

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

**Monday 9 September 2024**

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

## **REGIONAL TRANSPORT AND ROADS**

**UNCORRECTED**

**The Committee met at 9:15.**

### **MEMBERS**

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)  
The Hon. Mark Banasiak  
The Hon. Anthony D'Adam  
The Hon. Wes Fang  
The Hon. Sam Farraway (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. Stephen Lawrence  
The Hon. Cameron Murphy

### **PRESENT**

**The Hon. Jenny Aitchison**, *Minister for Regional Transport and Roads*

## **CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

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

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

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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the third hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts for the inquiry into budget estimates 2024-2025. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Cate Fachrmann, and I am Chair of the Committee. I welcome Minister Aitchison and accompanying officials to this hearing.

Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Regional Transport and Roads. I ask everybody in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures. Welcome and thank you for making the time to give evidence. All witnesses will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister Aitchison, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

**Mr JOSH MURRAY**, Secretary, Transport for NSW, on former affirmation

**Mr MATT FULLER**, Deputy Secretary, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

**Ms SALLY WEBB**, Deputy Secretary, Safety, Environment and Regulation, Transport for NSW, on former affirmation

**Mr BERNARD CARLON**, Chief of Centre for Road Safety, Transport for NSW, on former affirmation

**Ms CAMILLA DROVER**, Deputy Secretary, Infrastructure and Place, Transport for NSW, on former affirmation

**Mr ROGER WEEKS**, Chief Executive, NSW TrainLink, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

**Mr ANTHONY HAYES**, Executive Director, Community and Place, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr TOM GROSSKOPF**, Executive Director, Network and Assets, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

**Ms HOLLY TAYLOR**, Acting Executive Director, Transport Partnerships, Office of the Coordinator General, Transport for NSW, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Today's hearing will be conducted from 9.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. We are joined by the Minister for the morning session from 9.15 a.m. until 1.00 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 11.00 a.m. In the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 3.30 p.m. During these sessions there will be questions from the Opposition and crossbench members only and then 15 minutes allocated for Government questions at 10.45 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.15 p.m. We will begin with questions from the Opposition.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Minister. Good morning, department representatives. Minister, what is the total number of average speed cameras in New South Wales?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thank you for that question. It's 36, from memory. There are about 25 in regional New South Wales.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** This is something that you could take on notice and maybe come back to us in the morning tea break. Can you give a breakdown of those average speed detection cameras per electorate across the State?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, I can get that for you. I can give you an indication now, if you like, about where they all are.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm happy to come back, because there is a supplementary question to that. Would you be able to provide the number of fatalities on New South Wales roads over the past five years that are broken into those electorates, if possible?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, of course.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, I need to do that. If you want it on the macro, though, there are about 25 cameras in regional New South Wales and then there's about six in the metro area.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister. I note that we did speak at the Bush Summit as well, so I note that you attended also. The Premier did say at the Bush Summit that the use of average speed cameras was to police light vehicles and was to target city drivers going on holidays. My question must be: Will the trial only run in holiday periods, if that's the case?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, I don't know that it was just to do that. I think it's really to make our regional roads safe. That's an example where it does impact everyone that uses those roads, regardless of where they originate from. If you look at the roads in the trial, they are roads that lots of people use from all around the State.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But the Premier did say at the Bush Summit, a very large gathering in regional New South Wales focusing on issues—I note that you had an announcement at the Bush Summit. He did say that the use of these average speed cameras and the change in policy was to police light vehicles and was

going to target city residents going on holiday—city drivers in the bush. You would think that a lot of city drivers holiday in regional New South Wales in holiday periods, so the question is: Is the trial going to be just in school holidays, or is it also targeting regional drivers?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The trial is targeting all drivers, and it is looking at people across the State who are using those roads. It will be continuing for a period of 12 months.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Will a margin of error be applied to the average speed cameras?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** You're meaning a tolerance kind of thing?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Yes, so that there is a safe speeding limit. Will there be a tolerance or a margin of error applied to these average speed cameras when they're extended beyond heavy vehicles to light vehicles?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** You'd know this from when you were Minister yourself. They don't just say, "That's the exact time in between." It's done on calculations. In terms of the exact specifics of it, we have to be careful because we don't want to be giving a message out that there is a tolerance to speeding. That's something I'm really concerned about. Casual speeding—every kilometre counts. I think we have to be really careful about how we talk about that, in that sense.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But, to confirm, there is a margin of error? There is a tolerance?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Let me say it this way: It will be the same way that it is under the arrangements for heavy vehicles at this point in time.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Right, so there is a tolerance?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It would be the same. I'm really reluctant to go into encouraging people that it's okay to have an extra kilometre here or there, or when you're overtaking or something. That's not really a positive message in terms of—we're trying to get people speeding down, driving to the limit. We don't want to be putting messages out there that it's okay to go a couple of kays over if you want to overtake someone or if you get a little bit tired.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What do you say to, let's say, a Central West motorist? There are two average speed camera detection points, 54 kilometres worth, between—an example would be someone that lives in Lithgow and commutes to Bathurst for work every day. If they're one kilometre over one morning—they have kids they had to get to school, there are cost-of-living pressures, they're stressed and they're heading to work, but they're good drivers that obey the law—will they be fined by these average speed cameras under this process of extending them to passenger vehicles?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** What I'd say to that person is that this is the same arrangements that heavy vehicle drivers have been driving under in the State for in the order of 14 years. They have been proven over time to be generally fair. In fact, there's a figure I have seen of about 68 per cent or so community acceptance of them as more fair, in the sense that it's not just that moment when you might lose your attention or whatever. It's looking at your whole journey over that period of 15 kilometres. I would say to people—and that's why we're doing a trial.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But over that period of time, if that commuter was one kilometre over the average speed limit, would they be fined?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** If you want to get into the specifics of that operation, you'd be best to talk to Mr Carlon from the Centre for Road Safety. As I've said, we don't want to be putting the message out there at all that anyone should be driving over the speed limit. I understand, having had kids myself. You have to get them to school. You have to get to appointments on time. You have that in your role; you're very busy at the moment, I notice. You're trying to do your work and get things done, but you don't want to be in a situation where you are speeding to do that, because that's when you're driving stressed as well as potentially over the speed limit. All you need is for wildlife to come out or another driver to make a mistake. This is a really serious issue. Speeding is a massive cause of fatalities and crashes on our roads.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I accept that you're not going to say that if you're one kilometre over, you're not going to get fined. In a similar but reverse situation, you have people or commuters that slow right down to well below the speed limit going through these cameras. Does that not also cause a dangerous situation? It blocks traffic and frustrates motorists where they slow down to 80 kilometres an hour past a 100-kilometre per hour speed detection camera or average speed camera. Does that not cause frustration and a dangerous situation on the road network at the same time?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I can't be responsible and the Government can't be responsible if people want to drive below the speed limit. The choices people make on the road—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You are setting some new territory, some new policy, that you didn't take to the election. I would say that this is a significant change for motorists using the motorways and the road network across this State. Isn't having this change in policy going to also cause motorists to possibly slow right down, clog up traffic, and cause disruption and frustration on the road network where people also take risks at the same time?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We don't want people to slow down for speed cameras. We want them to be going the right speed the whole way through. We want them to be complying with the speed limits the whole way through. To your point, we had the Road Safety Forum. We've been using a whole lot of different ways of trying to address the road toll—the demerit point trial and closing the loophole that was allowing international drivers to do things. We've put money into Cudal. We've put money into road improvements in terms of the Towards Zero Safer Roads Program. We're putting out more mobile speed camera sites, so we are going at this from quite a number of different areas.

This is part of the Road Safety Action Plan, so there have been a whole lot of pieces in this. This is a trial. We have to come back to that. We will see what the data says. We know that internationally it has shown—and even in our own experience with heavy vehicles—a reduction of some 50 per cent in fatalities and crashes, and that's really important. We want to achieve that because everyone has been concerned. That's something I think we're all in furious agreement about.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister. When a driver joins the road between the cameras, when they join the motorway or a road network between these two average speed cameras, how does that work?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** To be honest, I'm surprised. I can't think off the top of my head how it does. I think it doesn't trigger because they weren't there at the start of the period. When we had the heavy vehicles—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You don't know how that works?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think it wouldn't be—is Bernard here?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, this is quite a significant shift in policy around these average speed cameras.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, it's just a surprising question. The obvious answer is that it's not going to trigger it because you're not there at the beginning and you're not there at the end, so you can't have an average speed.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's the answer, then, isn't it, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, it is. There you go.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Excellent. I'm glad we got there. Will 100 per cent of the revenue that is raised from extending these average speed cameras to vehicles—the 25 that are in regional New South Wales. Will 100 per cent of the revenue raised be put into regional road repairs?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, you would know, as a former Minister, that all of the revenue that comes from speed cameras and enforcement goes back into road safety.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But will 100 per cent of the revenue that is raised from the majority of the average speed cameras that are now being extended to cars be dedicated and allocated to regional road repair?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We don't determine where it goes exactly. To give you some context of that, which I think is really important, if you look at the last Towards Zero Safer Roads Program that was about \$41 million—I would have to get the exact figures on it, but about \$39 million to \$40 million, or something of that order, went into regional roads. That was that program, the Towards Zero Safer Roads Program, which is road infrastructure upgrades to improve road safety—things like rumble strips et cetera. If you look at this most current lot, we have \$202 million going into Towards Zero Safer Roads programs in the regions, but enforcement money doesn't go to pothole repair. You know yourself, we've put in the \$280 million that was promised by your Government before the election.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Delivered, not promised.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Well, not all of it has been delivered yet—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's on you.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** —but it has been there, and we extended it so that councils could spend it. There's another \$390 million that we put in, and then we're doing the disaster recovery repairs as well. It's really conflating road repairs with—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, with these average speed cameras, weren't they originally designed and locations identified for heavy vehicles? Is that correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Originally they were, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** If you're looking at a trial, these cameras may not deliver the desired outcome for cars because they were not identified and positioned for the hotspots where we have seen fatalities on our road network caused by cars, correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** These places have been looked at in terms of their crash history. On those two sites, particularly between 2018 and 2022, I think there were about six fatalities and there have been serious crashes there. There has been an assessment of those factors in this. In the trial there will be feedback which will give us that information, and that's why it's a trial. That's the most important—and it's two sites.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With regard to the trial of the two sites in regional New South Wales, have you spoken with the members for Cootamundra and Coffs Harbour about the trials in their electorates?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, I haven't.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How come?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Because it's not about that. It's about looking at safety outcomes. These are conversations that are being had with the Centre for Road Safety et cetera.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, these local members are getting, I suspect, inundated with calls from locals who use these road networks every day to commute, to get the kids to school, to get to work, to use them for their businesses. They want to know a little bit more detail about this. Will you undertake to reach out to those local members?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Sorry, did you say the member for Coffs Harbour?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The member for Coffs Harbour, yes—sorry, Port Macquarie.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I was going to say, there's no reason to talk to the member for Coffs Harbour about it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's on the Pacific Highway. Whether it's the member for Oxley or Port Macquarie—but also the member for Cootamundra. If we're going to turn on average speed cameras that were designed for heavy vehicles, if we're going to turn them on for cars, I think the least you could do is reach out to those local members and give them more detail that they can explain to their communities. Is that something you're prepared to do?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, obviously they can see the media. I'm happy to have a conversation with them. I speak to those members all the time, in fact, about different things. I just haven't had a chance to talk to them about that particular issue.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, there's a significant change in policy around speed cameras, and you're saying the local members can just read the media to find out?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Well, I talk to them all the time. I haven't had a particular chance to talk to them about this. But the reality is that I can't see any of those members coming to me and saying that they were concerned that we were going to do something about safety in their areas.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But that's not the point, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Look at the member for Port Macquarie. She has raised numerous concerns with me over time around safety on the Pacific Highway. I've also had conversations with the member for Cootamundra about areas of the Hume Highway. I can't see any local member saying, "Please don't make my roads safer. Please don't trial technology that will keep my roads safer."

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's good to hear you're going to reach out to those local members, but we will move on. How much revenue does the Government anticipate raising annually from the use of these average speed cameras to police light vehicles?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'll have to look that one up. We could probably get that for you later today.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With regard to average speed cameras, there is an average speed camera set up over Mount Victoria on the Great Western Highway.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes. It's not part of the trial—let's be clear.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, it's not part of the trial. But, if the trial is successful, will you delay turning on that average speed camera until the westbound lane of Mount Victoria on the Great Western Highway is repaired?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's going into hypothetical questions. There are a lot of different things that have to happen—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's a good question that motorists have raised with me because that westbound lane causes driver frustration. It causes driver anger and road rage, and now they see a Labor government wanting to pin them for their frustration on that piece of road infrastructure because your Government hasn't repaired it for the past two years.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks for that question. Mr Farraway, we haven't been in government for two years. It's something that perhaps you could've turned your attention to when you were in government, so let's be clear about that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's been 18 months, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I also have to reiterate that the trial is for 12 months on these two sites. We've been very clear about that. It's at least 12 months on there. We are focused on the trial and the outcomes of that, so that's what we're going to be focused on.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Did the Treasurer instruct you or have a conversation with you to raise revenue—or Minister Graham. Well, I suppose you can only answer for yourself. Has the Treasury or the Treasurer spoken to you about turning these cameras on to raise revenue to supplement income for the State of New South Wales?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Absolutely not, because all of that funding would go into road safety funding. It would just add more money into road safety, but it's not going back into consolidation. Some of your colleagues in the media have been trying to say it's paying for tolling, which is absolutely ridiculous.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** To the motorist, it could be seen as nothing short of a sneaky cash grab from a government which has withdrawn funding, with the support of its Labor colleagues in Canberra, for critical road infrastructure. The greatest example of all must be the Great Western Highway. The funding has been cut for the Great Western Highway. There is only the investment that the former Coalition Government left the Labor Government to deliver in that space for any improvements. And now there's talk of turning on average speed cameras on a part and stretch of highway into the future that—the westbound lane has been closed for two years. Of that two years, under your watch for 18 months—not one single piece of improvement in getting that lane opened. You must agree that there is total frustration from commuters in regional New South Wales with this announcement.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order: I'm not sure how any human being could possibly answer a question that has so many suggestions, arguments and different questions contained within it. I don't think it's fair to the witness.

**The CHAIR:** I do not uphold the point of order, but I remind the member to ask questions as opposed to making statements. Members are allowed to ask questions how they see fit, as long as they're respectful and they are indeed questions.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks for the question. I'll try to keep on it, because it was long. I have to reject, firstly, the premise of the idea that we haven't done anything at Mount Victoria. We have been doing a lot of work on that. A lot of that is around decisions that had been made by your Government in terms of heritage listing that, so there have been a few complexities that have been coming through that. That has been a challenge. In terms of money being raised by these enforcement activities, I want there to be no money raised by these activities. We want people to be complying with the road laws. That's a significant issue that we are dealing with in New South Wales. We want no extra money to come from this. I'm sorry to Mr Carlon from the Centre for Road Safety, but I don't want them to raise any money out of this. I want people to comply with the speed limits because, fundamentally, I want to save lives. I want there to be less death on our roads.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, the Bus Industry Taskforce handed down its final report. One of the key factors was essentially that Transport for NSW was not structured, focused or resourced sufficiently to fully address the challenges of delivering optimum bus services. It said Transport for NSW needs to refocus on buses. What are



you doing in terms of regional transport to put more resources and investment, importantly, in terms of funding, into regional buses so that more services are rolled out?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks for that question. It is something that's a real challenge. We know that funding is very tight. We are dealing with a massive budget problem that we inherited from the former Government. Regardless of that, we still advocate for our communities in order to have better bus services. We've rolled out somewhere in the order of 1,500 new services in the past year for regional areas, and that's something we've been really happy to do. We've also been looking at some of those more difficult areas; I'm thinking of really rural and remote areas like Brewarrina and Collarenebri. We've just put in on-demand bus services in their community bus services. We've extended the Wilba trial. We've made Wagga Wagga to Tumut permanent. We've been doing a lot of work in that space.

**The CHAIR:** We'll get to Wagga Wagga and Tumut in a second. With your budget in terms of the overall expenditure for regional roads and regional transport issues, how much of all of that in the last financial year was dedicated to buses?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** To buses overall? I'd have to get the department to give you that advice because, obviously, I'm not responsible for all the buses in the State.

**The CHAIR:** Within the budget parameters that you are responsible for.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I would have to come back to you on exact figures, sorry.

**The CHAIR:** You also just said—making the bus from Tumut to Wagga Wagga permanent, I think, is what you said. How frequently does that service run?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'd have to remember. It's a couple of times a week, I think. I can't remember exactly.

**The CHAIR:** It was running, I believe, just once a week on Wednesdays, and now it's the additional new service. I have your media release in front of me.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Good. I remember it, but it is a lot, so I can't remember—

**The CHAIR:** There's an addition of a new service on Saturday. It's a bit much to say that's a new permanent bus service. That's twice a week. One of the things that regional communities say is that because bus services aren't frequent they're just not used. To have to catch the bus, wait a few days and catch the bus when you need to head into Wagga Wagga from Tumut is surely unsatisfactory, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's something we've seen right across the State, and that's why we're trying to look at the areas that are most in need and where there might've been trials undertaken. We're using learnings from all of those different trials as well. We have got a lot of constraints in regional New South Wales. Often you have bus driver shortages. We've been working to address those. We are getting some traction on that and reducing those vacancies, but it becomes a problem of can you get the bus? Can you get the driver? How are you going to implement it in there, and does it meet a need that has been identified by communities? We are trying to coordinate all of those. I've been travelling around right across the State and I take those opportunities to get the feedback directly from communities about what helps them. Also, obviously when we are here in Parliament I ask local members to give us feedback as well.

**The CHAIR:** Speaking of need, my office gets a lot of people from the Northern Rivers contacting me—I know the member for Ballina does as well—about the huge lack of buses, particularly if you consider how many tourists go into the Byron-Ballina area. What is being done? To me, that whole area along the coast is just ripe for a connected bus service. Are you looking at that in terms of developing any kind of business case? When can the people of the Northern Rivers expect frequent and reliable public transport?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** With our Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans, that was really born out of that understanding—that particularly areas like the North Coast, where you have a lot of communities that are not in the same town, or maybe not even in the same shire, and they need assistance. You need to look a bit more regionally and that's what we're trying to do. We did think about whether we would put the planning for that region up higher in the list as we know there is an urgent need. But by the same token there has been a significant movement in population post the floods. For example, Lismore has another 1,000 houses going on the golf course which had never been there before as a residential area.

There are going to be a lot of changes that we need to make. But we didn't want to go in there and do the transport before either the planning or the recovery work was being done. We are looking at all of it together. If you have people with particular issues, I am really keen to hear it. One of the features of our planning processes now is that we're trying to listen to people when they want to talk about their concerns, rather than when we are

ready to do a plan. Previously there was a fairly transactional relationship in terms of correspondence or feedback into government. It was like, "Okay, I want this service" then "No, we're not doing it right now", and everybody had finished the conversation. Whereas we are saying, "If you tell us you want that service now we might not have it now but we're going to put it in the list for the future and we will look at how we can get that as part of the planning."

**The CHAIR:** To be a bit more specific, you're talking about hearing back from the community and developing a plan, but I think it has been known for a long time that the trains are a different matter entirely. A lot of people in the community are still advocating for trains. The number of people who would use trains compared to the people who would use the rail trail, for example, just doesn't compare. But if we stick to buses for now, surely it's very obvious that there's a need for buses in the Northern Rivers? I don't think you need more community feedback about that, frankly, and it's been going on for some time.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Certainly.

**The CHAIR:** The community of the Northern Rivers—I'm not just talking about Lismore but the whole connected area—it's a massive area in terms of visitors and people coming from Coolangatta airport. There is not some kind of reliable service from there, for example, and everyone drives their car—and they have to—from beach to beach on the holidays. Surely that is public transport service provision 101 to put basic buses into that part of New South Wales?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Certainly that is something that we want to consider but we also need to make sure that we're putting them in the right places. One of the things we don't want to do is put a whole lot of buses up there to carry people if they don't meet the needs of timetabling.

**The CHAIR:** Just to be clear, is a plan now being developed? When you say, "We don't want to put them in the wrong places," is there a plan that your department is working on—a business case, for example—for Northern Rivers public transport services?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We're looking at the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans. Transport is reviewing—

**The CHAIR:** Would you be a bit more specific when you say, "looking at the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans?" What does that mean in terms of timelines and when can we expect to see something?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I can get you the exact timeframes of it. There is actually a website with it, so it's all publicly available. People can get to it. I just haven't got it—

**The CHAIR:** Anything before—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Sorry, January.

**The CHAIR:** What's happening in January?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** They're kicking off the consultation.

**The CHAIR:** Just to be clear, who are "they"?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Transport and the Chief Transport Planner. The process is—and this is what we've done in the Hunter and in the South East and Tablelands area—they will write to all the local members, all parties, all levels of government, general managers, mayors and say, "We're going to be looking at your things," and that's the starting point. Then you have got the business chambers, the CWA, the Progress Association—

**The CHAIR:** In the 20 seconds that I have remaining, what is that timeframe?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** January.

**The CHAIR:** And then from January? What is expected after that?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I will have to give you the exact one, but it does collate all that information and put it together. That gives us a footprint and then the customer journeys part—

**The CHAIR:** Broken down into regions, did you say?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, just that whole region. When customer journeys is looking at getting some more buses, or whatever we've heard out of that, then that will start going into the more generalised planning. The other thing about this is—I really want to reiterate how important it is—we are doing those on the department of planning footprint. As an example, we did the Hunter one as a bit of a trial because I was more familiar with that area, and it also has a microcosm of everything. It has ports, airports, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture—all the things that you are looking for in the Northern Rivers.

