive for the operator to deliver improved services for Sydney Ferries customers. This incentive simply does not exist under the current model, under which the services are delivered by a government operator. Our Government is committed to delivering on this important reform. We have promised that the new private operator will be in place by the end of next year, and we are on track to deliver on that commitment. The services to be delivered by the new operator will include the additional 165 services per week which the Premier and I announced last month and which commenced yesterday. This includes restoring the 140 weekly services to which I have already alluded.

We have also announced an additional 25 weekly services in response to growing demand along Parramatta River. This is an area that we will continue to look at, given that the demand for services along Parramatta River is growing at a very fast rate. As I said earlier, an additional 165 weekly services are available from this week. The updated timetables have been released and the new services are already operating. As I said at the outset of this section of the hearing, our Government is about improving and expanding services, not cutting public transport options. We know that every extra trip that public transport can attract is taking cars off the roads, helping to address congestion, helping the environment and assisting commuters to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

That is why we have also started a process to encourage private ferry operators to suggest new commuter ferry routes they would like to provide on a deregulated cost-neutral basis. The success of the privately operated Manly high-speed ferry service has shown that there is scope for similar initiatives which can improve services for passengers. However, until now the private sector has been restricted by the regulations and by the lack of opportunities to gain access to key wharves. In August this year the Department of Transport and NSW Maritime commenced an expression of interest process for new commuter ferry routes. Under the process wharf access slots at wharf 6 at Circular Quay are being opened up to commuter operators for the first time. Spare spots at other wharves across the harbour are also being made available.

Responses to the expressions of interest are currently being considered. The significant progress that this Government has already made in delivering its ferry reform program demonstrates our commitment to improving Sydney's ferry services. As I said before—I do not think anyone would disagree with me on this point—we have the best harbour in the world, and our reforms are long overdue to ensure that Sydney has the world-class ferry service it deserves. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is address to Mr Rowley. When did the State Transit Authority decided to purchase and install the fire suppression equipment for the 254 Mercedes gas buses?

Mr ROWLEY: Back in late 2010 our executive review committee committed to purchasing the fire suppression.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, in your statement to the House on 19 October why did you not inform the community about these additional safety measures that were being put in place?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I did.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, you did not.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It was in *Hansard*. I did, and I am happy to repeat that. From memory, on 19 or 20 October, whichever day I was asked questions by the Opposition—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It was 19 October.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The strike broke on 19 October, and I think on the next day in Parliament, on 20 October, I was asked a question by the Opposition. I noted that the State Transit Authority, in September, had already decided to put in that extra precautionary measure. I stress to the Committee that the State Transit Authority was discussing this issue over a year ago. For whatever reason, the decision to take that

extra precautionary measure was not taken until this year, and I am pleased that it has. I made that public the day that I found out or the day that that advice was provided to me. I suggest you read *Hansard*.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am reading *Hansard* and it is clear that you did not mention that on 19 October.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It could have been 20 October, which is the day after. As I said, the day the strike broke during question time I was asked a question and I answered the question. The day after that, when I provided advice to the House, which was 20 October, I mentioned that. It is in *Hansard*, and I suggest you read it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have read it. You were keen to beat up on the union but at no point on the day did you indicate that additional measures were being put in place to deal with these buses.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The question I was asked by the Opposition was a few minutes after I found out about the strike action. Interestingly, I was updated during the day about union activity, which was around wages and conditions. When I was advised during question time I provided advice to the House about all the advice and information I had. The following day I voluntarily put everything on the record, and I was pleased to do so because a number of claims made by the unions were incorrect. The union alleged that it had not been kept up to date by the State Transit Authority. As I said on the record on that day and the day after, the State Transit Authority contacted the union on the weekend after the incident on 29 July. The State Transit Authority also took union delegates on a tour of the bus. I understand the bus driver took footage of the incident and provided the footage to the State Transit Authority and to his union delegates. So the union delegate had access to the footage in question in the week after.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is about the fire suppression equipment.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, no, no. I want to continue.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have read your *Hansard*.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Clearly you do not want an answer. I also highlight that I provided that information in *Hansard*, which you allege I did not. I have it here. Also on that day I put on the record—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Not on 19 October.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, you asked me, "Why did you"—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Not on 19 October.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: No, you asked me, "Why did you fail to tell the Parliament?" I did not fail—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is not in *Hansard* on 19 October.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You have not even read the *Hansard*.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If that is the way you want to spin it, that is fine.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If you ask me a question you have to accept the answer. You got it wrong. You had not done your homework. I suggest you read the *Hansard* of 20 October, which provides explicitly all the advice I received from the State Transit Authority, all the advice I had to hand. I was very pleased to make public that day the extra precaution that was taken by this Government even though the issue was first raised over a year ago, in July last year.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Mr Rowley, has all of the fire suppression equipment been installed now?

Mr ROWLEY: No.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What is the time frame for that installation?

Mr ROWLEY: We hope to go to tender in the very near future. We are just finalising the technical specifications. We anticipate that probably over about the next 18 months all fire suppression systems will be installed.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Eighteen months?

Mr ROWLEY: That is right.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, I want to ask you about the public transport information and priority system, and private bus commuters—commuters on private buses—and their ability to access real-time global positioning satellite data like people on public buses. Can you confirm what the time frame is for people who travel on private buses to get access to real-time data for timetabling?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will ask the director general to respond to that one.

Mr WIELINGA: We have just started rolling out the Public Transport Improvement Program into the private buses, some ComfortDelGro Cabcharge buses and some of Veolia Transport's buses have been done.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can I just clarify, is that only on the new ones that are basically coming on line? There is no retrofit of the ones currently on the road?

Mr WIELINGA: No, the other private buses need a box in them that is associated with the integrated ticketing. We combine that box with the Public Transport Improvement Program and then we can provide real-time information. To get a cost-effective outcome, we are combining the strategy with the roll out of integrated ticketing and that way we will have global positioning satellite scheduling information—all of the stuff that is needed to make the system work effectively.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So, remind me of the time frame for when that would be on all the private buses for integrated ticketing?

Mr WIELINGA: Well, the integrated ticketing gets under way with ferries next year and then buses the following year, but we have already started installing these boxes associated with integrated ticketing into private buses already.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Will it be 2013 before that is switched on?

Mr WIELINGA: We want to do segments of Sydney at a time, so it will depend on how quickly we get all of these boxes in and we make sure they are working and the integrated ticketing people are happy to hand it over to us early, but we are talking to them about that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to provide a list of the roll out of the areas in which you think that is going to roll out through 2013?

Mr WIELINGA: I will take that on notice and we will go and have a look for you.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Previously, I understand, some of that data was available and it has obviously been in the media that people were using it to develop apps around real-time data. If it is able to be provided in some areas, why is it switched off now so it is not available anymore?

Mr WIELINGA: Where we have got the Public Transport Improvement Program up and running and we are confident that it is working well in the State Transit Authority system, we have been providing the data. We have just started installing it into the private areas and, as I said, as the boxes go into the buses and as the improvement program rolls out, and then we make sure it works, we will start providing that information.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: So, is there no ability, where it is already installed, for it to be switched on and operated for private bus passengers?

Mr WIELINGA: I said I would come back and give you some details of where we are at with that at this stage. I am not going to speculate on it here and now without the detailed information.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can I just ask then about bus contracts? Obviously bus contracts, as I understand it, are currently being negotiated. Are you able to give some milestone time frames on that process?

Mr WIELINGA: Yes. The bus contracts have just been extended by 12 months in accordance with the contract. Discussions are happening with the bus industry about the performance elements of those contracts. We have instigated an independent review of on-time running by having independent auditors out there at the moment to check what those figures are. That is part of the process. There are several issues we want addressed in the new contracts to improve the performance. Those discussions are under way. The contracts will start coming on line in about 12 months' time and for the metropolitan ones they are spread over about 12 months—they are all on different timings.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to provide the Committee with a list of the time frames for each of those different types of contracts?