We then have the capacity, as we did, to have a meeting with the Secretary of Planning, the Secretary of Transport and all the general managers of those councils and go down to the nub of what they needed to do. They look at, say, the TODs of metro, in one sense, in terms of Planning and Housing. We are trying to combine that, so we are putting transport where people are living or where housing is expected to grow so that we give that whole-of-government approach. That's one of the things that I've been really passionate about. Transport is the enabler. Where are the schools, where are the hospitals, where are the houses? How do the emergency services work? How do you do—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I am conscious of eating into other crossbenchers' time.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Good morning, Minister. Can we continue the discussion that we were having last time around the Yarrowonga to Mulwala bridge crossing? Have there been any updates in terms of its status in funding and the business case at all?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There probably has. I will refer you to the secretary on that one. Do you have anything that you can give specifically?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I need to take that on notice for the moment, Mr Banasiak, when we have the specifics of the project.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** The last time we checked the business case hadn't been funded and it was eighth in line in terms of priority. I am wondering where we are up to with the other bridges that were above it in the priority list? I can list those off if you need them.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Let me just have a look. Mr Hayes, have you got something? Just before you do and so that you are aware, we have been trying to do some work with our cross-border commissioners on these. I've been having meetings with them about different aspects of it because it is a concern. That's the broader piece on it. I will let Mr Hayes answer.

**ANTHONY HAYES:** The Minister has just said everything I was going to say, to be perfectly honest. The strategic business case assurance process was finalised in June. We are now in discussions with the Federal Government and the Victorian Government in terms of finalising the priorities and finalising funding opportunities. We are working through the stakeholder engagement side of it with our colleagues from the other jurisdictions.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Is that specifically for Yarrowonga-Mulwala?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** It was one of the list, yes.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Where are we up to with the other seven that were in front of us: Swan Hill, Tooleybuc, Abbotsford, John Foord, Murrabit, Towong, George Chaffey?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Again, discussion is underway with the Victorians and with the Federal Government. Once we have agreed on a shared list of priorities, we would do stakeholder engagement then and talk to the communities to make sure they're comfortable with the priority list.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Minister, we learnt in Transport estimates that now Wollongong is considered regional, so I'm asking you questions about it now. I wanted to see if we had any further information around the Bulli Pass extension. I was chasing a consultation report from you, Mr Murray. I wondered whether that was available to be given to this Committee?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I don't have it presently, but we are chasing it up.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Thank you. Another project that's happening down there is the Mount Ousley interchange project.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, so—no, you go.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** I thought you were going to tell me you're not dealing with that one.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I was going to say that it is primarily under Minister Graham. He does that work—I get some visibility of it, but it's not predominantly in mine—because he'd been working on it from when we first took government. Camilla can cover it, I think.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Ms Drover, are you happy to give me an update in terms of where we're at with that? Then we might go into some of the details of it.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** You'll be aware that we're now in construction. The contract was awarded. We have had some impacts from protected industrial action that is impacting the project.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Have you also had some impacts from local residents in terms of their concerns around environment loss?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes. There are clearing works for that project, and discussions with the local community are continuing with the project team.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** To go into some of the design and the detail of it, was there any body of work done to ascertain how a heavy vehicle bypass lane that rejoins maybe a kilometre and a half down the road will alleviate heavy vehicle traffic or congestion, and by how much?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** There was quite a bit of analysis on heavy vehicles.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** But did any of it actually ascertain the value or benefit of essentially shifting the congestion a kilometre and a half down the road with this heavy vehicle bypass lane?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I'm not sure about the specifics of that particular example that you're citing, but I'm happy to take that away and see if we can bring some information back this afternoon.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** If you could give us any of that data or analysis that was done on that project, that would be great.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes. Safety was a major consideration in the design.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Given your ongoing interest in this—and I do really appreciate that—maybe it's a good idea if you set up a meeting for yourself with Ms Drover so you can go through it in a bit more detail and ask all the questions you want. I'm happy for you to do it in budget estimates. I just want to be helpful, that's all.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** I appreciate that, Minister. I will take you up on that offer. Is Ms Drover the best person to talk about Bulli Pass as well?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes, we can give you a briefing on that.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Excellent. We might combine that. Minister, with the changes in speed limits in enforcement zones, what help is going to be given to regional councils in terms of some of these safer speed reviews over the next 18 months? Are you giving them extra support to do those safer speed reviews or be part of those safer speed reviews?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We work very closely with the councils on this. It is something that we know drives concern in community at different times but also has some really positive benefits. One of the things that came out of the Road Safety Forum was that really positive story from some regional councils—Orange might have been one of them—where they'd been a bit resistant but then realised a significant benefit for the economy and amenity of their social cohesion in that community once they had done that in the CBD, reducing it there. In terms of specific assistance or engagement, it might be better if I give you to Mr Carlon.

**BERNARD CARLON:** With those regional speed zone reviews, clearly they're conducted in consultation with local government by our regional staff who are expert in implementing speed zone reviews. We provide financial support through the Community Road Safety Fund for infrastructure changes. The example the Minister was referring to in Orange—more than \$1 million worth of support for the infrastructure changes, signage and other elements of the program in Orange was implemented.

As a result of the forum, we are also working on a program to work with 10 regional councils to fast-track the implementation of safer speed limits, particularly in areas of high pedestrian activity. I note that last year there was a significant increase in the level of fatalities in country urban locations, which was a pretty unprecedented increase in the number of fatalities. We have a number of councils that have come forward that are keen to work with Transport for NSW in that program of accelerating those place-making speed zones within their local areas. I note that recently both Cootamundra and Blayney have implemented high pedestrian activity area zones within their local government areas, with support from the Community Road Safety Fund.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Can I go to the announcement around the \$7 million for heavy vehicle safety upgrades on the Golden Highway between Dubbo and Dunedoo? How much money has been expended from that currently?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'd have to look up the exact number in the budget. I can get that for you or someone can give it to you right now. It has been something we are really focused on. To give you some context around that, we went into the election and we had a lot of concerns being raised, particularly around Merriwa, around the lack of overtaking lanes. Then with the increase in heavy vehicles, particularly with REZ componentry

coming through, we knew that the Golden Highway was getting a hammering, so in the budget we put extra money in there.

There's \$128.5 million which we're spending with the Feds on "port to project", and that is on the Golden Highway from the Port of Newcastle right through. I think the port gets about \$5 million, and it's going right the way through. In the conversations that I've been having with councils, one of the things that they've been really appreciative of is that we are working on those heavy vehicle rest stops, but also that we're working on the road network in general. It's a big piece of work now, and I think that election commitment kicked off much better engagement from Transport in that particular part of the network, which has been very long neglected.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Thank you, Minister. I might come back to that \$7 million figure.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** As a regional roads Minister, do you agree that giving young drivers access to safer, newer, five-star ANCAP-rated vehicles would save more lives on our road network?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There's a trial being undertaken in Victoria on that particular issue. They're in the evaluation phase, I think, and they're still reporting on that. That's an idea that has been talked about, and they are doing that work.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have you advocated for a similar program with your colleagues?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm aware that there has been a program that I think was flagged via yourselves, and it hadn't proceeded when we came to government. We thought given it was a trial—I think it was \$5 million, so \$5,000 for 1,000 people—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have you advocated for a similar program to what you have alluded to in what the Coalition took to the last State election but also with what the Victorian Government is doing? Have you advocated for a trial in New South Wales of that program or a similar program?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I'm really keen to see evidence-based programs. If the Centre for Road Safety says to me, "We're very comfortable and we think this is something that should go," then I'll do strong advocacy for it. But, at the moment, my understanding is that it's on hold pending the outcome of the Victorian experience.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Carlon, do you support a program similar to what was taken by the former Government to the last State election? Do you support a program developed under the new State Government on something similar to what the Victorians are doing?

**BERNARD CARLON:** As the Minister has pointed out, we are working very closely with our colleagues in Victoria. My understanding is that they are envisaging over the next 12 months to have completed an evaluation of the program to see what sorts of benefits have been derived from that and the lessons learnt from the implementation so that we can have a look at the benefits associated with that. Meanwhile, this month we will again publish our used car safety rating, which demonstrates the sorts of vehicles that you can purchase in the second-hand market where younger drivers tend to purchase their vehicles rather than new vehicles. We will be releasing again the star rating for used cars so that we can provide transparent information to young people and their parents about the sorts of vehicles to purchase in the second-hand market that are safer and not necessarily more expensive.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Mr Carlon. Minister, it sounds like your Government is contracting out a program that could make a real difference to regional kids, country youth, to the results of another State government. Why don't you advocate for a program and a trial in New South Wales that could benefit New South Wales drivers because, as we know, our road network is not the same as Victoria's? Why haven't you done the work to advocate for a similar program and trial in New South Wales?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks for that question, Mr Farraway. There are so many different things we can do in road safety. As Mr Carlon said, obviously having a look at giving people the information in order to make a good decision about how buying a car is really important. We want to make sure that people are going to follow that information if they are given additional funds to do it. We want to make sure that it is robust, that giving people money to do that—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you support a program on a trial basis because we know you are going down the path of possibly raising some serious cash and slugging motorists long term with turning on average speed cameras for cars. That's a given, based on your commentary this morning and what is in the media. Don't you think we should be using some of that cash to invest into programs and possibly a trial to get more regional kids and country youth into safer cars?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, we do. As I said—and I will go back to this—I really hope we raise no money. I hope there is no money for any of these projects because we've actually got people to comply with the law and we have a zero road toll. That's our goal. That was the goal of your Government when you were in government and it is the goal of this Government now. That's the starting point. In terms of what activities we doing to try to achieve that, they are very many and varied. As we've seen, it's everything from road safety forums, level crossings, a wildlife stray forum, the Cudal extension.

There has been a varied approach in terms of projects that we've been looking at to do this. I'm always happy to consider things. I'm not going to make an announcement that, yes, we're going to do something here in budget estimates about that. These things are always under consideration. As an evidence-based person and as a government that's committed to putting money into things that we think will have a positive benefit that are being trialled—look at our average speed camera trial, for example—we are the only jurisdiction that only uses those cameras for heavy vehicles, not for light vehicles. It was a no-brainer to trial it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Taking that point, as the regional roads Minister, I suppose you would then agree that investing to make our roads safer is the best way we could save lives on the road network. That is a fair statement?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is one of the ways and that's where the Towards Zero Safer Roads Program comes in.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You would agree that, ultimately, better roads and safer roads is the best way to reduce fatalities and the road toll?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Forty-five per cent of the road toll, or somewhere in that order—I may be wrong in that it is exactly 45 per cent or 48 per cent but it's a huge percentage—of fatalities are caused by speeding. The road might be silky smooth, but if 45 per cent of fatalities are caused by people speeding, then I can't say that it is to do with road conditions or having a better car or whatever the individual thing is. We're being told, and the data says, the biggest factor is speed.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** If the average speed camera trial is successful by your own standards and you want to roll these out, will you roll out additional average speed cameras to the existing infrastructure across the State?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We are focused on the trial at this stage and that's what we want to have a look at. Of the 25 regional cameras that have been put in, I know that 23 of them were put in in the regions under the last Government. It wasn't until 2020 that they actually put them in—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** For trucks, for heavy vehicles.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It wasn't until 2020 that they turned their attention to the metro. That's understandable because a third of the population lives in regional New South Wales. Two-thirds, or more actually, of the fatalities are in regional New South Wales. We need to act in regional New South Wales. That's our concern. There's a trial. We are focused on the trial; we've just announced it. It's far too early to be hypothesising on what happens at the end of it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you think, Minister, there should be more average speed cameras detecting cars for speeding throughout the Hunter Valley?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I don't have that data to be able to give it to you off the top of my head.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But if the data suggested, or if there was a push to roll out more cameras, would you implement new cameras if they were warranted in the Hunter Valley and, possibly, throughout your own electorate?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** My thing is it's about evidence. I'm always about the evidence. I have many people who have been complaining to me just recently about speeding on a particular road in my electorate that has caused some fatalities. It's a horrific situation. People are saying, "The road should be this" or "The road should be that", but the reality is that the vehicle was not travelling at the signposted speed of 60 kilometres an hour and there was a fatality.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I want to go back to two questions ago and get you to elucidate a little bit on your answer. As regional roads Minister, and to meet the community expectation, the best way to reduce the road toll would be to have safer and better roads, correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's one aspect of it. You've got to be looking holistically—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you think average speed cameras are going to be a greater deterrent to reduce the road toll versus road upgrades?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, it's not an either/or, Mr Farraway. You said, "Is it the best?" and I'm saying to you that there are plenty of crashes that occur on really good roads which are caused by speed.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Which goes to the second part of the question. Do you believe that implementing existing average speed camera technology and extending that to cars and more sites is your Government's approach, long term, to reduce the road toll?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Our plan at the moment—and that's what it is—is to do a trial for at least 12 months and we will have a look and see what the data says. Then we will make a decision based on the data, on the evidence.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Thank you, Minister, for appearing today. Just in relation to this trial, how did you go about selecting the sites?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There were roads that were put up mainly through the department. When I looked at the list, I thought it did cover a regional road in an inland area and one in a coastal area.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Was it the case that evidence was used in order to select those sites, as in increased crash activity? Is that the technical information that was used to determine the sites?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes. As I said to you—and I said in the beginning maybe to Mr Farraway—the crash history came into that process.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** One of the sites is on the Hume Highway in the Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA. Minister, can you tell me how many fatal crashes they have had in the previous two reporting years?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The data that I've seen on those has been aggregated across the two sites, and it has been six crashes between 2018 and 2022. Mr Carlon might be able to get you more recent crash data for those sites.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Carlon, are you able to tell me how many fatal crashes occurred in the Cootamundra Gundagai LGA for the previous two reporting years?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Not for the previous two reporting years. I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I can tell you because I'm looking at the Transport for NSW site. There have been no fatal crashes in the Cootamundra Gundagai electorate for the previous two years.

**BERNARD CARLON:** If I can clarify, we did this on a five-year data basis from 2018 to 2022. These are indicative sites that have been selected. The Minister mentioned the 61 crashes—eight crashes on the Hume Highway between Coolac and Gundagai resulting in four serious injury crashes and no fatality crashes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm probably going to come to some of these issues as we go through. Before we jump ahead, I'm going to break some things down, if that's all right. I'm looking at the crash and casualty summary for Cootamundra Gundagai. In 2018 there was one crash. In 2019 there were three fatal accidents. In 2020 there were two, but from 2021 to 2022 there have been zero. Why did you select that site where they have a clearly improving road safety issue in relation to fatalities? I look at some of the Sydney LGAs where you have the ability to do similar implementation, and you've chosen a rural and regional area.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Fang, that's a really interesting question and I want to thank you for it. I want to thank you for your interest in this matter because I think it is important to get these issues ventilated in the public space. In 2021 and 2022, we did see very low crash data and fatalities across the whole State. COVID meant there were a lot less people on the road in that period of time. My concern, as the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, is really about the regions. The crash history you're talking about is just deaths; that's people who've died. When you're talking to people who have had serious injuries—I'm talking about life-changing injuries with people who no longer can walk unaided, who are confined to a wheelchair, maybe spent months or years in rehab—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate that, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It's not just one data point that you're talking about.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order: A question was asked that presented such a misuse of statistics that I would have thought the regional transport Minister should be able to answer it and dispel the misinformation inherent in the question without being interrupted.

**The CHAIR:** I do not uphold the point of order in terms of misuse of statistics. Please allow the Minister to get out her response to some degree before you interrupt.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Chair, I do believe I had. However, I was going to ask the Minister some further questions in relation to the statistics. She might be traversing some areas that I wanted to cover, so I was hoping to bring her to that area.

**The CHAIR:** We know how this works here. I give a fair degree of room for interjections if the Minister isn't responding to the question and is talking for the sake of talking. I allow that. But, on the same level, you have to allow the Minister to at least respond so you hear what she's about to say.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Chair, I do believe I had.

**The CHAIR:** Order! I have just ruled, if you want to continue your questions. I think I ruled in favour of you, Wes, so if you would now continue.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Chair, I'm not—

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Interesting. Minister, if you look at the casualty rate around the Cootamundra Gundagai electorate, it is actually decreasing yet again. Why was that site selected?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** When you say that, are you talking about—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm looking at the casualty figures.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** At 2021-2022?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Yes, that's correct, but also—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The same period that sort of crash data was reducing across the whole State?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Yes.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Right. I think that's your answer, actually.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** No, Minister. I'm trying to work out how you've selected a site where there have been no fatalities in the previous two reporting years. The casualty figures appear to be stable or decreasing. If you look at equivalent metropolitan figures that would cover, say, areas on the M5 or the M4 where you could implement similar programs, they appear to be increasing. Why wouldn't you select a metropolitan area where you can implement average speed camera trials over somewhere in a rural and regional area?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Targeting the region.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I couldn't hear what you said, Mr Farraway. Was that something?

**The CHAIR:** Order! It was not directed to you. Continue.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Fang, I understand that you are concerned for regional communities.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I am.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I am too. I'm really concerned about an increasing road toll in the regions. The data points that you're looking at are points in time where there was, across the State, a downward trend in crashes that caused serious injury and fatalities. That is something that we are trying to look at in this trial. We have selected that area and also the coast. There's a safe systems approach to road safety in New South Wales.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, do you agree with the premise that, on a metropolitan versus a rural and regional basis, metropolitan crash and fatality rates are higher than rural and regional fatality rates, given the differences, and that the increase in metropolitan areas has been far greater over the last couple of years than in rural and regional areas?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Fang, I will repeat again that one-third of the population lives in regional, rural and remote New South Wales, and the crash statistics for fatalities—people dying on our roads—show that two-thirds of those crashes happen on our regional road network. I absolutely and categorically do not accept your premise.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you agree that the increase in rate is higher in metropolitan areas than it is in rural and regional areas?



**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm saying that the actual number of people who die on our roads is higher in our regional areas. They represent two-thirds or more of the death toll—people dying on our regional roads.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate that, Minister. What I'm talking about is the increase in the rate. Is there a higher rate of increase in metropolitan areas than there is in rural and regional?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Fang, it would be, to my understanding—I can get down into the mathematics of this for you. Of course if you have a smaller number—say the figures, to make it easy, were 10 in the metro area and 20 in the rural areas. If you had one person die in each, it would be a higher rate of increase in the metro. But I'm not worried about the rate of increase for the future right now. I'm worried about two-thirds of the fatalities on our road network happening on regional roads.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** But you chose a site that doesn't have fatalities.

**The CHAIR:** Order!

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** For two years during COVID.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order—

**The CHAIR:** We now have questions from the crossbench. That is the end. No interruptions from the Opposition while we have crossbench time. I want to turn to the issue which I have asked about in every budget estimates for you so far: the roll-on bike trials. Why are the bike trials on the Sydney to Dubbo XPT services so severely restricted, firstly?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks so much. I really do acknowledge your interest in this. I won't take up the time with saying that, but I really do appreciate it. It was something that I was really concerned about in opposition. It's very exciting that we are having the trial. Obviously with trials you can't get exactly what you want because there's a physical constraint within the train. We have to make sure there's space. We're having a look at the safe handling for the drivers, the guards and anyone else on the train and, most particularly, the passengers. That is predominantly it.

**The CHAIR:** The trial, essentially, is not in school holidays—that is out—but only between Monday and Thursday, so Friday, Saturday and Sunday are out. You can't have bikes with panniers, for example, which a lot of people if they're travelling regionally will have. A lot of the social media platforms and bike threads that I've read suggest that the trial is being set up to fail. Can you see why people are saying that?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I am really wanting it to succeed. That's my hope; it is something that I know people are really passionate about. If you talk about setting up a trial to fail, it would be if you set it up so that there was an accident or an injury caused to someone by not thinking it through properly in advance.

**The CHAIR:** Who made the decision to do a trial for bikes on regional trains and not allow luggage and panniers?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Maybe you can get some more information from Mr Weeks during the break. I understand he has carriage of that area. I understand your concerns, but we also have to make sure that we are not creating a potential for a risk of harm or injury to other passengers, or even to the people who are taking those bikes. These are on the existing train, so we are obviously constrained in what we can do in terms of fitting them for that. I understand the concern about school holidays and whether they're operating there. That was a question I asked myself. Obviously these are things that have been determined in terms of work health and safety. It may be that once they've done some of the trial they say, "Okay, we can extend it a bit more", or whatever. I am hopeful of that too because I'm very passionate about this.

**The CHAIR:** Some of the bike threads that I've read—comments on this by cyclists—say that this trial has set conditions of bikes based on what a commuter bike would match in terms of tyre thickness, size of the frame, the fact that you can't have the saddlebags or panniers on a rail line destination that would be used mostly by bike packing, as they call it, and cycle-touring riders. Again, someone within your department is in charge of this trial. It does look like they're setting it up to fail. Just to be clear, if you're trialling right now without allowing bikes to be rolled on with their saddlebags, for example, then that's what you'll be rolling out permanently, or are you going to trial after this bikes with saddlebags? A lot of people want to use that and will be using that if they do have the bikes on those trains.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Ms Faehrmann and Chair, I am really keen to hear that feedback. It's very helpful. I urge you to give the feedback to Mr Weeks, or even to my office and we can get that to him at some point as it comes to us. Obviously we don't want this to fail. We do want to have bikes rolling onto trains. We do want to make sure that it is a safe environment so that there is a social licence for it; that other train users don't suddenly say, "I can't get through the carriage because there are so many bikes", or, "The bikes are too bulky",

and all those sorts of things that can do it. We are trying to make it so that we can get this to happen. The trial is obviously going to have feedback incorporated into it. If there is feedback that you've got now, we are more than happy if you want to send it through to us and we will act on it and give you some feedback on it, or you can talk to Mr Weeks in the afternoon session.

**The CHAIR:** There is also the situation of having to pay an additional \$12 or something for the bike. In Victoria bikes are simply rolled on into the guards' carriages, I understand. They are not packed down. I think they're able to have their panniers and things and they roll on and roll off. I am happy to ask Mr Weeks, but the fact is that you're here, as the Minister, setting the policy directions. The issue is you go and we ask the bureaucrats about stuff like this, and they say, "Oh, that's policy. It's not us; you've got to ask the Minister." That's the issue. I'm asking you, as the Minister, now: Will you be able to ensure that this roll-on bike trial is fit for purpose? Again, it's astounding that you're trialling a roll-on bike service without people being able to have a standard bike that they'd be riding in the country.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I understand your concerns. I'm absolutely committed to this working. What I see is we have to just get it in a way that we can make it work for the longer term. I know many people who are cyclists and I know they're really passionate about what they do, and they do like going out regionally and doing that. We just need to make sure that we have some parameters around it so that we have an understanding of how it would work in practice. If you look at Victoria, for example, it is a smaller network and it's not such a long period to be on a train, getting back and forth towards bathrooms and all the other sorts of things that could be changing the way people are working.

**The CHAIR:** Just sticking with bikes in a way, but active transport, the Get NSW Active funding, there was some advocacy for that to be increased in the last budget to double that. It's an extremely popular grant funding stream which many councils miss out on. Did you advocate for that to be increased in the last budget and why didn't we see the significant increases that we really need to see to get bike paths and other active transport funding infrastructure happening in the regions?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm really passionate about this in the regions as well. I think it is something where we have had some advocacy that maybe hasn't resulted in an overall increase in the doors in the program, as you say. But the main thing for me is that the regions got their fair share. I can't remember the exact number—whether it is 45 or—

**MATT FULLER:** Fifty-one.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Fifty-one per cent, sorry. We got more than our fair share.

**MATT FULLER:** Fifty-one projects.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Fifty-one projects, yes. The other thing we were doing was looking at the parameters of the program, so limiting it for councils so that there was a maximum number of projects, so you didn't have the councils that are really great at writing grant applications getting all the cash because that's been a real concern for smaller councils perhaps, or ones that aren't as well resourced. The other thing is we put in development funding as well as delivery funding.

I was really pleased when I saw the grants come back and they'd been approved—that we had projects where there was a cycle or an active transport plan being implemented. That was across quite a number of regional councils for the first time. We are giving them the tools. I sat down with one of the councils at one point before the applications closed. I wasn't a decision-maker in it, but we did have that conversation about how they could go from zero to hero, if you like, in being able to access these grants because they were really starting from such a low base. Having those development grants, having a limit on the number of grants, having—

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. You don't need to wrap it up.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, okay. That's polite. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, what planning has been undertaken to increase the frequency of passenger train services between Maitland and, for example, Scone and Dungog? Again, I get constituents asking about this.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Obviously the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan is part of that, looking at what modes of transport are available to people. I was really pleased towards the end of last year, in one of those silver-lining moments, that we had a 10 per cent to 15 per cent uplift of train usage in Maitland when the Tarro Bridge was having challenges. We can do it, and that was good. We also had some protest activity earlier this year which severely restricted people using the trains. It is a tricky issue for us to deal with. We are looking at all sorts of things. I think one of my advisers is having a meeting with one of those advocacy groups later this week. We are looking at it. It will come through the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** If we could go back to what we were talking about before—the \$7 million project to upgrade the high-tech heavy vehicle station between Dubbo and Dunedoo. Do we have a figure on how much was spent on that project?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Is that the Ballimore one?

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Yes.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'd have to get that for you.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** It was earmarked at \$7 million. Is that project complete or still in progress?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I don't believe so.

**MATT FULLER:** We're seeking an update on that, Mr Banasiak. We might have able to have that this afternoon.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** When I was driving the other day, it didn't look finished.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Yes, you'd hope it didn't. From what I've been reported, you would hope what's there hasn't been finished for \$7 million. The \$128 million you mentioned—how much of that is being dedicated to roads like the Golden Highway and other key links to the Central West? How much of that is going towards physical changes to the Golden Highway?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'll get Mr Fuller to go through it in more detail with you. The overview is that some of it is delivery money and some of it is for the Golden Highway, and then there is planning money—\$10 million that we fought for in ERC and got—to specifically just go on the Golden Highway. There is a real focus on this, and I want to reassure you about that. Again, I think it's one of those ones where we can have a more detailed briefing to give you the information. But I've been on that road quite a number of times and it is the easiest road, in one sense, to get from the coast to the Central West if you're in the northern part of the State, so it is definitely going to uplift.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** But if you're driving one of these big trucks with one of these big wind turbine blades or a stack of solar panels out to the REZ, it's probably not the greatest road. If you're stuck behind one of these trucks, it's probably not the greatest road to be on.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes. We've done a number of things in that, and I think it speaks to that broader piece. Transport has been working since last year with EnergyCo, and we've got the MOU there which has had transport planners within Transport. During this year, we've been really focused on getting a better engagement and relationship between Transport, Planning and Environment to try to get that right. As well as that MOU, Transport is now leading the steering committee for the whole-of-government response on transport and logistics. We are leading that. That means that all of those issues around the main roads, like the Golden Highway, are coming to that.

But also the last mile—for shires like Warrumbungle, for example, where their local roads are being impacted, Transport is leaning in and providing assistance on that. We've also done a major reclassification up on Wybong Road and Bengalla Road so we can get through Denman, because we know there's a constraint there with the bridge. We're really focused on that whole road. In terms of the heavy vehicles, I know there has been early talk about, "You've already got rest areas there. Wouldn't you just use those?" No, you wouldn't, because they're already there for an existing purpose.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** We need more rest areas, not less.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Exactly. I think you'll be really pleased. I can get Matt to have a chat about more of those specifics.

**MATT FULLER:** Mr Banasiak, as the Minister said, the \$128.5 million is dedicated to the port project. That will be physical infrastructure upgrades. That will be work on the road corridors. There are 19 sites at the moment that are targeted for that work to ensure that we get uplift in available space to be able to take the wind blades, as you say, and carry turbines, et cetera.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** On notice, can you provide details of those 19 sites?

**MATT FULLER:** Yes, we can certainly do that. As the Minister said, there is also the work that we're undertaking and working on with Muswellbrook shire. The Minister is committed to reclassifying Wybong and Bengalla roads across to support the project, to enable us to have the fastest response with sensible upgrades to ensure that we can get around sections of the Golden Highway. The \$10 million that the Minister talked about is

an additional amount for us to do a further detailed corridor assessment to think about not just the development of the REZ in this initial period where we'll be servicing the commencement of the project but about the whole lifecycle of the project and other growth considerations for the corridor around freight logistics more broadly, housing, increased population in the Central West, et cetera. There's a lot of work going on around the Golden Highway corridor to ensure that it is fit for future.

As the Minister said, there's also now a much better coordinated approach across the whole of government. I sit on a steering committee led by the Premier's Department across the energy infrastructure road map, which is about making sure that coordination across all areas of government is considered for the infrastructure and the other community investment we need to support the transition to renewables. As the Minister said, we have the steering committee led by Transport on transport and logistics matters. That picks up a range of other participants across government. It has the Premier's Department, Infrastructure NSW, EnergyCo, the planning department, the Office of Local Government. It has also has the NSW Police Force in terms of helping us with the coordination of pilotage and the logistics element. That has met numerous times now and is going to help us bring the areas of government together to make sure that we have all of the thinking involved to support the development of these renewable energy zones.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** I'll jump across to the Singleton bypass. You announced the other day a significant milestone, the turning of the sod. Are you conscious of the feedback within the community around the adequacy of the design of that bypass in that it's a single lane and there are many concerns that it's not going to be adequate and futureproof?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks for that. This is a massive project. It's \$700 million worth of State and Federal funding. It's going to take 15,000 cars off the road and get rid of five traffic lights. The single lane that is happening there is going to be additive, so that will be good. In terms of potential for future growth, it is a corridor that can be widened. If you look at the situation in Singleton—I go through that area regularly enough; not as regularly as some of the people in our community going up there every day for mining, et cetera—it is a car park. It needs work now. We needed to put it down and get the roads happening. In terms of duplication, that's something that could be looked at in the future, and it has certainly been designed with that in mind. But the urgency—with the investment that has been coming out of the Hunter Valley over decades, this is a piece of infrastructure that should have been done most definitely in the past 12 years. It hadn't been done. We're catching up.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** I appreciate the sentiment that it should have been done ages ago, but I'm also of the view "do it once, do it right". What extra delays and costs are we going to have by, six months or a year down the track, starting to look at duplication? Clearly the community is saying there's a need for duplication right here and now. They're saying that the inconvenience and stresses and pressures that have been placed on people, particularly with farmers losing land over this project—to then see a project that they see as inadequate because it's only a single lane. Why don't we just do the duplication right there and then, while we're there?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Banasiak, I totally have sympathy with that view. I'm someone who would love to do it once, do it right. In terms of reducing congestion in Singleton, we are going to make a difference here. Also, in terms of journey times around Singleton, it will be a massive improvement. But the reality is that we don't have the money. That would have to come from other projects to do that, at this stage. What we've done is not sterilise the road. We've given the capacity to have the duplication later on. But while we can get in there and get this done, it's quicker to build it and to make sure that we get the relief. If you're in traffic in Singleton anytime between two to three o'clock to six or seven o'clock at night, it's difficult. There's also an issue around flood egress and evacuation, which is a real concern for that community up there. We have to act. We are acting. We're getting the job done. Then, as the increase happens, we will duplicate.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Can you provide any data or modelling showing us the potential time savings for single lane versus dual lane as part of that planning process, perhaps on notice?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes. Chair, just before anyone else starts their time I thought I would go back to Mr Fang. He asked about the increase in fatalities and the rates. The increase in fatalities in regional versus metropolitan in 2023 was higher by the rate and also by the number of lives lost.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you have those figures, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, I do. Metropolitan—in 2022 there were 83 lives lost, which rose by 19 people. I really want to say that, when we are talking about statistics like this, these are people's lives and all the families. In 2023 it went up to 102. The regional road deaths in 2022 went from 198, by 51, to 249. My maths

in the middle of an estimates could be wrong, but I'm looking at about a 22 per cent increase in the metropolitan and a 25 per cent increase in the regional.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you have the figures to now, 2024?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We can get them on notice. But they are the annual full-year figures, so we don't have it because we're still in the middle of 2024.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** No, I appreciate that. I was just after the cumulative—

**The CHAIR:** It is Government time. We can get those, potentially, after the break. Do Government members have any questions?

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY:** No questions, Chair.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back. We will proceed to questions from the Opposition, starting with Mr Farraway.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Welcome back, Minister. How much of the \$334 million from the Regional Road Fund has been committed to and announced to date?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** My understanding is—I was looking at this last night—it is about \$125 million. It's on page 2-38 of *Budget Paper No. 03 Infrastructure Statement*. It is \$125.1 million that has been committed to specific projects.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Of that \$125.1 million, the majority of those projects were announced in 2023. Is that correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Of those projects, how much has been done on the \$15 million for the duplication of the Thornton Rail Bridge?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I've been looking at this one again. I may as well get that paper out. You can look these up. I think it's in the budget papers at page 2-38. It is early-stage planning. Do you want a dollar figure or what are you looking for, sorry?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I am interested to see how far you've progressed these projects between the financial year '23 and the financial year '24.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We've been doing some planning on it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Only planning? There is no actual going to market, there's no—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, not yet.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Of the \$15 million that you have previously announced for the duplication of the Thornton Rail Bridge, it's just planning money. How much has been—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, the \$15 million is not just planning money.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, but of the \$15 million you're saying that you've only allocated how much of \$15 million towards planning?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'd have to take it on notice, I think. There is some for planning and then there'll be some, obviously, for early works, for delivery and all that sort of thing. We always said when we made that commitment it would be towards. I think the day after we put out the announcement, based on what had been put on Maitland council's website for a long time as to what their projection was, it escalated up the next day. We saw that and we put that it would be towards. To put it in perspective, Mr Farraway—I think it's really important to have this—that project for the duplication was meant to be started back in 2011. When we were in government, we raised that road substantially to enable the duplication process to commence. Then the former Government did not continue with that program.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Of your commitment, though, Minister, \$15 million that you had announced in 2023 for the Thornton Rail Bridge, no construction and only a small amount of funding put towards planning, correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** An election commitment was made for the term and, obviously, we are getting on with it. But I can get—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We will move on. So \$12 million from the Regional Road Fund was allocated for the Golden Highway improvements for the Hunter section?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How much of the \$12 million has been expended?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I can probably take the exact figures on notice. How about we do this, because I realise—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm more than happy for you to take it on notice, Minister. I've got lots of questions.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Let's do that. If you're doing specific projects where you want to know the exact numbers, just say, "I want to know that number."

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's budget estimates, yes.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It's on notice and then I'll answer the substantive—

**MATT FULLER:** Mr Farroway, there is \$2 million allocated in this year's budget towards the Golden Highway.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's fine. That is \$2 million of the \$12 million. Is that correct, Mr Fuller?

**MATT FULLER:** Correct.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What has been delivered for the \$2 million?

**MATT FULLER:** As the Minister said, last year, or in the second half of last year when the budgets were confirmed after the Government coming in, the work has started in terms of planning and assessments. Some of these projects involve traffic count surveys, initial consultation with community just to assess requirements. That work has started and, depending on the projects and their commitments, that will lead us to logical work like strategic business cases. In some cases it may lead to some early works and preparation. There is a range of things to be considered on a number of these Regional Road Fund projects.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's all right. We will move on to \$20 million for the Bulli bypass investigation. How much of the \$20 million has been expended? Where are we up to with that project?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think that really has to go to Camilla. Or have you got that, Matt?

**MATT FULLER:** The Bulli bypass is the extension of Memorial Drive and, again, as Mr Banasiak asked about, we're in the stages of doing a consultation summary on that after being out and talking to the community about that project.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How much of the \$20 million has been expended?

**MATT FULLER:** We'll have to take the exact number on notice. I can tell you what's allocated in this year's budget.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** There was an additional \$6 million that was allocated for the Speers Point roundabout at Lake Macquarie. I'm sure the Speaker of the House would be interested to know where this is up to. Where are we up to with this project? How much has been expended and what's the update on progress?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We're in constant dialogue with all the members where we've made commitments. Matt can give you the update, but I know Mr Speaker is very happy that we are considering that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How much has been expended, Minister?

**MATT FULLER:** We have \$3.8 million in this year's budget. On Speers Point roundabout, we've recently been out with some options to community. We're seeking their feedback. Once we have that, that will refine the work and we'll move to the delivery phase in due course.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, \$40 million was put towards planning and design for the Gosford bypass on the Central Coast. How much of the \$40 million has been expended and where are we up to with progress, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We'll just get that figure for you.

**MATT FULLER:** Mr Farraway, we have \$3 million in this year's budget and, again, this is in the early stages of planning and development. It's in options assessment.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The entry and exit ramps on the M1 Princes Highway at Dapto, Illawarra—\$10 million. Minister, how much has been expended?

**MATT FULLER:** We have just over a million dollars this year and, again, it's in the early phases of consulting with the community on what those options would be to consider.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, \$10 million on the Yass, Bungendore and Ellerton roads intersection near Queanbeyan. How much has been expended on this project and where are we up to?

**MATT FULLER:** There is \$1.5 million allocated in this year's budget.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** And \$7.5 million for the Alphadale crossroads on the Bruxner Highway near Lismore?

**MATT FULLER:** There's \$1 million allocated in this year's budget.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Can you tell me how much is opex and how much is capex in all of this?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Do you want it for all of the projects?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm happy if you take that additional point on notice about the difference between capex and opex so we definitively know how the money is proportioned in that space. Minister, is it fair to say that no deeds have been issued for any of those projects that you have announced from the Regional Road Fund?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I believe that's not correct. Mr Fuller will be able to give you a bit more detail on that one.

**MATT FULLER:** My understanding is that on a range of council projects we've been progressively entering into deeds with local government areas.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Which projects have had deeds issued?

**MATT FULLER:** I'll take that on notice and come back and update you.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is there a BCR, Minister, that is applicable to these projects that I've outlined today?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** As you're aware, Mr Farraway, they were election commitments. They came from a really clear need for projects that was articulated. We were coming from opposition; you don't have the capacity to make a BCR determination. But if I go back to Thornton, for example, the history of that project—that duplication was supposed to commence. There was a caveat on—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, I accept your answer that they were election commitments. You weren't in government. But no BCR has been allocated to those projects. You will fulfil them as election commitments?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, those ones are election commitments. I want to make it clear that these were no-brainers. If we look at that particular example in Thornton, once the former Government lifted the cap on—there was a caveat on that bridge that stopped any more development north of that bridge, which gave Maitland City Council the opportunity to refuse applications if that was not duplicated, and in 2012 your Government took that off.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm sure there's a lot of merit in it, Minister. I've given you a bit of latitude.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** And then they built another 10,000 homes or something up there.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I am going to move on, Minister. Can I go through the projects that we've outlined in the Regional Road Fund, which is your flagship roads fund as the new Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** One of them.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Which electorate is the Thornton rail bridge in?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's in my electorate.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's the Maitland electorate?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The Tuross Head intersection, where we have \$1.25 million from the fund—what electorate is that in?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I believe that's in the Bega electorate.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** And that's a Labor electorate?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It's held by Labor at this time, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The \$20 million for the Bulli bypass investigation—which electorate is that in?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I don't know off the top of my head, to be honest. Is it Wollongong?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** It's Wollongong.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** A Labor electorate?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** At the moment, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving ahead, the \$40 million for the design and planning for the Gosford bypass—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I assume that's in Gosford. To be honest, Mr Farraway, I wasn't looking at—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** They're legitimate questions. You're answering them, so I appreciate that.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** They're absolutely legitimate.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving on, the \$10 million from the entry and exit ramps off the M1 Princes Highway Dapto, Illawarra—what electorate is that in?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm not sure on that one. It could be Shellharbour or it could be Wollongong. I'm not sure because there was a change in the redistribution about it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Take it on notice. The \$10 million for the Yass, Bungendore and Ellerton roads intersection—what electorate is that in?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That one is in Monaro.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** A Labor electorate.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is now. It wasn't before the election.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The \$7.5 million for the Alphadale crossroads on the Bruxner Highway—what electorate is that in?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think that one is Lismore, from memory.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's another Labor electorate. From this list that I've been through, the only funding I can find is \$6 million going to the Speers Point roundabout at Lake Macquarie, which it's fair to say that the local member did lobby both sides of politics for. Other than that, I can only see \$12 million for the Golden Highway improvements that might go to a non-Labor seat. Is that correct, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It could be. When we were looking at election commitments, we were looking at community need. Unfortunately I didn't have many Nationals members knocking on my door asking me for assistance in their electorates, so it was difficult to get that understanding of what their communities needed. Since we've come to government, they've understood that our door is always open to all communities across the State and we're very happy to hear from them. If you look at our Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund—\$390 million, more than the Regional Road Fund—that went to every electorate.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It was a duplication of the former Government's program.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** A better one, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving on. Minister, in *Budget Paper No. 03* for the financial year 2024 you have a lot of these projects listed, which is understandable because it was the Treasurer's and your Government's first budget. These projects are listed there with very little spend, Minister—for your reference, financial year 2023-24. And then, if we look to *Budget Paper No. 03* for the current financial year 2025, there's



little or no movement between two budget cycles, two budget years, in the projected spend on these projects. Whilst we're talking about \$125.1 million, how much of that has actually been expended, not committed?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's only in that particular budget paper. It's only on the State roads. There are also ones that are local roads or regional roads.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm only interested in these that are in *Budget Paper No. 03*. I'm happy to give you the page numbers. I'm interested in your Regional Road Fund. In these projects we've outlined, it appears that there is a significant issue with Transport for NSW actually getting on with the job. You have two budget years and very little movement between the funding. It appears that you've literally re-announced the same projects for a second year with very little expenditure change.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** There are a couple of aspects in that question, Mr Farraway, which I think we should be clear about. Firstly, as I said, they are the State roads. There are other projects that are not on the State road network. In terms of re-announcement, we had calls in the budget of people telling us that there was money being re-announced from—I think it was Restart, one of the projects under your Government. I think it's set up in the rules of how that fund was that it just gets re-announced every year, it feels like, in perpetuity.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'll redirect you, Minister. Let's talk about the Thornton rail bridge because it's in your electorate, so you would know it well. In *Budget Paper No. 03* for financial year 2023-24 there is an expenditure allocated in the New South Wales budget of \$1 million. In *Budget Paper No. 03* for financial year 2024-25 you have Thornton rail bridge—the same expenditure at \$1 million. You've said today that it is an important project—it is one that has history back to 2011—but over two financial years, Minister, you've spent a measly \$1 million on it.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, so we're getting on with the job.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So that's correct; you've only spent \$1 million on the Thornton Rail Bridge?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, just to be clear, there are a lot of projects that Transport is working on for roads, which are quite urgent in the State. If you look, for example, at our disaster recovery at the moment, we are really muscling in on that to get those roads back to scratch. We have totally increased the funding that we're allocating to disaster recovery. I know what your next bit is going to be, but I just need to make this point of context. We've got a staggering increase. From \$190 million a year you were spending on disaster recovery previously, we've gone to over \$800 million.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, I redirect you to the Regional Road Fund.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** So that means there has got to be effort done.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, I'm going to bring you back because the questions are around the Regional Road Fund. We've touched on the Thornton Rail Bridge. Let's touch on the Golden Highway because I know for a fact that you've spoken about it in Parliament, and good on you. We know we need more money invested in the Golden Highway. But in *Budget Paper No. 3* for the financial year 2023-24 you allocated \$1 million—\$1 million from a \$12 million commitment. When I fast-forward to *Budget Paper No. 3* for the current financial year, 2024-25, you've got \$2 million. You've spent only \$2 million in two years from a \$12 million commitment on a highway that, by your own admission, needs investment. When will this Regional Road Fund deliver the actual commitments that you have made?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I am advised that those commitments are all on track. They were commitments for the whole term of government. We have been working on them. There's been a lot of work happening on the Golden Highway. I'm not sure, you might have stepped out when Mr Banasiak was also asking about—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, I was watching. It's fine.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make any judgement there. I was just saying I didn't see you in the room. I just wanted to be clear that there's a lot of funding going on in that space on that particular highway that's not necessarily just related to the Regional Road Fund. We are trying to do these things in a coordinated way, and so that means not just throwing money out the door.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, would you be happy to take on notice for the Committee to outline your expenditure on these projects in the forward years because they are not included in the budget?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** In the budget papers, no. I am aware of that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Are you able to take that on notice for the Committee?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm not sure if we can provide that because a lot of this will be contracted work, and I think that could be an issue there.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I think it's a good comparison, Minister, because the previous Government did outline more trajectory of spend in the latter years than what the current Government is doing. I'd be interested to know under the Regional Road Fund those projects that you've committed to. We've got two years of expenditure that hasn't moved much. Clearly, one would hope that the expenditure is coming in the latter years when you actually start building something. But could you, for the Committee's sake, perhaps share the expected expenditure in the latter years?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I think we need to have a look at this issue around latter years because I remember you went to the election with a \$1 billion commitment for roads, of which not one dollar was going to be spent in 2023, 2024, 2025—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, I bring you back to the Regional Road Fund.