Mr WIELINGA: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, there has been discussion around the bus contracts, around what is happening with the bus depots. Are you able to provide some information to the Committee about that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As the director general said, we have not formally engaged in that process as yet. We are in a process where we have determined to look at those arrangements, as those contracts come up, post the extension of time. Clearly we will discuss a number of issues with industry in due course. Our primary concern is to make sure that we have good measures of performance, that we enter the arrangements and negotiations on the basis of mutual decisions about what is in the best interests of the customer and how those performance measures are undertaken between the Government and the private bus operators. I am looking forward to embarking on the formal process of engagement. It is heartening to know that in all the preliminary discussions we have had—without obviously going into detailed discussions—with the industry, that we are starting off on a basis of mutual respect. We know the private sector operators make an enormous contribution to bus services. They have done so for a long time. Similarly, we know that we want to refresh the approach we take to making sure that we have good performance measures on both sides of the equation and we are looking forward to that process of negotiation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, are you committed to the roll out of all the Metro bus routes previously announced?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are obviously committed to providing additional services and I was very pleased to announce—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The ones that were announced by the previous Government—are you committed to all of those?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The previous Government slashed 1,500 weekly bus services back in 2006.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am asking you about since?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know you have asked that question, but it is only fair to allow me to answer the question. Regrettably, there are fewer services today than there were back in 2006 when the previous Government, for whatever reason, decided to slash a number of weekly bus services. We are in the process of improving frontline services in buses and, as I stated in an earlier question, I was very pleased to introduce additional bus services, including night ride services. I am happy to go through them for the benefit of members.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, I am interested in the Metro buses specifically and whether you are committed to everyone that was previously announced?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are committed to improving existing services but also to increasing the number of services. But I want to make sure that if a current route may be better served by

altering it slightly because of community concern or feedback, that we are open to that. We need to make sure we have a flexible system. I will not commit to exactly every single same route, because that may not be in the interests of the community, but I will commit to enhancing front-line services, which is what we have already done. In fact, the bus timetable changes which were introduced in recent days highlight that fact. Not only have we improved the number of services in the metropolitan network, but we have also increased the number of night ride bus services, to make sure that people who work in the city and live in outer areas—especially in the west and north-west—have access to those services late at night and in the early hours of the morning.

We accept there is a demand for services. That is why we increased the number of night ride services available. We will be looking to enhance the number of front-line services. We have made a great start with the timetable changes, with the number of services we have brought back in relation to rail, ferry and buses, and our aim is to improve services to commuters—we want to see more frequent and regular use of bus services and buses will continue to have an important role to play, not only in providing direct services between destinations, but also obviously in feeding people into the rail network.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Minister, just on the question of the Government's wages policies for State sector employees, I am wondering what sort of award conditions do you think that bus drivers could negotiate to obtain their further 1.5 per cent wage increase under the Government's wages policy?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is currently the subject of negotiations between the State Transit Authority and the unions. In fact, the day the unions decided to announce a snap strike there were negotiations or discussions within the union about the current wages and conditions under negotiations—as there were the day before. I might ask Peter Rowley, as chief executive officer of the State Transit Authority, to provide an update to the Committee on the status of those negotiations.

Mr ROWLEY: State Transit had formally offered a 3.25 per cent pay increase, that is over three years.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Sorry, they have got their 2.5 and this is for?

Mr ROWLEY: It is 3.25 per cent.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: That is additional, above the 2.5 per cent.

Mr ROWLEY: It is the 2.5 per cent Government wages policy, plus a further 0.75 per cent, and this was for three years. There were four cost offsets that we have put to them as to award changes. In our discussions with the union, they have been very receptive to those award changes. They have put our position to their executive. I understand that they are now going to give us feedback on whether they will put our offer to their members. That is where it currently is.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, the Productivity Commission's draft report into the economic regulation of airport services, which was issued in August 2011, highlights the extraordinary situation of Sydney Airport having only one bus service. I am sure you are aware that that one bus service does not directly connect to the central business district, but travels between Bondi Junction and Burwood.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Yes.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: This is obviously due to contractual obligations with Airport Link included in the original contract signed by the Liberal Government in 1995 which prohibits the Government providing such services. Can you guarantee that no contracts with clauses that restrict equitable access to transport services such as these will be signed by your Government?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can certainly state to the Committee that we acknowledge the challenges that commuters face travelling between major transport hubs in our city and we appreciate the congestion associated around those transport hubs. That is why, as I addressed in a previous response to a question you asked in relation to access fees, we are working with the relevant authorities to see how best we can improve public transport services in and around the airport. That has always been our position. It is nothing new that I am saying, but clearly our transport master plan process will allow us to look at those issues in greater detail.