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY:** Point of order: You asked a question and then, as the Minister was answering, you interrupted before she could get even five or six words out in answer to that question. As a matter of fairness, you need to provide the Minister with a reasonable opportunity to answer before you just pepper her with new questions.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** To the point of order: Clearly, the Minister wasn't addressing the questions that were asked. I would say that the point of order is out of order.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** To the point of order: It's also my view that the Minister has not had a reasonable opportunity to answer the question and that you should make a ruling accordingly, notwithstanding that it was you who asked the question.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Mr Lawrence. I will allow the Minister to go back to her commentary, but I remind the Minister that the question was specifically addressed around the Regional Road Fund.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, and I do understand that. The part of your question that I was getting to was you were talking about the profiling of the spending of the election commitment. I'm saying to you we've got a \$334 million commitment here that we're talking about over four years. As a comparison, your \$1 billion was over 10 years with no funding—not one dollar—in 2023 and 2024 and I think you only allocated less than 10 per cent in the third year. So, really, it's quite strange to hear that from you, particularly given that you're the architect of that policy. Of course we're happy to give you—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister. The Opposition's time has expired, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Okay. I will just finish that answer. Could I finish the answer? I think I can finish the answer.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, we're going to move on to the next session, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm happy to give you the profiling on the Golden Highway. I can give you that now. We're looking at commencing construction by 2026.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister; I appreciate that. For the record, members, as no crossbench members are present, the Opposition will continue its questioning. Mr Fuller, I noticed you were sworn in today as Deputy Secretary, Regional and Outer Metropolitan, Transport for NSW. That's how I knew you, but that's not your title on the Transport website. Your title is Deputy Secretary, Road Network Resilience, Maintenance and Programs. So what are you? Who are you?

**MATT FULLER:** I'm not sure which part of the Transport website you're referring to.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's actually an email signature of yours, but I'm happy for you to take it on notice. What is your job title at Transport?

**MATT FULLER:** My job title at the moment is Deputy Secretary, Regional and Outer Metropolitan Division. We haven't transitioned yet. I am proposed to take on the new division that is the road maintenance and resilience area of Transport, but we haven't moved to that yet.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Murray, is Mr Fuller's new title going to be Deputy Secretary, Road Network Resilience, Maintenance and Programs?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Yes, that's correct. That's what has been proposed and, as Mr Fuller has just said, we are going through the stand-up of the new divisions in Transport at the moment. Many have been completed and others, such as the ROM division, are going through that at the moment.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When will that all take effect?

**JOSH MURRAY:** It's occurring as a staged process, obviously with the size of the organisation, and some of the divisions are dependent on other elements being done before they can start. So that is happening over coming weeks.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I will ask Mr Fuller this one first: The Minister referred earlier to a heritage claim with regard to the westbound lane at Mount Victoria. Could you elaborate from Transport's view what is the heritage claim the Minister referred to earlier?

**MATT FULLER:** Certainly. As you would know, we had a couple of slips that affected the Great Western Highway at Mount Victoria. Slips, whether they be upslope or downslope, often require some pretty complex work with geotechnical investigations and a range of other activity to ensure that we undertake the work safely.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What was the date that that lane closed?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice for you in terms of the exact date.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you be able to come back to me and to the Committee today on that?

**MATT FULLER:** We'll have a look. I know that it occurred during 2022, and I know and certainly acknowledge the frustration in the community that we have still had those lanes under management. As I was saying, the slope work—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The primary reason for that westbound lane closure was due to severe weather events in 2022, and you'll confirm the date for us?

**MATT FULLER:** Yes, we can confirm that. But what the Minister was referring to this morning was about the important heritage work that goes alongside the other technical work, given the sensitivities that are in that vicinity of the Blue Mountains. We've got some very significant heritage items and considerations in and around that work. Unfortunately, it has been a bit of a delayed process to work through that and ensure that we respect both the safety and the geotechnical considerations as well as the heritage considerations.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has there ever been a cultural heritage claim put on that stretch of road or the rock face and the slip area, Mr Fuller?

**MATT FULLER:** A cultural heritage claim I might have to clarify. I will take that on notice. Mr Grosskopf, are you aware of any claim?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has there been any heritage claim of any significance or any relevance put on that stretch of road?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** I can clarify a few things for you, Mr Faraway. The first is that it was in July 2022 that we had the failures at Victoria Pass. The second is that the road corridor through that area of the Great Western Highway is listed on the State Heritage register. With that listing we were then required to gain approval, lodge what's called a section 60 request under the Heritage Act to undertake those works. There were two applications made, one on 29 July 2024 for the downslope embankment failure, which is the one further up the hill, and one on 9 August for the one lower down, which is the upslope failure. On Friday we received conditional approval from the Heritage Council for the upslope embankment failure.

**The CHAIR:** I'll jump in now. There are three estimates going on today, which is just ridiculous. I formally put that on the record. The Port Macquarie Hastings ferry, Minister—I've been contacted by a number of constituents and councillors about that ferry. They are wanting financial support. They're saying it's proving financially unsustainable to maintain the Hibbard and Settlement Point services. I understand that they have written to you—the Northside Progress Association—from that area. What can the Government do about this situation? Given that it does subsidise other ferry services, why isn't it looking at Port Macquarie Hastings? That is an essential public transport service within that area of New South Wales.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thanks for that question. I have had a fair bit of correspondence. I've been very clear in responding to that and tried to put that clearly in there. Obviously, it is a local service. It was established by the local council. They have approved development applications for housing to be located there, so that has been their decision to do that. I understand that council would like us to take it over, but they've always

been run by Port Macquarie Hastings Council. I've met with the council on it, and Transport has conducted a review of the request, and it has been advised that the Government is not in a position to take that in. It's always a challenge. We would love to do everything, but we can't. I also want to put on record that we are investing in Port Macquarie. We've invested more than \$51 million through our emergency road repairs, road safety grants and natural disaster recovery support. We're continuing to do that, but that's just where it's at.

**The CHAIR:** The roads aren't going to help the people who have to get from one side of a body of water to another.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Council did approve those housing developments to be there, and they did take on to put the ferry in that location.

**The CHAIR:** I understand the Government has contributed towards the Lower Portland ferry, though. I think this was the previous Government back in 2020. The contribution that the Northside Progress Association and the council is requesting, I understand, is \$500,000 to \$800,000 per year, which would be annual operational costs for both ferries. It's not much, especially given how much is being spent on highways and roads and senior public servants' salaries. What were the reasons put forward by Transport for saying that funding shouldn't go towards this essential public transport service?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It might be better for you if you get that from the departmental people. I don't know—I'm trying to think back to the correspondence I have had—whether they've come to me with that figure before of exactly what they were asking for. At one stage it was taking over the whole ferry, and that has an ongoing recurrent cost and capital expenditure et cetera. It's quite an undertaking. I think it would be better, if you want to know the more specific details of that, if you talk to one of the officials either now or in the afternoon.

**The CHAIR:** If the council can't continue operating the ferry and the private sector thinks that there's not enough money in it so the contractor stops operating as well, what happens then?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That would obviously be a different consideration. That's something that the Government would take on board.

**The CHAIR:** I think that's what the locals are saying.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I can't be making government decisions about how to allocate hard-won taxpayer funds on the basis of hypothetical questions. If there is that concern clearly being articulated—it hasn't been put to me in that way.

**The CHAIR:** I think it has—in correspondence to you, in fact. I think that's why they're asking, because it is unsustainable for the council and they can't see the council continuing to operate the service for too much longer. I think that's the whole point, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It's one thing to say that in terms of a letter, but the council has to make its decisions about how it allocates its funding. At some point in time they were getting developer contributions from the developments that they approved over there, and that's a decision of former councils that has been made. I'm always happy to engage, but I have met and spoken to them a number of times on this. I'm happy for them to continue the conversation.

**The CHAIR:** Just so you are aware, my understanding is that Port Macquarie Hastings Council is one of the few remaining councils left in New South Wales that actually runs ferry services. It does seem, to be honest, like something that would make sense given the extraordinary costs—I know all levels of government are faced with a lot of costs, but this is running at a huge deficit. In terms of the other ferry services, wouldn't it make sense to see if you can take those out of council's hands? People can't do without ferries if they need ferries to get from one side to another in these regional areas where there is lots of water and lots of islands.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I understand the concern. That's one of the reasons why we wanted to have the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans. What we'd seen had been this growth in organic decision-making—that's probably the best way to describe it—around doing things on a bespoke process. It does lead to different treatments in different areas. Port Macquarie will be having their plan. It will be considered because we are looking at all modes of transport in those plans, not just one or two. We're looking at all of them, so there will be opportunities there to have a look at it in a more holistic way.

**The CHAIR:** I want to go back to the previous line of questioning, before the break, which was around the transport provisions in Maitland. I'm also being asked whether the Government is undertaking looking at the feasibility of constructing a new station—we're talking trains now—on the Hunter line at Maitland Hospital. It would also make that hospital—in terms of accessibility for towns up the train line, like Scone and Dungog.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That has been something that has been raised with me a number of times. I myself have raised it in terms of the new hospital going on. If you look at the distance between Metford station and Victoria Street station, it's the longest point in the network in Maitland that doesn't have a train station. The one at Metford is only half a station. I tried for many years to get the former Government to look at it when that property came up for sale. There are a lot of benefits that could come, particularly for those communities that you're talking about. It is being looked at in terms of the Strategic Integrated Regional Transport Plans, so we will be looking at that, definitely.

**The CHAIR:** Going back to the plans for the different areas, my previous question to you was around the planning for increasing the frequency of passenger train services between Maitland and the Upper Hunter Valley towns. This is all being looked at in the strategic plan. It's all starting in January for every plan, is that right?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No.

**The CHAIR:** That was just Northern Rivers?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Hunter is already on the way. It was the first one because it does have that blueprint, if you like, of every kind of transport mode available. Hunter is under consideration now.

**The CHAIR:** Has that been released or is it still in development?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It's still in development, and there's a website. You can google "SRITPs" or "strategic regional integrated transport plans" or probably any combination. It's the worst acronym ever, sorry.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** As most of your Government's ones are.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I take full responsibility for this one, Wes. It was all my own work.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I can tell.

**The CHAIR:** The timeline for that, then, is when in terms of release of the plan and when in terms of the implementation?

If it's anything like the Bus Industry Taskforce, which did very good work—it has come out and now there's a medium-term bus plan. I thought the taskforce was going to put together a plan for buses. It just seems like there are plans, plans and plans and no action. Is there going to be action on any of this before the election?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I am hoping that there will be. I know there will be some action on it. The issue we have is that we've come from an environment in government here in New South Wales where the only thing that shifted the dial on things was, really, the electoral pendulum, to be honest. What we have gone to is to look at the regions in alignment with where are the new schools going? Where are the new hospitals going? Where are the new houses going? Where are those things there that have been neglected for the past 10 or 12 years? How can we better service them? How can we look at freight and passenger movements? How can we look at air, rail, bus, active transport, community transport, point to point—the whole gamut of transport that's in there? How can we do it?

If you're looking for these, we are very open about it, as I've said. We've written to MPs. If we look at the Hunter, for example, you can just go on the website. You can follow it online. It tells you what's happening. You can pin on the map where your particular issue is and say, "Right, I don't like this particular road because I think it's a bit constrained," or "I need more services here." So it's very useful. If you want to have a look at that and then I'm happy to give you a briefing and answer any questions.

**The CHAIR:** This is my final question before I have to duck out again. Earlier when I asked about the Maitland passenger trains and whether passenger rail services would be increased in frequency, you mentioned disruptions in terms of protests. Are you saying that the protestors have caused more of the trains to stop than other disruptions such as mechanical failures, track failures et cetera?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, obviously not because track work is a regular thing that happens all the time.

**The CHAIR:** Failures.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I have to get you that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** If you could get that on notice.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** What I was saying, though, just to be clear, is because it was in such a concentrated period, the feedback we were getting from the community was that they were not able to rely on the

trains during that period of the action, and it was protracted. Where we'd seen an increase in the Tarro Bridge scenario we saw a decrease. The other thing also for your information around the increase in services—there is a constraint. One of the things we found during the Tarro exercise is you have a limited capacity with extra trains and also drivers that are accredited to drive on the track in that area. You can't just put on another train service; it does have a requirement of planning in terms of the logistics of getting the rolling stock and getting the drivers to do it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I will go back to the Regional Road Fund, Minister. In the last session of questioning, we had nine projects of which seven are in Labor seats, one is in the Speaker's seat, and one is across the Hunter, which is in your region. Is that correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think there are more. There were other ones there.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Of the State roads I referred to in the last session we went through nine projects, seven of which you confirmed were in Labor seats, one in the Speaker's seat and the Golden Highway Hunter end project across the Hunter region. Is that correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It could be. I would have to check it before confirming.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Did you apply any process at all to those projects around a BCR or any cost-benefit analysis for those projects beyond just a political election commitment?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I think to say "just a political election commitment" would be really quite wrong, in the sense that these were community concerns that had been raised with us, sometimes for years, sometimes over a shorter period, and not by political parties necessarily. Sometimes community groups had come to us over a period and said, "We just can't get traction on this," or there were projects, like in the case of Thornton Rail Bridge and in the case of Tuross Heads, where there had been some investment by government but not enough to do the whole job.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Obviously a lot was said in the campaign about pork-barrelling, but stakeholders have approached the Opposition, Minister, and described your Regional Road Fund as Labor pork-barrelling and a slush fund. Do you agree with that sentiment—the fact that the overwhelming majority of projects have been allocated to Labor seats?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I totally reject that. If we had had approaches from any people, it didn't matter from what areas, we just looked at where we knew there was a no-brainer that needed to be done. If we look at the Golden Highway example in the Upper Hunter, it is not a Labor-held seat, but one where there is a whole body of work now being undertaken on the Golden Highway, which I think communities right from the Hunter back down to the Central West would say was very necessary and should have been thought of when the renewable energy zones were slated to happen. So I totally reject that assertion. It was really in terms of what was the need we were seeing. If you look at my travel plans that I did right across the State—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister. You are now straying away from the question. Is it fair to say, Minister, that of those nine projects—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Well, no, you asked me a political question to say did I pork-barrel and that is absolutely incorrect.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, of the nine projects I just want to know—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I haven't finished answering the question and I'd like to have the chance to finish it. Did the bell mean it finished? I'm not sure.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order: I think the Minister should be able to complete her answer, particularly in circumstances where such an argumentative proposition was put to her.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I don't uphold the point of order, Mr Lawrence.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** To your question, there are assurance processes that have to go on in any of these projects. Anything over \$10 million has to go through a gateway; it has to go through assurance business cases et cetera. That's part of the reason. On the one hand you're being critical that these things are taking time to spend the money but at the same time—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We are going to move on, Minister. Of the nine projects—

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order—

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Chair, I thought I was allowed to finish answering the question without you talking over me.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** It's my suggestion that the Minister is being treated discourteously and is not being given a reasonable opportunity to answer questions that are put to her before she's again peppered with more interruptions and questions.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** To the point of order: Chair, I believe that the Minister is straying from the question that you asked. I think that it's appropriate that you bring her back to the question.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With due respect, Mr Lawrence, I gave the Minister latitude, and she is straying well away from the question that was asked. I do not uphold the point of order.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, I have a question that follows from your evidence and your response. Of the projects through the Regional Road Fund, were you the person in the Labor Party, within the Opposition at the time, who signed off on those projects? There was no interaction with other Ministers; this was your space and you signed off on them?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's not correct. Obviously there was consultation with other Ministers and the expenditure review committee of the Opposition. No, there is definitely not. They had gone through an assurance process as we've come to government, and they have to satisfy business cases et cetera. I just take it really—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's actually a great point. To confirm, there has been a process since coming to government and you've put those projects through the assurance process and there have been no issues identified through those assurance processes?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, you have been critical of the speed of these election commitments being undertaken, and the planning.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The slowness.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That assurance process is part of that. I am not involving myself in the minutiae of every project.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We can come back in the afternoon.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I can get Mr Fuller to give you some of the background on that question, specifically whether there have been any flags on assurances, but not that have been raised with me, though.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** There is \$97 million unallocated, still left there, in that fund. Who will decide what projects are funded from that \$97 million? When will you have a process, or have you already undertaken a process, of taking applications for the \$97 million? When will future announcements be made regarding that unallocated expenditure?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I am not in a position to answer those questions at this time.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Will there be a transparent process for local councils and other State roads to be able to apply for funding from that \$97 million pot across the forward years? Will there be an opportunity, or will it be purely the discretion of the Minister to decide where that funding will go?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, as you know from being in government, those decisions would have to go through an ERC process depending on the quantifiable amounts anyway. Certainly there is an oversight in that space. But I would also say that, as the Minister, I have been a Minister for all members in this place—all electorates. Coming to government, I think local members from across the political divide have seen that I am very willing to hear from them about issues and concerns that they have in their electorates. I would hope that we would be able to hear from all members of Parliament about projects. In fact, that's what part of the strategic regional integrated transport planning has been, to see what some of these issues are and how we prioritise them by region and then across the State.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** To confirm, Minister, you can't update the Committee today on when you will make decisions around opening a process for applications for the \$97 million that is left over from the Regional Road Fund?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's correct. To your point about where this money will be spent, that's the reason why we didn't allocate. We were very clear about this in the election campaign—extremely clear. Being in opposition, and in the height of the election campaign, you don't have access to knowledge of every electorate across the State at the granular level that would be required to make those kinds of determinations. We did want to have it so that it would be open to everyone in the State, just like we did with the Regional Emergency Road

Repair Fund. We allocated that fairly across all of the electorates and we hope that this one will be similarly fair to other electorates across the State, regardless of the political persuasion of the people they might have elected to represent them.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Grosskopf, have there been any other claims put on the Mount Victoria westbound lane that are non-heritage? Have there been any other claims put on that stretch of road or on that infrastructure that Transport has had to deal with over the last 18 to 24 months?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** I am unaware of any other claims on that stretch of road.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So it's only claims that relate to the State Heritage Act?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** I'm a little bit confused by the term "claims", Mr Farraway.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We've seen recently throughout the Central West a section 10 claim that went to the Federal Government. We have seen cultural claims put on road infrastructure in the past. I'm interested to know, is it only the State Heritage Act and a process that Transport has had to follow under the State Heritage Act that has delayed the Government and Transport to do any work on that road?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** I am unaware of any other impediments to the progress of the project.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How much will it cost to fix that westbound lane coming out over Mount Victoria?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** We won't have a final cost until we get a final design and the price back from the market.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With the most recent update that you gave in the last session, when do you plan to go to market to look for a contractor?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** We'll go to market as soon as possible now that we have that. We have been running in parallel with the assessment of the section 60 application by the Heritage Council. We've been running in parallel with our designs and market testing, but we will be going to market now.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How long do you envisage, once going to market, that the process will be concluded and works can start on site?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** It's very difficult to predict the response from the market at the moment, Mr Farraway, given the amount of work that is out right across the State, most of that work being slope work and there being a limited number of people available in the market to tender for this kind of work. At this stage, we would hope to get tenders back in an eight- to 12-week period and move through a tender assessment process following that with start dates.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So it will be 2024, realistically, before—

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** It will be 2025, Mr Farraway.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Yes, sorry. It will be 2025 before any actual works can be initiated on site?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** That's my prediction, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is the repair of this road infrastructure part of DRFA arrangements or category B disaster funding?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** It's my understanding that it is part funded by the disaster recovery fund.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So it would be somewhat under the DRFA arrangements?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** Yes. The specifics of it I'll have to take on notice.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Can you take that on notice, Mr Grosskopf? Has Transport for NSW prepared any briefs to the Minister's office on a projected timeline for the repair of that road infrastructure?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** I would have to take that on notice. I'm not aware of all briefs that are provided to the Minister.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving on, Minister, are you familiar with Northern Distributor Road in the Central West?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** At Orange? Yes.



**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Who manages that road?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I can't remember off the top of my head. I'm familiar with it. I've driven on it.

**MATT FULLER:** Mr Farraway, we have an agreement with Orange council. It's my understanding that they continue to maintain the road now that it has been reclassified as a State road.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When was it reclassified, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'm not sure. Was it a year ago? Was it one of the last-minute ones you did before you left office?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** March 2023.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** March 2023, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The State Government, under the control of Transport for NSW, has been responsible for that road since March 2023. How much money has been spent, via Transport's budget or its contractual arrangements with Orange City Council, to improve or at least maintain that stretch of road infrastructure?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'd have to take that one on notice, Mr Farraway.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What's the current speed limit of Northern Distributor Road?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'd have to take that on notice. I can't remember off the top of my head, I'm sorry.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Fuller?

**MATT FULLER:** From memory, it varies between 60 and 80 kilometres in different sections.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has the speed limit of Northern Distributor Road changed in recent months?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Again, I'd have to take that on notice. I would have said that around the similar figures, but I'd have to take it on notice. What's the question here, Mr Farraway, or your concern?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** There are plenty of questions; I'll keep asking them. How much is in the budget, Minister, for maintenance works for Northern Distributor Road, which has essentially become an extension of the Mitchell Highway? How much have you planned, as regional roads Minister, in the budget for the upkeep of that road?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think that's another one that's going to have to go on notice. I know it's your primary concern. It's part of your election campaign.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I drive that road every day, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Do you? That's surprising.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I drive every day.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I get that it's a major concern for you—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** And everyone in Orange and the Central West, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I do agree with that, and I do understand that. But at the granular level of going down to individual maintenance, I don't have that in my—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Fuller, has the speed limit been reduced on the eastern section of Northern Distributor Road in recent months due to the absolutely disgusting and poor condition of the road?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd take that on notice.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The answer is yes.

**MATT FULLER:** If the speed limit has been adjusted, it would have been due to considerations in regard to user safety.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** To that point, Mr Farroway, if you have concerns about any road in New South Wales, there are numbers you can ring that are on websites. You can, alternatively, contact my office or Transport for NSW and raise it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Or I could ask them today to the Minister herself in budget estimates.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Fuller, can you outline or take on notice—it may be an extension to the previous answer from the Minister—how much funding Transport for NSW has allocated for the maintenance and repairs and upkeep of Northern Distributor Road with Orange City Council for the next 24 months?

**MATT FULLER:** We can take on notice the direct allocations. As you are well aware, we have both an operational budget and a capital maintenance budget. We can confirm whether or not there are operational allocations or capital upgrades for that piece of road.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister or Mr Fuller, do you know how many cars use that bypass on a daily basis, as an average for estimates and for the Committee?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Again, we'd have to take that exact number on notice, Mr Farroway, as we would with every—we're talking about an area of 800,000 square kilometres of roads in the State and 21,000 kilometres of regional roads.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We are also talking about a bypass of one of regional New South Wales's largest and fastest growing cities. We're also talking about a road, Minister, that essentially is an extension to a highway now and the speed limit has had to be reduced in previous months from 80 to 60, including all the heavy traffic that bypasses throughout the Central West, because of the lack of investment and actual repairs and maintenance on that road. That's why I raise it.

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY:** Point of order—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Are you in a position, Minister, to take on notice whether we're going to be able to fix this road and what plans are in place?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Absolutely, Mr Farroway. I'm very happy to help you. I'm very pleased that you have taken the opportunity in estimates to raise this issue, and I would just encourage you not to leave it until estimates next time. It's something that is very concerning to me if we have had a road not performing as it should due to maintenance. Obviously we will have a look at it. Not only will we give you the information; I will make sure the team has a look at it from your perspective.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister.

**MATT FULLER:** Mr Farroway, I think it's been well documented over a long period of time that that road has had some very considerable issues since its construction, and it was owned and maintained by local government. Transport has had it obviously in its possession for what's a fairly short period of time. I'm sure there's detailed work happening in the background in terms of assessments of the long-term maintenance and uplift to that corridor, but the specifics we would take on notice.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Mr Fuller. To that point you've raised, do you know how much Transport for NSW has expended on the upkeep of that road since it came into its ownership in March 2023?

**MATT FULLER:** No. We're talking about a 9.9-kilometre section of road amongst about 20,000 kilometres that we manage as a State, so we would take that on notice.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's fine. If you don't have it, take it on notice. I am happy with that. Minister, do you support the extension of the Bathurst Bullet, the existing service to Orange?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I've been in consultation with the member for Orange and he is very keen. We are holding community consultations about it. There are some really sound reasons that we need to do something around the stabling, so yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has there been any initial plan within your office or the department to look at an extension of one of the Bathurst Bullet services to be stabled and initiate from Orange?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Certainly we've been looking at it. That's been on the record—that we've been looking at this for the past couple of months. I took the Premier out there, when we were in Orange, and we met with the local member.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Beyond looking at it, what has been done within your office and department to progress that policy, or that initiative, that the member for Orange has been looking to deliver for his community?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think it would probably be better to give you someone from the department to get that information so that you've got it up to date.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, have you instructed your department to prepare a brief on the feasibility of extending one of the Bathurst Bullet services to Orange and to have that train stabled with its crew in Orange overnight?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I will get the secretary—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, we will come back to Mr Murray in the afternoon. I'd like to know: Have you, as the regional transport Minister, instructed the department to do that work?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I've asked them to look at it, yes, definitely, because we've obviously got the new trains coming and we need to have some preparation for that, so yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What type of train are the current Bathurst Bullet trains under the existing models of trains that we use on that network?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Oh gosh, I hate these. I can never remember if they're XPTs or XPLOREs.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Are you saying you hate trains, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, I hate these questions, thanks, Mr Fang. It's an XPLORE. No, it's an Endeavour, sorry. It's just a thing.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's fine. Minister, with regard to transitioning that train to the new fleet, what will be the equivalent replacement of the new fleet that will take over the Endeavours?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Can I refer you back to the department to get that kind of detail on that? I think that one at this stage would probably be the NIF, to be honest.

**ROGER WEEKS:** No, it will be the short regional.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The short regional, that's right, sorry. It's very early days, Mr Farraway, and you're on the record as saying that you don't want that for the people of Orange, I think.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, I'm on the record as saying that I want it.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Oh, have you changed?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, I've never moved.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Why didn't you do it when you were the Minister?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, I'm a big supporter. We're on the same page here, Minister.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** No, you're across the detail, Mr Farraway.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Oh, is it Mr Toole? Is it Mr Toole that doesn't want it from Bathurst. I get confused between you two.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Well, I'm a big supporter in rail on the Central West.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** One of them is taller than the other, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Which one?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving on, Minister, with regard to the short regional, is the short regional replacing the Endeavour trains?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It will be on this one. I think really you should spend the time in—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We're getting new trains, Minister. These are important questions.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, but I haven't had a full briefing on that sort of level of detail. We really just asked the department to have a look. We're having some community consultation at the end of October. You are more than welcome to come along to that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Love it; I'll take that offer.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I think in terms of getting the detail on it you'd be better to really ask the department.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** More broadly, when we're talking about the Endeavour fleet, there are multiple communities, including the Hunter, that actually use some of the Endeavour fleet. As the regional transport Minister, when we look to transition our older trains, whether they're XPTs, Endeavours or XPLORERS, to our new fleet—obviously XPTs will be long regional, from memory?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, that's right.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When will we be transitioning Endeavours to short regionals?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, that is the \$64 million question, the one of how we get that to happen, because we've got to get those trains built. We are dealing with a project—your Government decided to build them offshore, so there's been a delay, though obviously we are trying to get that program—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has the first batch of long regional trains arrived?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The first trains have arrived. I'm not sure if they're long or short. I think they're long.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** The first two are long regionals.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** My question, Minister, is with regard to the Bathurst Bullet services. If you don't have a timeline of when we're transitioning Endeavours to short regionals, will you give a commitment to the Committee today, to the people of the Central West and the member for Orange, that you will look at an interim extension of one of the Bullet services to Orange and transition that service to the new fleet when they're introduced?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, the member for Orange has been a really strong advocate on this, and not just to me but to the Premier. There is a lot of will within government to get something to happen here. I'm happy to keep you in that briefing; I know it's very important to you with your election campaign. But, basically, we are having a community consultation on 31 October. I don't want to be making commitments that I can't keep, or just done off the back of a conversation with you as a candidate. I'd really like to be in a position where we're giving the community certainty. One of the things that I've had feedback about as I've been in this role is the community wants certainty. They want to know. They can see if it's a fair time frame.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** And that is a fair comment, Minister. I've met with the Orange Rail Action Group multiple times.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Same.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The member for Orange has met with them and you have met with them. They approach me regularly and they want more answers, and that's why I'm asking today. I note that there are no crossbenchers in the room, so the Opposition will continue with questioning until one returns. Minister, with regard to the new Dubbo maintenance facility, have you settled on a date for an open day for the Central West community to see that fantastic facility that has been built and what it will offer, not only for the efficiency of rail services but for jobs and for the future of rail across regional New South Wales?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The first bit of your question, or your statement, or whatever it was before that, I just want to be clear. Orange Rail Action Group is a great organisation. If they want to have more information around the Bullet, I'm more than happy for them to reach out to me directly or to have a conversation—we can get briefings for them from Transport, no problem. I urge them to come to that community consultation day. It will be 31 October. So that will be there. In relation to the Mindyarra facility at Dubbo, I did have a letter from the Leader of The Nationals asking me about that.

I think I've written back to him, from memory, about whether there could be an open day. I gather there had been someone in the community who wanted to do that. I'm a former tour operator, I'm a local member and I understand there's a lot of excitement about these places. But it's also an operating facility that is very focused on the health and safety of, first, its workforce and, second, anyone else who is on site. My understanding is that an open day is not going to be possible in that. I queried that myself because we know there's a lot of buzz in the community around it. What I know the department is very keen to do is if people want to have a presentation—you have your local Probus groups. If they want to do one, we're happy to do that. But, at this stage, we're not planning a big open day where the community go and walk through. When I was there a couple of weeks ago—there are a lot of safety constraints in that, as there should be, as a rail facility.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Minister. I specifically want to know that you have not settled on the rollout of the new regional fleet, and I accept that answer. Will you be prepared to look at getting Transport for NSW to look at interim arrangements to extend one of the existing two Bathurst Bullet services to Orange, and to have that service initiate and start from Orange, and for the crew and train to be stabled there?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, we're looking at all of those options all the time.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When do you think there will be a decision on that option or that request from the member for Orange and the Orange Rail Action Group and the people in Orange?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The timing will come when it comes. I can't give you a timing on that today. What I can say is that there are a lot of things to get right here. We have to manage the existing rolling stock, the existing services, the existing staffing and the existing training accreditation of that rolling stock. We have to make sure that it is achieving the work that it's meant to do, and then we need to look at the capacity for additional services and things. That's why I can't give you a time frame at this point.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I suppose a simpler question is will you only look at extending rail services to Orange when the new regional fleet is introduced?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Not necessarily, no. That's why we're doing the community consultation, Mr Faraway. We want to have a look at exactly what the communities want. We want to have an open and transparent conversation with them. On 31 October I urge you to come along.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** If the decision is not reliant on the introduction of the new regional fleet—you just said "no, not necessarily"—does that mean that it is a live possibility that you will look at the feasibility of extending one of the two Bathurst Bullet services to Orange, to have that train stabled there, for the crew to be based there and for the service to initiate from Orange in the morning?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, we're getting into hypotheticals: "If this, if that, we'll do that." I'm happy to take it on notice, but I think it's probably better to put it on that—we are looking at the feasibility of it. We want to make sure that we are meeting the customer service obligations of the existing services that we have, but we are also aware of the very strong, passionate views within the community and, to be frank, the need for services to improve. We're balancing all of that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You have a supporter here, Minister.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's great to know.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Wallerawang station—the local progress association recently had a town hall meeting on site.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** They didn't invite me. I was surprised.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** They are disappointed with the lack of action from Transport for NSW and the New South Wales Government. Can you tell me where this project is up to in getting that station reopened and, secondly, if you support the reopening of that station longer term?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, that station has been non-operational since 1989. There has been quite a long time where it could have been reopened and it hasn't been.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But it's fair to say, Minister, that the former New South Wales Government did commit money.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, \$7 million.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It wasn't an election commitment.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** October 2022—a total of \$7 million announced to reopen it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Correct.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We've allocated \$3.46 million in our latest budget.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How much work has been done for that \$3.46 million? What have you got to show the community for \$3.46 million?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** They're assessing scope and costs, including progressing the site investigations and doing the design development. That includes things like development of station upgrade options that'll meet the operational requirements as well as the passenger and community expectations. I'm not sure if anyone can give more detail than that or if there's more updated information. I think that's probably up to date.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you support the reopening of that station, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The Government has put money in the budget to do that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is \$7 million enough? Due to rising costs, do you need to allocate more funding towards it to make it happen?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I hope not, Mr Farraway, but for a lot of the projects that your Government promised, unfortunately, that has been the case. We will see how we go.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Will the Bathurst Bullet stop at Wallerawang station when it is reopened?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That one would have to be on notice. Again, we're getting into hypothetical territory of "if this, if that". It's going to be some timing points that are important here, and we'll need to make sure that they all work in alignment. The other point, Mr Farraway, is that one of the successes of the Bathurst Bullet has been that it is a fairly direct service. That's another consideration in that, too.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What do you say to local stakeholders—including the full room, a large turnout of the local Wallerawang community—who say they have seen no visible progress at Wallerawang station after your 18 months of being in office?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Farraway, I couldn't say anything to them because I wasn't invited to the community meeting. I would have loved to have been there and I would have loved to have known about it. I'm happy to go and meet with them again. There has been funding allocated in this year's budget, so work is happening. As I've outlined to you today, it's happening.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, you would be familiar with the Edmondson Street bridge in Wagga Wagga?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I am.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** After 18 months, since your candidate for the seat of Wagga Wagga committed funding for the work, why hasn't it been completed yet?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We've been having a conversation about this with Inland Rail because they are doing some work in Wagga in that area. We know that they are looking at what they are. We don't want to be in a situation where we upgrade the pedestrian bridge at expense and then it all has to be pulled down and they do their work, so it's really about getting that in alignment. That was the local candidate's commitment, not what we had huge visibility over, but I was aware of it before the election. Given the state that it's in—I've been over it a couple of times and seen it—it is one that we need to do work on.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, in that case, was the commitment made solely by the candidate alone? Was there no consultation with the then Opposition in relation to that commitment before it was made?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, no. I said I had visibility of it. Local commitments—it was committed under that rather than a Transport commitment.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** But you would understand, Minister, that that commitment was made in light of the fact that Inland Rail was already planned through that section of railway crossing. Therefore, you would have known beforehand that there was likely to be an upgrade of that bridge, no?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We did know there was likely to be. But, in light of the timings, it wasn't clear exactly what the time frames were for Inland Rail and what the time frames were with government taking it on and getting all the work done. When you come into government, there are slippages in terms of timing because you get more information about those timings as you get here.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'll continue this line of questioning when we come back.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I notice that on the Sapphire Coast there have been two medium-sized electric powered minibuses. Have they been provided by the Government or the private sector?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Sorry, I'm a bit—I know the one you're talking about.

**The CHAIR:** It was a media release by you on 7 June.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, I know. I was actually going to get down there, but I think it was such horrendous weather that I was going to get blown off the plane, so we couldn't get there. Holly, can you give that detail?

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** Thank you for the question. These are two small minibuses. They are zero-emission buses. They provide our on-demand services. The operator liaises directly with the manufacturer and leases those vehicles. And then essentially, in terms of the contract arrangement, we ensure that we pay for the vehicle.

**The CHAIR:** So ultimately those are paid for. Are there other plans? On demand is working in some areas, but a lot of the community regionally, particularly in coastal areas, have been asking for more buses—smaller buses, shuttle buses that can travel around quite quickly and conveniently. What is the expectation for other buses like this to be delivered in other parts of the State, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Sorry, do you mean ZEBs, or on demand, or both?

**The CHAIR:** These are two new electric, battery-powered minibuses that look fantastic. Are those particular buses being rolled out in any way?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We're doing trials. We've got trials going on at the moment in Armidale. If they're not there already, there are going to be—I don't know if we've announced it; anyway, here we go.

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** We did.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We have? Good. Narrabri, Queanbeyan and Deniliquin. We're trying to get a diversity of operating conditions and climates. For example, at Armidale it's really important because battery vehicles don't perform as well in the cold, so it's important to know how that might impact in terms of operation. We are trialling the ZEBs in different locations before we go, "Right, here we go. That's what the solution will be for particular regions", because they might operate differently in those environments. In terms of the point to point aspect of it, the on-demand part, as I said before we've rolled out on-demand minibuses similar to that in Brewarrina and Collarenebri this year and we've continued Wilba in Bourke.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I've noticed that as well. When you said that it's being trialled, were you saying that the electric component of it, the fact that they're electric, is the trial?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes. Sorry, I'm talking about those electric trials, yes.

**The CHAIR:** You're not trialling the bus service to see whether it's convenient for people, but you're trialling whether electric vehicles work, I assume because, as you said, the cold, but charging and everything. Is that right?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, charging infrastructure—all of that. Sorry, that's why I wasn't quite sure whether you were talking about the on demand or the ZEB.

**The CHAIR:** Let's go back. You're trialling on demand as well, I assume, as to how much the community is responding and needs it. Is that correct?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of trialling the on demand, you said that there are a number of other areas. I've been contacted by other communities around the Queanbeyan and Braidwood areas. That's another region that has a severe lack of transport options, particularly transport services in terms of medical appointments but obviously many others. If you take school buses out of it, there's not really much else. What's being planned for that area?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I will throw to Holly on that for more detail, but we've been looking at that again. Obviously we've been engaging with the Office of the Cross-Border Commissioner around particularly Queanbeyan because that is a concern, even with taxis and point to point there. We are trying to make it smoother across borders for bus journeys so that people don't have to have such reliance on point to point. But we know that there are some inconsistencies in terms of which side of the border you pick up on point to point. That's why we had the wheelchair accessible round tables. We also really had a lot of issues raised just about taxis generally and point to point.

**The CHAIR:** Particularly in relation to around this area, lots of elderly residents need to get to medical appointments. This is back to Braidwood, Goulburn and Queanbeyan. Has there been any investigation into more community transport services? I think there is one at the moment that's being run called Valmar community transport, but it has got very ad hoc bus services and that's about it, according to the communication I've had with locals. Is there anything else planned or at least being investigated, Ms Taylor?

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** Thank you for the question. I might take that question on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Is that one of the areas as well in terms of the regional transport strategy?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's the SEATS—that would be the South East and Tablelands, which is live at the moment and people have been consulting. That was in the tranche one, particularly because it had the

one thing that the Hunter doesn't have, which is that cross-border issue. Obviously in that region you have quite a number of border issues because you've got Canberra and then you've also got Victoria.

**The CHAIR:** More transport in the ACT and less in New South Wales is probably one of the big border issues, I think.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, back to the issue of the Edmondson Street Bridge in Wagga Wagga. Do you agree with the candidate when she said, "Speaking to Wagga council, I know this is a priority for them at the moment" and "Good government looks at needs and addresses needs." Minister, when can the people of Wagga Wagga expect that bridge to reopen?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I would have to take that one on notice because I do want to have that conversation with Inland Rail. I know that we have spoken about it and where they are up to with that. As I said, we don't want to be duplicating where there might be—that's the feedback too, Mr Fang, that we've had from the community. They were very concerned that if there was an amount of money spent and it was just going to be replicated within a short period of six to 12 months, then that would be a problem. That's why we've been talking. Also, I should just say I've been really engaged with council in Wagga about their issues just generally in terms of Inland Rail and how their planning is going. We've actually been doing a bit of a whiteboarding exercise with Transport for NSW. And the regional director down there, I want to give her a shout-out, Acting Director Cathy French, because she's really been leaning into that to try to get more work done on that whole of Wagga transport.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, in that case then no doubt they will have raised the issue of Marshalls Creek Bridge with you.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, why has this Government delayed Wagga being able to have that free flow through the Sturt Highway, which should have been delivered sometime next year and which is now probably not going to be delivered until after the election?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** You're talking about Marshalls Creek Bridge?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Yes.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We've actually escalated that. We said that's a focus of the work we are wanting to do. That has certainly not been held back, and it was underfunded by the former Government in terms of commitment. So definitely we have got that done. We've had a lot of work with council, a lot of work with the progress association, the citizens, the ratepayers, all of those different groups that were advocating for it as well as council. I'm pretty confident on that one that we're pulling out all stops to get it done.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** You're saying to this Committee that you're ahead of schedule with Marshalls Creek Bridge?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No, I am not saying that. As I said, I know that it's a priority for the community. If it's not moving at pace, again I urge you to come and have a chat to me about it, or drop me a line, or get someone who is not afraid to talk to me. That's fine—whatever.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Minister, I can assure you I am not afraid to talk to you.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Well, that's fine. That's great, Mr Fang.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Minister, do you still support the ability for a noise wall to be built as part of the Coffs Harbour bypass project to support the potential film studio project?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Do I still support the potential? Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has it been costed?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** No. I've seen a figure that the proponent has put up there, but I don't think it's been costed, I understand.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have you had direct meetings and discussions with the Treasurer and/or Premier about finding additional funding to make that sound wall a part of the Coffs Harbour bypass to allow the film studio project to proceed?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, we have been very clear with the proponent that there are other pathways for funding to government. We've encouraged them to do that. There has also been an issue in the sense that they haven't submitted plans. That was the last I got, and I stand to be corrected. That's right, is it? We're up to that?



**MATT FULLER:** That's what I understand.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have you discussed the matter with the Treasurer or Premier about finding additional pathways for funding to make this project happen as part of a broader Coffs Harbour bypass project?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I haven't spoken to those two. I have spoken to other Ministers.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Which Ministers?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Particularly John Graham, the roads and arts Minister. I think I've also directed them to speak to Minister Moriarty. But, really, without a plan in place lodged with Transport—and we've been very clear with the proponents that we would urge them to lodge that. It then enables us to make a decision et cetera. These are just challenges that are there.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Given that Transport for NSW eventually settled with Rochelle Hicks, do you regret your office victim blaming and briefing against her?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Mr Faraway, I am surprised you would ask that question. I categorically reject the assumption of your question, and I absolutely think it is inappropriate to be raising that case in this forum again, because I do not think it's appropriate to be—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The question was in regard to your actions.

**The CHAIR:** Order! It's my turn. Minister, I'm not sure whether this was asked earlier, so apologies if so. But let's talk about it again—the poor, delayed Regional Rail fleet. Your media release on 28 August says that the first two trains have been inspected. What's the expectation? They've been inspected. They're at the maintenance centre. They're doing testing now, are they, literally, on the tracks?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I'll give that to Camilla, about whether they're actually testing right now. But I will say they're bi-modal trains. They will involve testing as diesel and as electric. We were very clear, when we were out there, that there is still a way to go, because of that need to test in both modes as well and to get through the huge accreditation process for this rolling stock.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I can confirm we've got two trains at Dubbo. They are both long regional trains, six carriages each. There are final fit-out works that are occurring. That will be done locally, in Dubbo. But the first of those trains will make its way south to Sydney later this month, and it will start its dynamic testing on the network. The first dynamic set of testing will actually be on the electrified city network. It needs to do that testing, and eventually it will go on the regional network, which is the diesel network. It's a bi-mode train. It needs to be tested thoroughly.

**The CHAIR:** Is the reason that it's bi-modal for regional New South Wales, which at this point doesn't have any electric network, I'm assuming—I'm assuming that it's not in this Government's strategy to put in place an electrified network for the regional rail, is it, Minister?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Not for the whole State, no. Obviously going into Sydney, the trains will go—

**The CHAIR:** Obviously, it's a great idea. The Greens support that. But I haven't heard the Government talking about that.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** That's right. It'd be a big announcement. Obviously the trains are going into Sydney. There's an opportunity there to do it, so there is a reduction in emissions there. Also just futureproofing it, and there may be certain sections of track that are electrified. Those conversations are always happening.

**The CHAIR:** So it's being fitted out. The first train will be finalised, in terms of fit-out, this month, to go to Sydney? Or is the fit-out still needing to occur?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We'll start the dynamic testing of the first train from Sydney. There are final fit-out works that are occurring locally, in Dubbo. The second train, for example, will commence those fit-out works shortly. Some of the fit-out works for the first train have already occurred because the train arrived in February—earlier this year. Just in terms of the bi-mode, it will travel on the electrified network when it comes in and out of Sydney. The long regionals go up to Brisbane and down to Melbourne, out to Broken Hill, but they do come via Central.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, with those two trains, if they're ready perhaps well ahead of others—I'm not sure what the expectation is in terms of the delivery of more of them. Do you have an idea of when the next train is going to arrive in the country?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** We do have some ideas. I'm not sure if we're telegraphing those at this stage.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We'll have a third train in Australia later this year. And then, from early next year, the trains will be arriving regularly. Every couple of months we'll have an additional train.