The mantra that we adopted since day one of this Government is to put the customer at the centre of everything we do in public transport. We make sure that every decision we make and every action we take in relation to public transport is about providing better customer service. Clearly that is the attitude we will take to any future opportunities we have to enhance services. What will drive and motivate us and what continues to drive and motivate us is how we can better service the customer.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Can you guarantee around the signing of future contracts, though, that there will not be similar clauses that impact significantly on the transport used in New South Wales?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I can assure you that any arrangements we enter into on behalf of the people of New South Wales in relation to public transport will be about improving customer service. That is our aim. That is always what we have said. I hope—I should not say "I hope"—I would like to think that what we have achieved in the first six months demonstrates that. We sat down and negotiated with the light rail operator, for example, in relation to getting a better deal for people who want to use light rail. We have made similar approaches in other areas. We are a government that will put, and that has put, customers first in everything we do. Clearly any arrangements we enter into in the future, whether it is franchising Sydney Ferries, whether it is renegotiating our bus contracts or whether it is looking at new arrangements, will be driven by the customer and what the customer needs.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, I wonder whether you have any influence over contracts, considering you are the Minister for Transport, and whether you can have any influence over contracts that are not signed by you but will impact on transport users across the State? For example, with the Sydney Airport situation there is only, as I said, one bus. As I understand it, you cannot provide any bus services to the approximately 140,000 users of that airport each day. The Productivity Commission has used the example of North Sydney which has 50,000 people employed in the area and is serviced by 62 bus routes.

The Productivity Commission's report suggests that the Government could negotiate with the company to relax these restrictions or buy out the service. You are talking a lot about customer service, yet what about all of these people who use the airport and have only one bus and, clearly, it is a bus that does not even connect with the central business district? Have you considered looking into the situation? Does the Government have anything before it that it is considering to make it easier, or even just to make it possible, for people to catch a bus from the city to the airport?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Certainly. Clearly our transport master plan process will deal with those issues. We know we have enormous challenges as to what public transport users can access in the region in the vicinity of the airport, but we also know that it demands careful consideration. I am not a transport Minister who will announce something before we have done our homework and before it is fully funded, but obviously we look forward to the additional input we expect to receive during the master plan process on that issue. I would also say that, where appropriate, if there are opportunities for us to sit down and obtain a better deal for our travelling public, we will look at those options. But of course we need to make sure that every announcement we make about public transport has been done after careful consideration and after funding and costing arrangements also have been put in place.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: With respect, this is probably quite a separate issue that could be easily dealt with, or could be dealt with on a parallel basis to the master plan, and this is about the contractual arrangements that Airport Link has with the Government that essentially prohibits it from providing any of these buses. Does the Government have anything before it relating to cost-benefit analysis and whether buying out or subsidising bus services to the airport is feasible?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have heard today just some of the challenges that we face in public transport. There are a number of priorities that this Government has been addressing and will continue to address. There is a long list of things that we need to do. The issues you have mentioned are definitely on our radar; they are on the list. The challenge for this Government is to make sure that we have a clear plan moving forward about when we stage our activity and what priorities need to be determined. That is why we want to ensure that we embark on a process which will assist us to identify the priorities, but also deal with the challenges you outline.

I will be the first to say that we have enormous challenges to ensure that people have access to key places in Sydney, the airport being one of them. Those challenges exist elsewhere. As a government, we will

make sure that we plan for these things properly when we are talking about improving services, but that we also embark on a proper planning process which sets out priorities and time frames for these activities to occur.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: By the way I am looking forward to next year's budget estimates because hopefully that master plan will have been released and hopefully we will be able to get more answers about the master plan. But will that master plan incorporate the challenge of getting buses to Sydney Airport?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: We have more road users than train users.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: John, excuse me.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: It is not your time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Obviously that issue will definitely be considered as part of that process. We look forward to having expert input into that process. But as this Committee has discussed during the course of the day, we have enormous challenges also regarding freight in that precinct as well as commuter services. We need to get all that right. You cannot get that right by looking at things as one-off issues. We have to look at it in an integrated way, which is why we are embarking on this process. But I do not for a second take away from the importance of the issue you have raised, and I do not for a second take away from the fact that I know many people feel frustrated by the current arrangements.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Do you find it frustrating that the Fahey Liberal Government signed this contract that is prohibiting you from providing bus services to the airport?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I think it is important to mention—and I stand corrected on the year—that I think it was 2005 when the Labor Government reconfirmed those arrangements. In 2005 the Labor Government confirmed the arrangements. It had an opportunity again to change arrangements if it wanted to. I believe the year was 2005, and I stand to be corrected if that is different. But it was 2005 when the Labor Government reconfirmed. It was either 2004 or 2005 when the Labor Government confirmed those arrangements. We have inherited those arrangements, which were confirmed by the previous Labor Government—as we have inherited a lot of other things you left for us and we are working through those challenges. But again, I do not take away or I do not wish to underestimate the challenges that are before us, including those types of access issues.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Just in relation to my first question, which was about the contracts, you are confirming that, as transport Minister, you really have no say or influence over the contracts that your colleagues, other Ministers or governments outside your own contract have signed, and that may make it very difficult for you to provide transport services in the future, such as roads contracts or the re-signing of the Airport Link contract.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not saying that at all. I did not say that.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I did not say you did.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am not sure how you came to that conclusion. All my comments today have been predicated on the important point that for the first time in many years this Government will be addressing transport issues in an integrated fashion. That includes land-use strategies and other government agencies. Of course, my department has an important role to play in future contracts that touch on transport. That goes without saying. This is a Government that will do things in a whole-of-government approach to ensure that transport is not just an afterthought but is part of the planning process. That is why we have adopted the strategies we have, and I am very pleased we have done so, because as a department our strategies and policies need to be tied into whole of government to make sure we deliver customer service and an integrated approach, which regrettably has been lacking in this State for far too long.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Does the Minister have any evidence before her that suggests seatbelts will make it safer for students travelling to and from school along some of our more dangerous rural and regional roads?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are very pleased that we have established the School Bus Safety Community Advisory Committee. This is the first time all these stakeholders have sat around the same table. It