**The CHAIR:** For those first two trains, when they do get on the tracks, how are you determining which communities get them? Which services will be provided with those—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Probably Labor electorates.

**The CHAIR:** I don't think there's many west of the divide.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That's true.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** They'll be done on an operational basis of what's the most appropriate. Obviously it's a long process because you've got to get the drivers accredited to drive them. There'll be staffing arrangements. There'll be stabling arrangements. There will be a number of considerations that have to be taken operationally before that decision is made, and that will be the sole and only decision. I have no desire to be having a train in a particular area of any political persuasion. That's not how we roll.

**The CHAIR:** Back to the bikes. On those trains, because these roll-on bikes are taking place on the old trains—the trial. I think we went through this last time. Are there specific areas of those new trains that will allow quite a few a bikes at once to be rolled on?

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes. When we were on the train the other day, having a look at it, there were areas that were able to have a few bikes in there. They are not whole carriages, a caboose at the end or anything like that. But there will be some, and we were just talking in the break about your question earlier, and one of the concerns—

**The CHAIR:** That's good to hear.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** As I said, I'm 100 per cent behind you on this. We want to ensure that, for instance—you know there are bike tours that go on. You don't want to have 20 cyclists all turn up with their bikes, wanting to roll on, when all the carriage is booked out fully, and you end up having an unintended consequence of really poisoning community sentiment towards it because people are saying it's not safe to have them on there. So we are trying to make sure that that is facilitated. That's part of where the fee is, to make sure, really, there is a booking and an understanding that there will be a bike coming on that train. It's not a case of you're on the train for 10 or 20 minutes or half an hour in a city service and then you're out and people can put up with it. You could be on it for four or five hours or overnight. You want to make sure that people know that that's what they need to expect.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Any questions from Government members? I think they're raring to go.

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY:** No Government questions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. That's the end of your time here with us today. Thanks for making yourself available.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Thank you so much.

**The CHAIR:** I'm pretty sure we have everybody else coming back. We'll now break. We'll come back at two o'clock and see all the officials then.

**(The Minister withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back to this afternoon's session. We will begin straightaway throwing to the Opposition.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Carlon, I want to do a bit of a deep dive into the way that analysis is done in relation to the rollout of speed zones, safety zones, analysis for speed camera operations et cetera. I want to start with the rollout of these point to point, average speed assessment zones. Is it fair to say that the ones that are currently set up on places like the Hume Highway were originally set up for heavy vehicles?

**BERNARD CARLON:** In 2009 there was a spate of fatality crashes, a spike in relation to heavy vehicles, and that was the commencement of a program to establish average speed camera lengths on regional

roads in particular where that took place. So, gradually, over that period of time since 2009, there has been a gradual expansion of the number of those sites, which are prioritised around, again, heavy vehicle casualty crashes. In 2018, as part of the then Government's Road Safety Action Plan 2021 in response to a significant increase in heavy vehicle crashes across the metropolitan area, there was a decision to expand the average speed cameras associated with heavy vehicle enforcement to the metropolitan area.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So the Cross City Tunnel, Eastern Distributor, Lane Cove Tunnel et cetera?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, and the motorways as well, currently. I think there are now 31 sites, six of which are in the metropolitan area, with an additional five sites which are planned for the metropolitan area.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** In relation to the location of those camera sites, I have the fact sheet in front of me and it says that they've been worked out in relation to heavy vehicle hotspots. How might that differ from a passenger car hotspot?

**BERNARD CARLON:** We have comprehensive datasets around casualty crashes across New South Wales. We have a range of enforcement options associated with the enforcement of speeding for all vehicles, including police enforcement, fixed speed camera enforcement, red light speed camera enforcement and mobile speed camera enforcement. So the combination of all of those programs, the fixed locations are generally around concentrations of casualty crashes where those are identified. The mobile and average speed cameras, on average for heavy vehicles, are generally applied to areas. Mobile speed camera programs across the world are generally applied in a way to randomise enforcement in order to get a general deterrence across the whole of the road network.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I want to start doing a broader analysis of instances that occur in relation to, say, heavy vehicles in the first instance and then we'll move to passenger vehicles later. Are you able to determine how many instances occur because of speed and how many occur because of something like fatigue?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes. Every crash investigation where there's a fatality, police, as well as our own experts within the Centre for Road Safety, and through the contract we have in place for putting together the data for New South Wales—a more than 30-year contract with the SCIA—the Spinal Cord Injury Association have been doing that data cleansing for us for a number of decades to ensure that there's clear information about every crash. From every police report as well there's an indication by the investigators, particularly in fatality crashes, detailed investigations around the site, the location, the vehicle, the conditions. All of that data is available on our website and also available in open data.

Clearly, not always, there are very regularly multiple causes to crashes, so contributing factors to crashes. In terms of the outcomes of all crashes, whether it's a fatality or serious injury, there's a system-based approach which would indicate whether the vehicle itself contributed to saving the individual's life, or the safety features of the vehicle, as would be the road environment. So the investment we have in barrier systems, audio tactile wide centrelines, shoulders, speed zones—an analysis of the degree with which the whole safe system is actually contributing to the reduction of the impact of the crash as well.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Over the last year—you might have figures going back a bit further, but I imagine you have the last year in front of you—how many heavy vehicle accidents on, say, the Hume Highway or the Pacific Highway were in relation to speed and how many were in relation to other issues like fatigue? Are you able to provide an insight?

**BERNARD CARLON:** I'll just take that on notice for the heavy vehicle crashes because I know that you're interested in the process by which we've selected the two trial sites and we've excluded the heavy vehicle crashes from that analysis as part of that process.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Part of what I'm seeking to find out is that, obviously, when there is an accident, predominantly speed is considered to be a contributing factor in a lot of crashes. That's certainly the evidence that I think you've provided at numerous inquiries where we've had these issues come up. How much work has been done in relation to something like fatigue as opposed to speed? Are fatigue crashes increasing or decreasing? Are you able to provide some insight into that?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, certainly. Fatigue-related crashes over a long period of time, based on research, have actually been increasing as a proportion. Clearly the speed at which you travel and the speed at which you crash determines from a physics perspective the impact on the human body and, therefore, whether you are seriously injured or killed. Though we have seen a disturbing increase in the level of fatigue and we have a range of specific criteria for the classification of crashes where fatigue is determined to be a factor in that crash. For example, a run off road crash where there's no indication of any self-harm indicated, where there's no braking and somebody hits an object, clearly would be identified as fatigue contributing to that crash. We have seen in the

data in the year to date a significant increase in fatigue-related crashes, and we have over time as well. There is generous research around sleep debt and the health research around sleep patterns has impacted on a whole range of health areas and it has also impacted on road trauma.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I use the Hume Highway and I will keep coming back to that because I travel it twice a week. I live in Wagga, work here and I often drive it; I drove it last night. The speed limit along the majority of the Hume Highway is predominantly 110 kilometres per hour. Mr Carlon, do you know how long it has been a speed limit of 110 kilometres per hour on that road?

**BERNARD CARLON:** No, I would have to take that on notice in terms of the time frame for when that speed zone review was done.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** The only reason I ask is that, for as long as I can remember—I got my learner's on 30 December 1993, on my birthday—the Hume Highway has always been 110 kilometres an hour. Would that be fair to say?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, there are segments which are lower speed zones—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Sections that have bypasses.

**BERNARD CARLON:** —because of the entry points onto the network or the design of the network.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So it has been 110 for the last three decades or thereabouts. Have we ever seen a road in Australia that has had an increase in its speed limit, as opposed to a decrease?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** How do we come to the conclusion that we can do that?

**BERNARD CARLON:** I'll get some data for you from the evaluations of our speed zones over the last period. In 2021 we saw speed zone reviews conducted in 305 areas; 14 increased in regional areas and 73 increased in Greater Sydney.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is that usually associated with an improvement program along the road?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, exactly. I'd point to the 30 or 40 years of the investment that we've made in the Pacific Highway, where we've halved the number of fatalities over that period of time. Growing up, it used to take seven hours for me to travel with my family when I was young to Sydney from Taree.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So about two or three decades ago?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Now it's down to a little over 3½ hours. Speed zones have actually increased since then—so speed increases—and fatalities have reduced on that part of the network.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is it fair to say that fatigue on the road is predominantly a sleep debt issue, is it a late-night issue, or is it the fact that people are spending long periods of time behind the wheel?

**BERNARD CARLON:** It's a combination of those factors. What some of the research indicates—and we have seen an increase in fatigue-related crashes in the 5.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. and the 3.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. periods. The early morning fatigue-related crashes can be where people just haven't had enough sleep over a period of time. Certainly, people not resting when they are on long trips and they get fatigued is a factor. But people getting into their vehicles already fatigued is also a factor in fatigue-related crashes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So finishing work late, working a long shift and then trying to get home—that sort of thing?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, and also accumulated sleep debt as well. There is a lot of research that indicates that if you don't get seven or eight hours a night—so if you're getting five a night—over time that accumulates in terms of your sleep debt.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I wish I got five hours a night, Mr Carlon.

**BERNARD CARLON:** It's affecting your fatigue, yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Given that we've had the same speed limit on that stretch of road for quite a number of decades, and given that it's fair to say that cars are now much safer—a lot of them have radar cruise controls, they have lane keep assist and, indeed, some of them have levels of autonomous driving—why is it that there hasn't been any work done in relation to increasing the speed limit on some of these major roads? We've got an opportunity to reduce the amount of time people are spending in their cars on the road, therefore reducing the fatigue levels that we have and perhaps reducing those crash levels.

**BERNARD CARLON:** The research is pretty clear in this area: The faster you travel in a vehicle, the higher the cognitive load on your brain. Your response times and your control over the vehicle fatigues you more when you're travelling at faster speeds. The other point that you're trying to get at as well—we have a vision to reduce the level of trauma on our roads to zero. We have specific targets for the reduction of trauma. By 2030, the previous Government's target was a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities and a 30 per cent reduction in serious injuries.

We still have a significant number of fatal and serious injury crashes on the Hume Highway. We would say that we need to take more measures in order to reduce that trauma, rather than allowing additional speed. That would produce a higher cognitive burden on the person who is driving a vehicle at higher speeds and reduce your stopping distances. The research is pretty clear that additional speed will create more crashes. At higher speeds the outcomes are more severe, so you will see more serious injuries and more fatalities in a context where the policy settings are to reduce the trauma.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is it possible that we can engineer the roads we currently have, such as the Hume Highway, to accommodate a faster speed limit?

**BERNARD CARLON:** The answer to that is yes. It's a balance between the level of investment that we make in the road network. What I would say is that the level of trauma on roads that are not on our major thoroughfares like the Hume Highway, the M4, the M8, our tunnel systems and the Pacific Highway—there are literally tens of thousands of kilometres of roads where people are dying and being seriously injured at higher volumes on those parts of the road network where, from a road safety outcome perspective on reducing trauma, the cost benefit of investing your funds on road safety initiatives in those locations would reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries at a faster rate than investment in additional capital for enabling the Hume Highway to be 120 kilometres per hour.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Let's live in a utopia for a moment where we're looking at things in isolation and we're looking at what we would need to do to have a 130 kilometre per hour limit on the Hume Highway. I'm not suggesting that for all of the Hume Highway. There are certainly sections where I wouldn't think you could have 130 kilometres per hour, but there are long, straight sections where there is potential there. What improvements would need to be engineered into it to allow that to happen?

**BERNARD CARLON:** I would suggest that the standard of the safety of our vehicles in Australia would need to significantly increase. When we compare ourselves with European standards for the safety features of vehicles in our fleet—and you mentioned the advanced driver system technologies that are coming into our fleet which, in the last decade, increased from about 3 per cent of the vehicles registered on our roads up to around 15 per cent to 20 per cent. You still have 80 per cent of the vehicles that don't have those technologies. You have a significant proportion of the fleet which, when you crash, those that are 15 years or older have much worse outcomes compared to those vehicles which are in the fleet in those other jurisdictions that permit higher speeds. That would be one area. That transition will take a significant period of time as well in Australia, to turn over the fleet and have vehicles as safe as they are in northern Europe.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Which is why I think my colleague was asking certain questions about fleet renewal and certainly the safety of vehicles for P-plate and learner drivers.

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, absolutely. If we can go aside, the 500-odd young drivers who may access that scheme in Victoria compared to the 84,000 young drivers who got their Ls licence in the last 12 months, again, the impact of a program like that, in a utopian world—with unlimited capital and unlimited ability to control the network and control people's behaviour—we could reduce the road trauma significantly. If everybody followed the rules, we might envisage that we would have a massive reduction in trauma on our roads. If people drove under the speed limits on our roads, that would make a massive impact on the trauma levels.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** You wouldn't find that slightly annoying though? God knows I do. Perhaps you wouldn't.

**BERNARD CARLON:** No, as you'd imagine, I drive under the speed limit.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That doesn't surprise me, Mr Carlon.

**BERNARD CARLON:** The science is pretty clear that when you're driving on a road that is designed for a certain speed, your cognitive load and your stress is less, so therefore you have a better outcome.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm not sure I agree with that, but I appreciate the science is another thing. My last question on this is—again, it's a utopia almost—but somewhere like Germany has the autobahn which, for stretches, has unlimited speeds permitted. What's the accident rate in Germany on those sections of road compared

to ours? Why is it that they're able to achieve those speeds and that circumstance when we're not? Is it better driver behaviour? Is it better vehicles? Is it that their engineering on the roads is better? Is it a combination?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Firstly, on the premise that they have better crash rates on those roads, I am happy to come back with data. I'd also be able to come back with data on the number of those roads which they actually have started applying speed limits to, rather than unlimited speeds, which has been the case.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** As I said, there are sections that—

**BERNARD CARLON:** I'd end by saying, again, investment in those areas where we have the majority of trauma rather than upgrading specific roads to get higher speeds is what will save more lives.

**The CHAIR:** I can't help but want to ask questions now about the road speed limit. It's just extraordinary to hear the Nats are advocating for higher speed limits and how bad it is to slow down.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is it?

**The CHAIR:** Mr Carlon, about the Northern Territory situation? I have some reading information here that for the last three decades the Northern Territory road death has been four times the national average in terms of per capita. The Productivity Commission found that. There's a number of different issues in relation to that, but is speed one of those? Do you know?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes. It's fairly clear in the evidence that—

**The CHAIR:** It's all fairly clear, really.

**BERNARD CARLON:** The rate of fatalities and serious injuries in the Northern Territory is significantly higher than in New South Wales. I might point to 2022 when New South Wales had the lowest rate of fatalities in Australia and, for the first time, of any of the Territories as well—ACT, which normally is better, and Victoria. We went to eleventh on the OECD list in terms of the rate of fatalities but tragically the number of people who died on our roads last year, we slipped back down to sixteenth. But New South Wales has had a much better and higher rate of performance than the Northern Territory for as long as those data have been available, and speeding is a significant contributing factor to the fatalities in Northern Territory.

**The CHAIR:** It's like the multiplication table in being that obvious. The bus driver shortage, I want to get an update on that if we could. There's the immediate actions that were released in the first report of the Bus Industry Taskforce with the regions that were most impacted by driver vacancies. This was April 2023. Obviously this is regional, so I want to get an update on how that is going for the most impacted contract regions as identified in that report.

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** In terms of bus driver shortage, we track driver shortages across the outer metropolitan region and that's because that's where we've identified most of our driver shortages. In terms of the rural and regional space, driver shortages are managed by exception.

**The CHAIR:** What does that mean?

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** What it means is that 94 per cent of our operators are small and very small operators—owner-operated businesses—and we don't experience shortages in those areas. We manage driver shortages in the rural and regional space by exception and for the outer metropolitan contracts, we manage those on a monthly basis and track figures. In terms of our July numbers, we're currently tracking at 3 per cent for July, which is an improvement from October 2022 when we were at 12 per cent. We still see some pockets, predominantly in Newcastle, Upper Hunter and Central Coast.

**The CHAIR:** So we've gone from 12 per cent vacancy—did you say that was for the regions not including Greater Sydney and outer metropolitan?

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** That is for outer metropolitan.

**The CHAIR:** With that improving from 12 per cent to 3 per cent, does that include the same level of services or has that had to necessitate some cuts to services to get those figures?

**HOLLY TAYLOR:** Yes, that is the same level of services.

**The CHAIR:** I turn to the issue of wildlife underpasses now. I did ask this question in the Transport estimates, or Roads—no, it was Transport, I believe, with Minister Haylen. No, some time in the last—I think I may have asked them at both. I will ask them for the third time. I do want to get a response as to whether the department is looking at particularly underpasses and overpasses. I think there's been some response obviously about the wildlife symposium that I think Minister Graham said he attended, and also discussions about fencing. What work is being done to look at overpasses and underpasses, which really are the pick of all of the options to

ensure wildlife have safe passage across highways. Is anything being done at all or has that been struck off, as in "That is just too complicated and too expensive"? Ms Webb, that's right. We spoke about this.

**SALLY WEBB:** Yes, Chair, we spoke about it on Friday. We talked about koalas but also there are improvements and initiatives that are put into place for a whole range of wildlife.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, because I think—sorry to interrupt—this was largely Appin Road, Greater Sydney, but now we are regional estimates so I want to know what is going on in other parts of the State for wildlife beyond koalas as well.

**SALLY WEBB:** For example, I think I mentioned the Pacific Highway between Newcastle and the border, there are strategies including 450 kilometres of fauna fencing. There are some fauna underpass structures and planting of koala feed trees. I'll have to take on notice the exact specifics of any underpasses.

**The CHAIR:** You know those big overpasses that are on the Pacific Highway that are really quite remarkable, there has been evidence—cameras put in place—showing the amount of wildlife that do use them. I think I asked specifically around particular wildlife and important wildlife corridors in the State. It does sound like, to be honest, if you're taking this on notice, again, that it's not really something that the department has before it in terms of that type of agenda or plan to look at where any wildlife overpasses would be beneficial.

**SALLY WEBB:** I will pass to my colleagues on specific projects, but certainly wildlife preservation is part of all of our planning work when we're building new roads and those significant upgrades that we are doing on the road network.

**The CHAIR:** Have you done an options analysis within the department on what wildlife—compared to fencing and compared to overpasses and underpasses, what options are most beneficial in terms of wildlife and a kind of cost-benefit analysis, if you like, recognising that we are in Australia and a lot of those highways go through biodiverse hotspots. An incredible amount of wildlife, a lot of which are threatened—recognising all of that, has there been any analysis or is that something that environment department would look at, not Transport?

**SALLY WEBB:** As we do our design for all of our projects, we will be looking at the impact on the wildlife for that project. I'm not aware of a particular study that we've done that has that more generic review of all of the different types of wildlife and the most effective—more generic studies as opposed to looking at the specific wildlife at specific locations. I will defer to Mr Fuller to see if he has any specifics for—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Fuller, do you have anything else beyond not much? Thank you, though, Ms Webb, I know you're trying to answer to the best of your ability with not much of a priority within Transport.

**SALLY WEBB:** We do have specific examples. We can give you all the details around a range of wildlife on a range of our projects, but in terms of a collective answer to your question, I don't have that.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Fuller, we will go to you. Is there anybody within Transport that actually has a position?

**SALLY WEBB:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Where is that within?

**SALLY WEBB:** Within my environment and sustainability team there are a range of specialists who work on biodiversity protection, including, obviously, animals.

**The CHAIR:** And they are responsible for the wildlife crossings?

**SALLY WEBB:** They will work with both Matt and Camilla's teams to provide specialist advice and support as the EISs are developed for each of their programs and projects.

**The CHAIR:** Anything else, Mr Fuller?

**MATT FULLER:** Essentially, any time we touch any part of the network in any substantive way, we obviously do very thorough assessments on any environmental impact, including wildlife. The environment team support both our team and Camilla's team to go out there and do thorough species assessments. I am just trying to think of the last time we might have done a review of the effectiveness of some of those wildlife crossings. I know there has been some work done in the past.

**The CHAIR:** I understand species assessment when highways and major infrastructure is going through sensitive environmental areas. I understand what they do is largely offset and sometimes there is avoidance, but not much, as we know. The question is really, when they do go through key corridors, what is the requirement for the department, if there is any, to try and ensure that there is still safe passage or crossing? I don't think it's feasible to just put fencing up right along and just pretend that that is going to work for these populations of animals that

you are essentially dividing. The question is how regularly does that happen? I feel like there was a little bit of a burst with the Pacific Highway around the Ballina area, but not much else that I see when I am travelling around the State.

**MATT FULLER:** There is certainly a substantive amount of work that goes on whenever we go into a new project. I can give you some examples at the moment. Ms Drover probably has some more detail. We definitely have wildlife overpass crossings in place for the Coffs Harbour bypass and Jervis Bay Road intersection, as a couple of examples. One of the key issues at the moment that we are contending with and working through between our teams for the Milton Ulladulla bypass is the impact on the greater glider and making sure that we have the right settings to support its movement through the corridor and understanding what sort of structures would be most effective for that species. It is something that is undertaken very regularly, in an ongoing way. I do recall some work that has been done on the efficacy of some of the different corridor options that we have provided. You are right; it is a balance between actually fencing and absolute restriction and deterrent through to effective movement corridors and how we do those through either overpass or underpass.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I was going to share some of the same examples. But we also do things like vegetation selection and putting vegetation in certain areas to attract wildlife to it so that it doesn't need to traverse, for example. For the glider work we are doing, we haven't yet got the SEARs for that project. Even ahead of getting the planning department's requirements, we are looking at how we will address that glider issue. Certainly, as you say, Mr Fuller, on Coffs Harbour, there are a number of koala crossings proposed. More work will be done on that Princes Highway on the South Coast, looking at the wildlife issues as we develop those projects.

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate that, thank you. I have been contacted by somebody in the Hunter area that their property is within—this is in relation to the M1 extension to Raymond Terrace, which I understand is under construction at the moment. This is for you, Ms Drover, is it? Or it depends on the question?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Probably.

**The CHAIR:** Their property is within the 250-metre survey corridor for the Hunter Gas Pipeline and they have been told—and they have the documentation that shows it—that the pipeline is approved to go straight through the entire road construction area. What happens with that situation? Firstly, are you aware that that construction is going to have to accommodate the gas pipeline at some point?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I am not clear on the exact gas pipeline.

**The CHAIR:** This is the Hunter Gas Pipeline from Queensland. I certainly hope it doesn't, but it's going all the way through the Liverpool Plains through the Upper Hunter and then to Newcastle and the M1 extension to Raymond Terrace. I suppose the question is that this pipeline, which is quite a big gas pipeline, if it does go ahead, is going to carry a lot of gas. For something like that, what are the safety requirements? I assume that, if the road is already built, that would have to be constructed underneath the road at some point, if the road is already in place.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I am not familiar with that pipeline. I am not sure that we necessarily have contemplated it for the project. But I'm happy to take that away and see what information we can bring back. It hasn't been one of the major issues to date on the project and, yes, we have been doing major construction work since December last year.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, apparently some of the construction workers on that project were basically laughing and saying they are certainly not building a gas pipeline through here in terms of what they knew about that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Murray, I will go to you. I would like to know, have any of the transport Ministers ever requested a PowerPoint or other presentation to be provided to them from the department on average speed camera policy?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Sorry, could you just repeat that? Have they ever asked for a PowerPoint only?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** A PowerPoint presentation on the rollout of the average speed camera policy that was announced yesterday.

**JOSH MURRAY:** I would have to take that on notice. I am sure there have been numerous briefings of different subjects, but I can't speak to PowerPoint presentations.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have the Ministers requested policy or briefings from the department to be provided via a PowerPoint presentation since you have been the secretary?



**JOSH MURRAY:** Not specifically. The department does provide PowerPoint-style presentations for some specific subjects. Other times it would be written briefs. Other times it might just be a conversation presentation rather than specifically a PowerPoint deck.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has your department provided a PowerPoint or any other type of presentation to the offices of Ministers Graham, Haylen or Aitchison?

**JOSH MURRAY:** On?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** On average speed camera policy.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Coming out of the Road Safety Forum in February, the average speed camera issue was tabled in that session by a number of the experts. One of the commitments was to investigate that policy further from that point in time, which the Government committed to. As a result, I am aware that we did a number of pieces of work within the organisation. Many of those would have made their way up to the Government for consideration or for ongoing discussion in terms of the research which Mr Carlon has already spoken to today.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you consider a PowerPoint presentation to any of the transport Ministers to be a form of briefing document?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Yes, I would consider that as part of a briefing, not a briefing necessarily in itself.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** If briefing notes were requested in a freedom of information request, would a PowerPoint or other presentation be included?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I couldn't answer that in terms of the hypothetical nature of the request.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** If there was a request through freedom of information to your department, if any representatives within transport had given a PowerPoint presentation, would that be picked up or would you expect that that be picked up in a freedom of information request?

**JOSH MURRAY:** In a GIPAA?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Yes.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Again, I can't comment on any specific applications, but I have certainly seen PowerPoint-style decks in previous GIPAA's, if that's helpful.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** As the secretary, would it be your expectation that any PowerPoint presentations that were given to Ministers' offices—whether it be the Minister, chief of staff or advisers—as part of a briefing, should be part of any GIPAA?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Again, it's difficult to speculate on any PowerPoint presentation without knowing the individual document or the request that was actually submitted.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But in general, as the secretary, Mr Murray, would you expect that if there was a PowerPoint presentation as part of a briefing process to any transport Minister's office, it should be included in any GIPAA request?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Again—and I'm not trying to be obstructive here—I certainly would see no reason why it might be ruled out. But to say any PowerPoint should be included is too sweeping without knowing the particulars.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has the Premier or Treasurer's office ever requested a PowerPoint presentation as part of a briefing document on average speed cameras?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Not that I'm aware of. They would most likely do that through the Ministers, in which case we would service the Ministers.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving back to the Regional Road Fund, Mr Fuller, we heard the Minister, in her contributions earlier, talk about an assurance process. Firstly, I would like to know, of the 28 projects in total—we touched on eight or nine projects this morning that were State roads, but to my knowledge there are 28 projects in total that have been announced through the Regional Road Fund. Have all 28 projects been through an assurance process?

**MATT FULLER:** The short answer to your question is yes. For any investment commitment that is undertaken by Transport on behalf of government, we have internal governance arrangements. That could be through committee oversight. For example, on local government investment, we have assurance activities over the investments undertaken by different councils, through to the most robust assurance process, which is in partnership with Infrastructure NSW, for projects greater than \$10 million. Given that a number of the

commitments are for development and planning considerations to explore options for future delivery investment, and some of those obviously amount to more than \$10 million, we are subject to the same assurance processes on any government project of that size and nature. We'll be undertaking a strategic case and having that assessed at appropriate gates in partnership with INSW. It really depends on the project, the size and the scale. There is a governance and assurance arrangement across Transport broadly. I can outline a number of the committees and a number of the processes that we go through.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I suppose the next part of my question, Mr Fuller, is: When was Transport given that list of projects and who was the list given to to start the assurance process before, I suspect, those projects were put forward to ERC?

**MATT FULLER:** I guess like in any election process, there is a series of commitments made by governments.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm talking about post-election. Where did the list of projects come from and who initiated the assurances process internally in Transport?

**MATT FULLER:** Generally speaking, there is a list of projects that comes down through election commitments that is endorsed by Cabinet. They are then tracked, monitored and measured through—in this case I think it's the Cabinet Office that is monitoring those election commitments. At a point early after the Government's appointment we would have been provided with that list of confirmed election commitments.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Where did the list come from?

**MATT FULLER:** I think at that stage it probably came from Premier and Cabinet until they were ultimately reformed and then split into two, from memory. Obviously those election commitments have to be confirmed in the Government's first budget. That was provided to us. Then, appropriately at the different levels of investment, the different ways of assurance then come in and line up against those.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** For people listening at home—and I'm sure there are heaps of them—Transport would have needed to have done that assurance process before ERC would have signed off on the funding from government. Is that fair?

**MATT FULLER:** No, not necessarily. Election commitments are normally fairly clearly handed to departments.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Had the New South Wales Cabinet approved those projects before Transport initiated the assurance process?

**MATT FULLER:** Cabinet endorses a series of election commitments. Then it's up to government departments, once they are allocated that funding and investment portfolio, to apply the appropriate assurance regime. Like I said, projects over \$10 million will come under the same level of scrutiny of others of that nature through the Gateway Assurance process, in conjunction with Infrastructure NSW.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** As part of that assurance process, is there a requirement for a BCR return of one?

**MATT FULLER:** My understanding is that the only funding envelope that requires a definitive BCR greater than one is through Restart funding. For others, it is really just an assessment of government on the value and the decisions taken by Cabinet. There have been many decisions over a long period in time where governments have invested in projects that are under one.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Are you saying that the Regional Road Fund doesn't have a BCR requirement?

**MATT FULLER:** It doesn't have a minimum requirement, no.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So it can have a BCR of less than one and be approved?

**MATT FULLER:** That's a hypothetical, but it doesn't have a minimum requirement for a BCR.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have any of the 28 projects that have been announced by the Government that Transport are now administering for the Government had a BCR test put on them?

**MATT FULLER:** As I've just said, the assurance process that happens is tiered in accordance with the level of investment. Primarily, substantive business cases are generally only done for the more major projects, for example most of those at the \$10 million mark and above. It wouldn't be our intention to run BCR assessments and substantive business cases and chew up lots of the funding for some of the smaller examples that have been provided for local government as a contribution to an existing project or to do investigation work.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has the Minister's office given any indication to Transport on when a process for the \$97 million that is left unallocated will be initiated for Transport to go to market to councils and stakeholders looking for applications?

**MATT FULLER:** That's not something that I could provide at this Committee. That's obviously an ongoing consideration for the Government.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The point would be, Mr Fuller, you haven't received advice from the Minister's office to start a process?

**MATT FULLER:** The Minister would be the one making announcements about what a future process for any further applications to the Regional Road Fund would be.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With regard to deeds, earlier you said you were going to take one of the questions on notice about how many councils have received deeds. Have you got anything back for us yet?

**MATT FULLER:** I don't at the moment, but we can certainly take that on notice. I do understand that for many of the projects, as we've been going through and monitoring the election commitments, we have provided funding to councils, particularly for some of those smaller arrangements when they have pretty straightforward deeds. There are probably still a few that are in the process of being finalised with councils.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** At a previous estimates hearing, I asked for a full list of the projects, which was provided. I've got them here. Interestingly, for the 28 projects, we have mapped them per electorate. Has Transport mapped the total projects per electorate as well?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice. I'm not aware of that and I haven't seen a report that does that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you know how many projects are in Labor-held seats, Mr Fuller?

**MATT FULLER:** No, I couldn't say off the top of my head.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's 24—88 per cent. With regard to the Regional Road Fund, will you come back to us on the deeds?

**MATT FULLER:** I have actually just had that information come through. It says that all 19 of those local government council deeds have actually been executed.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You've got an executed document back from those councils?

**MATT FULLER:** Yes, we've got executed deeds, according to the information I have just received, for all 19 projects.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Excellent. Moving on, I'd like to ask some questions around the Wallerawang station upgrade. Who is looking after that?

**MATT FULLER:** We can probably do that in combination, but I can.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Back to some of the questions to the Minister earlier, \$3.4 million—I think, was the figure that was quoted—has been spent or expended of the \$7 million that was allocated. Does Transport have a timeline of when more meaningful works and activity will commence onsite? Secondly, does Transport for NSW have enough funding in real dollar terms to deliver that commitment?

**MATT FULLER:** Just to clarify, I think what the Minister said this morning is \$3.46 million has been allocated in this year's budget of the \$7 million that was announced previously.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So that means, even if we wanted to, we couldn't deliver the upgrade in this financial year because we don't have the funding envelope allocated for any meaningful works, correct?

**MATT FULLER:** Like with all projects, they go through a process of design and development phase, which is what we're in. The Government has allocated a substantial amount to ensure that we're able to fulfil the final design requirements to provide options back as to what works can be undertaken at Wallerawang.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** In terms of the process and in terms of some of the initial works, has Transport for NSW identified significant upgrades to the platform that would be required to make that station operational?

**MATT FULLER:** I think in our early investigations, platform requirements obviously dictate whether or not we can have all of the carriages associated with different trains accessible from the platform. In many of the smaller stations across regional New South Wales, there are only some carriages that you can alight from or

enter the train from because of the shorter platforms. I think that was some of the considerations being thought about by the team, but that's a logical consideration when we're thinking about smaller regional stations.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When will more community consultation commence with the community around the reopening or progress on the reopening of that station?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice. You heard this morning from the Minister that she was pretty clear that we're very happy to touch base with any of the local community groups just to engage and to give them an update as to where we are with the project.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's fine, but I think they're frustrated because they're not hearing anything from Transport. That's why they're organising their own meetings. Does Transport have any scheduled community consultation sessions planned as of today?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice just to check in with the team on—

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I can add a couple of lines—just a little bit. I don't have an enormous amount either, because it is very early days in the process. Early investigations and survey works have started. There will be a number of options looked at for what the solution could be, and community consultation will be included as part of that design phase, but we would expect that that is more likely to be next year than this calendar year.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When does Transport for NSW expect that that phase of works will be completed? What time in 2025? Q1 or Q2?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I'm sorry. I really don't know at this early stage. It really is very early in the process of looking at the various options.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'll continue with you, Mr Hayes, for the moment to see what else you've got there.

**ANTHONY HAYES:** That serves me right!

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Will the station be able to access their on-demand service as part of the upgrade?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I couldn't answer that at this stage.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has there been any work or consideration that the Bathurst Bullet services would be able to use the platform and that station as part of its reopening?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** No, I would say not at this early stage.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With regard to the Bathurst Bullet services that we spoke about earlier with the Minister—is this something for you, Mr Weeks? Or it might be back to you, Mr Fuller. Bathurst Bullet services?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I'm happy to take that initially and then perhaps Mr Weeks.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Murray, has the Minister's office directed your department to look at an interim service or a modification of the existing Bathurst Bullet services or one of the two existing Bathurst Bullet services—that one can be station housed and stabled in Orange and initiated from Orange?

**JOSH MURRAY:** At this present time, again, I'd say we're early in the process, but the Minister has certainly asked us and NSW TrainLink to look at the logistics involved in the current Bathurst Bullet service and to do that on the basis of being able to speak further with the community, which I think the Minister indicated earlier today was in October. We have some dates set down. Really, it is an early discussion around what logistics are required by the current services that we could go and then seek the views of the local community as to how we would look at that again for a future service—again, with no commitment around what timing that would be but just to see what the real local demands are travelling from Orange through to Sydney and that may be interested in using that same route.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So you have no data at the moment that would help justify an initial investigation based on the connection from coach from Orange station through to Bathurst station to utilise the Bullet?

**JOSH MURRAY:** They're the elements that we're actually looking at: patronage, obviously, on the Bathurst Bullet, patronage on the TrainLink coach services from Orange to Bathurst, patronage on the Dubbo XPT, which then might be affected by any new services through the Central West. All of these elements are what we want to have clear data on before we engage with the community so that we can actually see what

their expectations are around what would potentially be a very early train or a train that perhaps doesn't get into Sydney until late if we think about the morning services. There are a number of logistics that we want to factor into that discussion before we meet with the community.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** As the secretary and hearing some feedback from the region, is it fair to say that Transport, in your view, when going to conduct these consultations and engagement, needs to go wider than just patronage numbers—that you need to be speaking and liaising with council, Orange Rail Action Group, Business Orange or the business chamber? How far and wide will consultation be looking into this service?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I understand our initial plan is to hold this October session. I absolutely agree with you that the views of all stakeholders need to be taken into account, as do some of the other factors that will impact on both Sydney Trains and New South Wales train services, like provision of the new fleet and the staffing requirements for the intercity fleet and the future regional fleet. All of those elements have to be looked at because they place additional stresses on current services and then that affects the availability or future timing of an Orange-based service.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** This might be a question for Ms Drover. The short regional trains will be the replacements—obviously, we didn't get an answer this morning from the Minister. But will the short regionals be the replacement for the Endeavour services?

**JOSH MURRAY:** The short regional trains would be envisaged to be, based on the fact that we don't yet have the deployment strategy for the new trains. It would be incorrect to say it's a like for like because there may be network changes in between times. But, yes, in effect, that is the replacement of the Endeavours.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Where is the short regional new train in the rollout phase of the entire new regional fleet?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Ms Drover, when we do expect that?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** As the secretary said, we're still working with NSW TrainLink on the deployment strategy. We have both short and long regionals and the regional intercity, and then we will allocate those trains to the deployment strategy. So it may not necessarily be a one-for-one swap, as the secretary said.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But in terms of the trains coming in country and being manufactured, isn't the short regional the third tier of the new fleet to be built?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Well, the first trains we're getting are the long regional, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So the long regional is the replacement for the XPT?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So they've started to arrive, correct?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** That's right.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** After all the long regional trains have arrived in country—I suspect they will be being built as three phases. Is that fair to say? So all the long regionals will be built first?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We're just in discussions with the manufacturer about the sequencing and balance of the fleet. So I wouldn't like to be definitive on that today. But the regional plan, you are right, was the long regionals, and then we'd follow with the short regionals.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I remember the briefings. Does that mean the rollout of the new regional fleet is slightly different to what Transport for NSW—I'm not talking about Government or Parliament. I'm talking about within Transport—that the rollout could be very different to what was envisaged when the program was first commenced.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We're working through that, obviously with the demand and needs of NSW TrainLink, but also what the manufacturer can deliver. There are also the enabling works across the network to be considered as well.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Just going back to Mr Murray regarding regional train services, you've spoken about the end of October and the consultation. But with the new regional fleet, will there be a more holistic view in terms of consultation and how services can be rescheduled, or how we can have a different service offering with the efficiencies that come with a new fleet?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I think, Mr Farraway, it would be our priority, presently, to focus on the completion of that contract and getting a clear timeline of train delivery, which is our priority at the moment. We're working

with the consortium and the manufacturer. As Ms Drover has said, we would hope that in 2025 we'd have a regular stream of arrivals of the trains from Spain and that that will then enable us to reprofile how we get those trains into operational service. But, as has been put on record a number of times, there is still a long way to go in terms of both on-track testing and readiness for the New South Wales market.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** While we're still on trains, I'll go back to Ms Drover. We have two long regional trains at Dubbo.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes, six cars each.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When will we see the next long regional arrive? You may have said this earlier this morning.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes, it's later this year. We should have three in country by the end of '24.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What is the estimated arrival of the rest of the long regional fleet?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** They will come next year. As I said, we're just finalising the schedule for those, but we anticipate that every couple of months a new train will arrive into country.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Will we have all of the long regional fleet by the end of 2025?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I'd just need to check that because there are about nine or 10 in the long regional suite.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Could you come back to the Committee?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** At this stage, what is the second phase of the regional rail fleet rollout? Obviously it'll be approximately 2026.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We haven't confirmed the first passenger service date for the regional rail fleet.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm talking about the actual trains themselves. When do you anticipate, at this stage, seeing the second phase, once all the long regionals are delivered? You won't be receiving a batch of different configurations, will you? You will receive all of one configuration, and then you will start taking delivery of a new configuration.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** As I said, I'll take that on notice because we are in final discussions with the manufacturer about the arrival of the various components of that order of 29 trains.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Murray, are you familiar with the Tooleybuc Bridge.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Not specifically, no.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is there anybody here on the panel that's familiar with the project?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Yes, I am.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Are you able to provide me an update as to where the project is at at the moment?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Tooleybuc Bridge was a key part of the Murray River crossings strategic business plan. The business case is being finalised, and then discussion is happening with our Victorian colleagues at the moment.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Initially, it was to be replaced. Is that correct?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is that still the plan?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** No. As part of the timber truss bridge strategy, working with Heritage NSW, it was actually reprioritised. That one is now not for replacement but for reinforcement.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is that likely to be more or less expensive than a new bridge?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** That would be less expensive than a new bridge.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is it true that there was land acquired in order to facilitate the construction of a new bridge?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I don't know.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Are you able to take that on notice?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Yes, of course.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** In the instance that there was land acquired, which I believe there was, can you provide on notice what is planned in relation to those parcels of land that were acquired in order to construct the new bridge?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is there a time frame for when you think the upgrade work will occur?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I might have to take that on notice, too, with specific regard to Tooleybuc, if I may.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** When was the previous replacement strategy to have been completed?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** That's all tied up in the strategic business case. It's obviously a fairly expensive proposition but, as mentioned during the last estimates hearing, a number of these crossings are coming to their end of life. I think all parties, Federal and State, agree that it is a priority that needs to be dealt with over the next 10 years.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Could you also take on notice the previous budget amount that was planned for the spend in relation to the replacement versus what you now expect will be the cost, given the retention of the bridge, and also what the primary consideration was. Do you know if that was a heritage issue, or was it more of a cost issue?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I think there were a number of factors involved. One of them was looking at the key freight routes and the freight industry requirements, which led to looking at which bridges should be prioritised from a freight perspective, and also local community sentiment on the matter.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I was about to ask that. Was there community consultation in relation to the retention of the bridge, as opposed to a replacement?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Yes. But certainly the conversation—and I'm sorry I'm sounding vague. Swan Hill, I think it is—the bridge that was swapped—was determined to be of a significantly greater opportunity from a freight perspective, and it was very strongly supported by local councils on both sides of the border. Local MPs et cetera were all very supportive.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Are you sure all the local MPs are supportive?

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Of the Swan Hill Bridge or Tooleybuc?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Tooleybuc.

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I can't comment on Tooleybuc off the top of my head, no.

**MATT FULLER:** Mr Fang, I can probably add that on the Transport website, it does have quite a specific outline of works that we're undertaking on Tooleybuc between August and November this year and some of the particular interruptions to local traffic during that time—both night and day works.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Excellent. Ms Webb, it's probably time to throw some questions your way. Are you leading the lithium ion battery safety working group for the whole of government?

**SALLY WEBB:** No, I'm not.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Are you involved in one?

**SALLY WEBB:** I'm not personally involved in that. I believe that members of my team are supporting that work, though.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** So you don't have any visibility in relation to that working group at all—only through your team members?

**SALLY WEBB:** I saw the submission to the parliamentary inquiry about 12 months ago, I'd say.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Given that you don't have direct involvement in the government working group on it, are you looking at issues around fire risk on trains, train platforms, ferries et cetera in relation to e-bikes, scooters et cetera?

**SALLY WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** How are you informing that work?

**SALLY WEBB:** We have a group within Transport that involves safety representatives from the rail agencies and representatives from my team, from the asset standards piece, with expertise in fire safety and who are in liaison with Fire and Rescue NSW. We also have other public transport modes' representatives from the Coordinator General on that group, safety representatives et cetera.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm going to ask the obvious question now. How is the work that you're doing in relation to this battery safety different from the whole-of-government battery safety group? Are you duplicating work? How are you ensuring that there's a cohesive approach in relation to work that one part of the government is doing and that you also seem to be doing?

**SALLY WEBB:** I think my starting point would be that it's important to consider safety risks for the particular property and risk environment of different parts of New South Wales Government, and areas which are interacted with by members of the public. It is necessary to make sure that we're comfortable around the risk profile of e-mobility devices on our network. That's obviously drawing on information et cetera from other parts of government. My team has tapped into those other parts of government.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Obviously, the Government has their Active Transport Strategy that's underway.

**SALLY WEBB:** Yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is the whole-of-government working group, in relation to the lithium ion battery issue and the associated fires—are they the ones that are providing the technical aspects to the active transport group, or is it your working group that's doing the work in relation to safety on transport assets?

**SALLY WEBB:** There is an e-micromobility inter-agency group that I am co-chair of. That group is led by Transport but has representatives from Police; Fire and Rescue; Health; Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; Building Commission; SafeWork; the Premier's Department; the EPA; the Office of Local Government; Fair Trading; and from SIRA.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** SIRA, like the insurance?

**SALLY WEBB:** Yes. That group is a multidisciplinary, cross-agency group that is tapped into work that's being done around lithium-ion batteries. I note the work of Fair Trading and announcements they've made. That is a piece that's looking at the policy settings around use of e-micromobility devices and the policy framework around that. That group has made a whole-of-government submission to the parliamentary inquiry.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is there a possibility that you're looking to ban lithium ion battery devices—mobility scooters, e-bikes et cetera—on Transport for NSW assets or public transport?

**SALLY WEBB:** What we're doing is undertaking—and slightly separately from that cross-government inter-agency working group that is obviously informing Transport as well. We are looking at the safety of lithium ion batteries on our own network. We are undertaking risk assessments. That process is underway.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is it fair to say that one of the outcomes of that risk assessment may be that you ban the carriage or use of devices that use lithium ion batteries—such as mobility scooters, e-scooters or e-bikes—on Transport for NSW assets or public transport?