comprises road safety experts, transport operators and parents and school representatives who will closely examine all issues relating to the safe transportation of children to and from school. I know there is community concern about seatbelts but there is also evidence to suggest we need to look carefully at children getting on and off buses. I am pleased to say that Ms Carolyn Walsh, who is the Commissioner of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, is chair of the committee. I was pleased to attend the first meeting of the committee and the feedback I received from it about people being willing to sit down and talk together was really positive. There were parent representatives sitting around one table with transport experts and the industry, which was an unprecedented but very important step in dealing with all the safety issues to do with children and bus safety in rural and regional New South Wales.

On 31 August the committee called for public submissions. I am pleased to say that more than 110 submissions were received and are currently being assessed. We had an open process where we invited the community and organisations to give us any evidence or feedback they had on the issue. From memory, submissions closed on 23 September, and the department is going through them. The submissions have been published on the Department of Transport website, so they are publicly available. I also am pleased to say that the minutes of each committee are available on the department's website. If people want to access the deliberations of the committee they are able to obtain them. I am looking forward to the committee's recommendations.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, I am about to run out of time. It is great that the committee's deliberations, submissions and minutes will be made public. Does the Government have any evidence before it in relation to risk management strategies, risk levels on school bus routes, seatbelts, and students standing on school buses that may be travelling at 80 kilometres per hour or more on winding narrow roads? Would you make that public? I tried to get some documents referring to various risk assessments through the upper House but again it was blocked by your Government. I know the public and parents want to know what evidence you have before you in relation to making those buses safer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: The whole purpose of establishing the committee was that notwithstanding the factual evidence provided to successive governments, not just this Government, the reasons for safety precautions being taken or otherwise did not meet outstanding community concern about seatbelts on buses. I stand to be corrected but because there was not conclusive factual evidence on why that should occur I thought it was appropriate to have the process deliberated on in a public way so that parents could express their concerns. The independent chair of the committee, who is an expert on transport safety, can evaluate all the facts and gain feedback from concerned parent groups about the issue so the committee can make independent reports and recommendations to government.

Interestingly, at the first meeting of the committee I said to the chair and to all members present that I would leave it to them as to when they report to me. As Minister I could have given them a date by which to report but I said it would be up to all the stakeholders to decide when they felt they were in a position to make their recommendations to me. I want this process to continue to be as robust and as open as possible. Since we set up the committee not only have we called for and received submissions in relation to the issues but the Government is in the process of assessing those submissions and the committee is continuing its deliberations. The one thing I am very grateful for is the amount of cooperation between all the stakeholders and the fact that this is the first time, even though previous governments stated they were doing things about this issue, that all the stakeholders have sat around the table together. I place on record my gratitude to the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport who is a silent observer during those deliberations. He attends on my behalf to make sure the Government is in touch with the issues being raised. Obviously I am looking forward to the recommendations the committee puts forward.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Thank you, Minister. They would never believe I am silent. As the Minister has covered much of what Government members were going to ask it might be best to forgo any further questions and to move on to a deliberative.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.