**SALLY WEBB:** What I would say to that is we're looking at the safety risks of lithium ion batteries. What we want to ensure is that the network is safe for passengers.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Let me rephrase it in another way, because I think that was the answer you gave earlier. Can you guarantee that the Minns Government will not ban devices that use lithium ion batteries, such as e-bikes, mobility scooters or e-scooters, from public transport or Transport for NSW assets, so that people can have a holistic active transport and public transport opportunity to access these things—that you're not going to go leave people stranded part of the way?

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order: I think the question along the lines of "Can you guarantee that the Minns Government won't do this or that" is really seeking an opinion on or pre-empting a question of policy.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That's fair. I'm happy to change the question.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, if you'd like to rephrase your question.



**The Hon. WES FANG:** Can you guarantee that one of the recommendations that comes out of this working group won't be—and insert the rest of the question that you won't ban devices A, B, C and X, Y, Z plus everything else.

**SALLY WEBB:** It's part of Government policy and part of Transport's strategy to support active transport. As part of that, we know that e-micromobility is a part of that Active Transport Strategy. However, we also know that it's important to keep the network safe and if there are some—but each mode is also very different. For example, it may be that on buses, where it's difficult to get some of those larger e-bikes onto the bus—it may be that those quite large e-bikes on buses are quite challenging for people to get on and off the bus. In terms of your asking me to give a guarantee, what I'm saying is the work that we're doing is undertaking a safety risk assessment of different types of e-micromobility on the public transport passenger network.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate the answer. I must say, however, I'm no clearer as to what a possible recommendation or set of recommendations that might come out of this working group might be. If you are a gig economy worker and you are seeking to get from, say, Manly into the city so that you can then do work—and you have an e-bike and you want to bring your e-bike on the ferry and bring it across to the city so you can do your gig economy work and then come back via a ferry—is there a possibility that your e-bike will not be allowed on the ferry given it is powered by a lithium ion battery and that you are seeking to reduce the risk and therefore will ban that sort of device? That's what people are wanting to know: Is that a possibility?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Mr Fang, if I take it to a slightly broader level, our task in pulling together the e-micromobility working group—you asked about what recommendations might come that would affect the scenario that you've pointed out. It is much broader than batteries; it's about the whole use. It's about where they can be used, the scale of the devices, the power et cetera. We're looking into all of those aspects. The aim, really, is to coordinate amongst I think 14 government agencies to ensure that the Parliament can review all of the scenarios and may ask some further questions and also put some ideas together around the future policy settings around e-micromobility. That's the stage that we're up to at the moment and we're exploring those issues. And I was just going to add on the earlier point that you asked about lithium ion fires—that's a similar whole-of-government group, but it's one coordinated by the EPA with Fire and Rescue NSW, as the EPA has carriage of the Act about hazardous goods transport.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate that and thank you for the expansion of that. If there was, say—and we've used the example of a ferry—a lithium ion battery fire on a ferry, what's the procedure in handling it if you're, say, between Manly and Circular Quay?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I'd have to take the actual operational specifics on notice. However, they are the exact elements that, in terms of the working group, we're looking at because—as Ms Webb has already said—the procedures on a ferry are very different to what might happen on a bus if someone tried to board, or a train or metro. We are at the point where, as has been said previously, very much part of what our organisation is trying to achieve is to improve and expand the use of these devices—certainly support them. I think it's fair to say we don't have concerns about the devices per se, but some of the way the devices are used, charged, stored or perhaps modified are elements that we also need to look at. That's what we'll be feeding into this inquiry.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate that broader overview in relation to the safety aspects but, in relation to a lithium ion fire on a ferry, does Transport for NSW have a dedicated procedure to deal with a lithium ion fire on water?

**SALLY WEBB:** Our ferries are operated by private operators. They have a range of procedures in place to ensure safety. One of the aspects around something like a lithium ion battery fire on a ferry is the fact that the bikes are stored outside of the ferry except on the old Manly ferries, where they're stored inside the ferry. But there are different procedures. So, for example, there would be fresh air that is diluting or blowing away the toxic fumes. That's a different scenario from, for example, inside a light rail vehicle, although you could open the doors for that. Each public transport mode is different, and the safety assessments will be able to look at the specifics of each type of mode.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I am interested in the way that you framed the first part of that answer to my question, which was that ferries are operated by a private consortium, which means it's not owned by Transport for NSW because it's operated by a private entity. Does that mean that there's a disconnect between the Transport for NSW strategies in that you may ban it on, say, a Transport for NSW bus, but a private operator might allow it on theirs? Depending on where you live and what operation you have, you could be treated differently, depending on whether you are on a Transport for NSW bus or a private operator's bus. Is it going to be consistent across the network?

**SALLY WEBB:** Our safety policies and the safety policies of our operators are all based on safety, and safety comes first. There are mechanisms through ticketing et cetera and the public transport Act to look at access conditions to ensure safety. But any safety decision is based on a safety risk assessment and that's informed by the specifics of the mode.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Murray has talked about the inquiry that's being undertaken at the moment and the fact that the policy is perhaps not set in stone—it's my understanding at least that there is consideration of banning lithium ion battery devices on a number of Transport for NSW assets and modes of public transport. If that's the case, will it be network wide? Is that what we would see if a ban was implemented?

**SALLY WEBB:** What we're undertaking at the moment is safety risk assessments for our different modes, and they have different features, which means that they may have different outcomes. We are, however, supportive of active transport and exactly the example you said of someone being able to undertake their work as a delivery operator in the city and having to use a mode. But we want to make sure that passengers are safe, those delivery drivers are also safe, and the crew on those different modes are also safe.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** At this stage, provided the public can fit the device on a method of public transport, they can bring their e-bike, e-scooter, mobility scooters and use them on public transport. It is my understanding that the potential ban that may or may not come in is at the moment not being implemented but may in the future.

**JOSH MURRAY:** I think it's important to say—you've said the word "ban"—there is no proposal for a ban. There is a risk assessment study that is going on, which needs to take into account the very big differences between being on the deck of a Manly ferry as opposed to a light rail vehicle or, indeed, a bus. It doesn't matter if it's an e-vehicle or any other kind of mountain bike that would be very difficult to get on board a Sydney bus. That work is ongoing at the moment and that will be presented to the inquiry.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is it fair to say then, Mr Murray, that there are no proposals, no plans, no drafts that are currently before working groups that involve Transport for NSW that would have mobility scooters, e-bikes, any of those micro lithium ion battery devices, banned from Transport for NSW assets or public transport?

**JOSH MURRAY:** What I would say is because it's an emerging technology there are a lot of views coming from different organisations. We've seen reports come in from overseas experiences that have been put forward by one government department or another. What we've said to you today is Transport's role is to advocate for greater accessibility and equality of transport. We're certainly aware of the increasing demands on the Sydney network, in particular, of the gig economy workers, and that's why we're trying to get all of the facts together with all of those government agencies and put them together for the Parliament.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Murray, I've been diving into these questions for about a good 15 or 20 minutes now and I am none the wiser as to what people can expect Transport for NSW will do in relation to the \$60 million active transport plan that this Government has. Are they going to be able to invest and buy these devices knowing that they will be able to then use them on public transport, or are they going to buy these devices and find out in six months time that they are not permitted to bring them on rail, on ferries or on buses? I think there needs to be some clarity here. My understanding is that there is a proposal to ban those devices on Transport for NSW assets. If that's the case, then people need to know so that they don't invest a lot of their hard-earned money into devices that they're then not able to use in an active transport way.

**JOSH MURRAY:** With respect, while we're talking about active transport and, in particular, e-micromobility, we've gone into a fairly deep dive on battery safety and battery fires. What I'm saying is we are doing the work at present to advise the whole-of-government committee, which both sides of politics have committed to in terms of being an important step forward. We absolutely support that. We've committed a lot of resource across Transport to getting that data together. We're simply not in a position here to comment on the likelihood of any kind of restriction or otherwise that might impact e-micromobility.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** If there was a ban, would you accept that this would have a dramatic impact on the gig economy and gig economy workers being able to shift from location to a place that they're needed to operate in for deliveries et cetera if it was to be implemented?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I'd take the question as a hypothetical, but say that this is the reason why Transport, in its membership of the whole-of-government working group, is doing a lot of data work on the use—and the proper use—that is not just safe for the user but is safe for the other public transport passengers, especially as we try to build patronage and capacity, not just for people that might be bringing a bike or a skateboard, but for everyone else who is already in the carriage.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** We spoke earlier about the people that we've consulted in relation to the working groups that are currently underway from both the whole of government and with Transport for NSW. Has that included a lot of those gig economy employers, the workers, who are involved in that aspect of the economy?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I'd have to take that on notice as to exactly how we've engaged with those groups, but I agree it's important.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I note that you've said it's a hypothetical, but it's my understanding that it's actually not a hypothetical; that you're currently looking at drafts to go up to government. Do any of those drafts or plans that have been put forward to the Ministers have the banning of lithium ion battery devices on Transport for NSW assets?

**SALLY WEBB:** I note that, for example, NSW Fair Trading has announced standards for batteries and devices. Something like that is something that we will look at and understand—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate that bit. I'm more looking at a draft plan that's gone to the Government. I understand there is a draft plan and that part of that draft plan has these devices being banned. Is that the case?

**SALLY WEBB:** No draft plan has gone to government.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is there a draft plan within Transport for NSW that indicates that these devices be banned?

**SALLY WEBB:** As I've mentioned a few times, we are undertaking a risk assessment to understand the safety risks of lithium ion batteries and different types of lithium ion batteries, and different types of e-micromobility devices on our network.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That didn't indicate that there is a draft plan.

**SALLY WEBB:** That work is underway. That work will inform any safety settings that we make recommendations about to government.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We'll pull it up there and have our scheduled break for 3.30 p.m. We'll be back at 3.45 p.m.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It is 3.45 p.m. and we will go straight to Opposition questions. I'd like to go back to you, Mr Fuller, with regard to the Regional Road Fund. Just to confirm, as part of the assurance process you said that anything with a \$10 million spend or above obviously required Infrastructure NSW Gateway approval. Is that correct and part of the assurance process?

**MATT FULLER:** Part of the ongoing assurance is that we would go to INSW for future considerations around other investments. As an example, the Dapto ramps consideration. If that was for a large-scale, many millions of dollars project for delivery, we would go back and work with INSW on the appropriate—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** To confirm, with regard to any project that was \$10 million or above, would that automatically bring about a trigger to engage with INSW on that project?

**MATT FULLER:** On \$10 million projects, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** As part of that assurance process and work with INSW, do they put a BCR on that investment and that project that you refer to them?

**MATT FULLER:** We will put a BCR as part of a strategic and final business case analysis. As I said before, we haven't got a minimum requirement. We put a benefit-cost ratio on all projects over \$10 million. As I've said, there's been many projects over time that have been delivered that have been underneath a BCR of one.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What is the BCR for the Gosford Bypass?

**MATT FULLER:** That work hasn't been undertaken yet. We've got an election commitment in terms of a nominal amount that's been allocated to undertake the work. We now need to undertake that work to establish what—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** INSW haven't done the work?

**MATT FULLER:** Transport haven't done the work. We've got an allocation of funding to now go and do the development work, including options assessments, strategic business cases and final business cases. At that time we would be determining what benefit-cost ratio would come from different options that have been presented to government for further investment.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What happens if it comes back with a really low BCR as part of the INSW Gateway assurance process?

**MATT FULLER:** That's a decision for government in terms of any future investment.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has INSW done any work on the M1 Princes Motorway exit ramps?

**MATT FULLER:** INSW would not because we're in very early—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Sorry, Transport.

**MATT FULLER:** As we briefly touched on this morning, we've done early investigation work. We've been out in the community to seek input.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So no BCR would have been completed on that?

**MATT FULLER:** We haven't done that detailed assessment work yet, no.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** What about the Bulli bypass? Any BCR on that?

**MATT FULLER:** No. These projects are in the early stages of planning. We're going down and doing community consultation to assess need. We're doing traffic modelling. We're doing other site-related investigations in and around these projects. They're not at a stage where we'll have benefit-cost ratios.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** None of the 10 projects that are \$10 million or above that would trigger that process to engage INSW and look at BCR have had that work done on them to date?

**MATT FULLER:** It's an ongoing process. We will engage and have projects registered with INSW well before we have an established benefit-cost ratio. That's really down to the policies that exist across government for an investment level. We will, through the process of determining strategic and final business cases, work on options to present to government, and the associated benefit-cost ratios are with those. INSW would assure that work and give their assessment, and support or otherwise, to government as part of the independent assurance framework they have.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Without going through every project, I'm interested in Cuttagee Bridge, though, because Transport have done a lot of work over a few years with regard to funding for that bridge—under previous programs under a previous government—that never eventuated. Do you know if the Cuttagee Bridge has a BCR that may have been determined previously under a different program for that investment?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice. I'm not aware, no.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** To confirm, you said all the deeds have been executed, even for Cuttagee Bridge.

**MATT FULLER:** My understanding is that for the 19 local government projects we've entered into deeds.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving on, I have a question for probably Ms Drover, if that's all right, regarding the Coffs Harbour Bypass. Have all the property acquisitions for the Coffs bypass been completed?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** That's my understanding, because we're well advanced with construction.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So all the property you require has been acquired?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** That's my understanding. I'll just confirm that. I can also give you an update on the regional rail issue too, if you want that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Yes.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We are expecting to take possession of the first nine out of the 10 long regionals and then the short regionals. Then the balance of fleet—the nine intercities—will arrive. The last train to arrive will be the very first long regional. That's because it's not built to the resolution agreement design, so it goes to the back of the queue.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** We'll stick to trains. The equivalent Endeavour replacement train would be an intercity train, wouldn't it, not a short regional, like was discussed this morning?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** That will be a decision for NSW TrainLink.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Weeks?

**ROGER WEEKS:** As part of the transition under recommendation 12 of the independent rail review, all of the intercity services, including diesel intercity services, transition to Sydney Trains on 1 July. As Ms Drover said, part of the arrangements in terms of distribution of fleet is currently being worked on. In broad terms, we would expect that short regional fleet—the second tranche that Ms Drover indicated—would primarily replace our current XPLOER fleet and then the third tranche, most likely, the Hunter and Endeavour fleet. But there are still some operational decisions, scheduling and planning that we need to be making in conjunction with Sydney Trains around those services.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Getting back to Coffs Harbour, we have access to all 178 properties required for construction, and 175 of those properties have transferred their ownership to Transport. There are three properties that are still under negotiation, but we have got access agreements in place for the construction activities.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you know what noise wall panelling would cost to produce per metre? I'm talking about produce, not build—what you could source it for.

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Are you referring to the proposed noise wall outside the resort?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm talking about what the panelling costs, because you would have put up similar infrastructure as part of other projects, in terms of sourcing the actual infrastructure itself. Maybe the cost in installation might be different, but what do you think noise wall panelling would cost to produce before installation?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I wouldn't like to speculate on that. As you are aware, under the environmental approval conditions for the Coffs Harbour Bypass, we're not required to deliver that noise wall. Having said that, though, we have space-proofed for it. So if in the future the resort was to put a planning proposal in, there is at least space-proofing for it. The other thing to note is that the new Coffs Harbour Bypass is either 300 metres or up to 900 metres further away from that resort. There's also forecast to be materially less traffic running along the Old Pacific Highway next to the resort. In fact, over 5,200 vehicles per day will transfer onto the new Coffs Harbour Bypass away from the Old Pacific Highway.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When is the operational noise review for the Coffs Harbour Bypass due for release?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We are doing the operational noise review based on the final design for the Coffs Harbour Bypass. That was due to the department of planning, heritage and infrastructure by the end of this year. That will be done by the end of the year and submitted to the department for their review.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So that work needs to be done by Transport for you then to submit to planning and heritage?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes. It's obviously been done on the final design, and you'll be aware that the motorway moved even further west, away from the resort under the adjustments that were made to the design.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But you would still include, irrespective, a corridor or the proofing to install a wall?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** We have space-proofed that, absolutely.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Ms Drover, is the issue funding rather than anything else with the wall?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** No, I think it's the fact that the planning conditions didn't stipulate that we had to deliver the noise wall. I think the other factor is the bypass is even further away from where the traffic impact of the Old Pacific Highway was. And the other factor is we don't have details of the planning proposal, so the use within that land is not certain and, therefore, any noise wall requirements could not be confirmed.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is the operational noise review taking into consideration the updated traffic conditions—I'm pretty sure it is—including the imposed new traffic lights that have been added?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** Yes, it will reflect the final design for the Coffs Harbour Bypass and any changes to traffic in that area. You'll also be aware that under the planning approval conditions, we have to do a noise review at the end of the project as well, so that will occur after construction has been completed.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You've confirmed today and in previous estimates that you've got the corridor and the scoping space for the wall. That's fine. The final question is has Transport for NSW costed that wall as part of your project or had any costings to reflect the event that it was included in the project?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** I haven't seen any myself. In terms of a noise wall, it's often the foundations of the noise wall, not the panelling itself, where the main money is spent, so it would depend on the conditions et cetera.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Murray, as the secretary, have you seen or requested or do you know of any costings that Transport has undertaken for a sound wall as part of that project?

**JOSH MURRAY:** No, I'm not aware of any costings. Certainly, as Ms Drover has said, we are aware that there is provision in terms of space for a future wall if the proponents plans reach that level of maturity.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Mr Murray, would Transport for NSW be prepared to undertake costing of a sound wall to have, as a reference point for any future DAs, negotiations with other Ministers or departments around having that piece of infrastructure support another major development in Coffs Harbour?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I'd take that on notice, accepting that the nature of the proposed development might mean there is other government interest. However, it wouldn't normally be Transport's position that we would do feasibility work for a private development.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, but when the development includes something that could be in the middle of what you are building—and I accept you have taken this on notice, but hopefully you understand in a genuine way that I'm saying would Transport entertain at least costing the wall so other agencies and other arms of government know what the actual cost is that has been identified by the highway builders in the event of additional government funding or grants becoming available.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Thank you for the question. As I said, given there may be wider arts community engagement or business engagement in that particular project, I'll take that on notice and we can have a review of that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I'm not sure who this question is for but it's regarding the Cudal pedestrian bridge, which is part of recovery efforts in Cudal and was damaged in the significant flooding back in 2022. I'm looking at Mr Grosskopf or maybe Mr Hayes.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Maybe Mr Hayes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** This was their swinging bridge that went over the creek or the river, which we had just opened in government and then the floods came. I am told by the local community that the process, because it is a pedestrian bridge within that precinct, is actually sitting with Transport for NSW. So my question is where is it up to in terms of an approval process to allow local government to get on with rebuilding it through DRFA arrangements? I'm happy for you take it on notice and maybe come back to us.

**ANTHONY HAYES:** Yes, I would have to, I'm sorry.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving now to Mr Grosskopf. Back to the Mount Vic lane closure, I just want to run through that process again. Obviously the State Heritage Act has slowed things up. About eight weeks ago, you put the applications in. You have received the first—was it upslope or east?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** The upslope one, which is the embankment failure. It's the below road.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you have any indication on when you will receive anything back regarding the second application?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** We work closely with Heritage New South Wales and the Heritage Council. My expectation is, given that they were lodged one or two weeks apart, that we'll see the next response within the next couple of weeks.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Can you step the Committee through the process of how you would repair that lane and that rock face and piece of road infrastructure?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** The upslope?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Yes.

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** The first thing to do with the upslope is to remove the loose debris that currently is there. We'll basically release the catch net at the base, pick up the materials and remove them from site. That

will require road closure to give us the room to move, and we'll do that at night. Once we've got that done, we will then—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When you say "road closure", is that both—

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** Both lanes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So east and west bound?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** The Great Western Highway will have to be closed to repair that piece of infrastructure?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** I would expect so. If we're to do it efficiently and effectively, we'll want that room to manoeuvre heavy machinery. When we release that material from that catch net, putting in place the kind of controls that would provide public safety and allow passenger traffic would be very difficult with them in play.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So that means diversions, when you get to that point, will be via Bells Line of Road for people commuting east-west?

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** And then across the causeway there back into Mount Vic. As I say, that would be done at night to minimise the impact on the travelling public. Once we've removed the loose materials, we'll then do the final assessments on how much what we call scaling work needs to be done. Scaling is effectively the scraping back of the rock face to find a solid foundation, from which then the rock bolting and other activities and the resecuring of another net would come into play.

In all of that, we need to look after the heritage-listed items or the items of heritage significance on that slope, which are various openings from an old shale mine and some of those features. We would work around those to ensure they're protected and remain in situ. All of those works would then commence. We would then finish it off by reattaching some form of rock bolt net shock creep-type treatment. As I say, those final designs and the recommendations that the market will bring back to us will determine the final look and feel of those restoration works.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With regard to the Northern Distributor—maybe, Mr Fuller, back to you, if this is in your space—Transport for NSW have—what is it called? I can't remember. Is it an RTCC—

**TOM GROSSKOPF:** RMCC.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** RMCC contract. Anyone can take it; I don't mind. You have an RMCC contract with Orange City Council?

**MATT FULLER:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Can you advise the Committee how much you have spent or expended since March 2023 through the RMCC with Orange City Council on the upkeep of that road?

**MATT FULLER:** We've taken that on notice, and then we'll come back in terms of both the spend for Orange City Council, previous and future, and other works.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** In terms of, obviously, the expenditure for the next 24 months that I asked earlier, yes, you'll need to take that on notice, but you have no way of coming back today with what you've spent?

**MATT FULLER:** I don't have that immediately, no. We'll take it on notice.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** In terms of that speed reduction, who would've made the decision to reduce the speed limit on the eastern end of the Northern Distributor?

**MATT FULLER:** I will take it on notice. But, broadly speaking, I would say that it is likely that Orange City Council has, in their assessment of the condition of the road and what has been a safe use of that corridor, considering all of the impacts of the pavement, as you've described.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has there been any work done with Orange City Council to reclassify Summer Street and some of the existing Mitchell Highway infrastructure or hand that over to council?

**MATT FULLER:** I'll take it on notice, but not that I'm aware. Sorry, you're talking about the main Mitchell Highway through the centre of town for Summer Street, the recently re-speed zoned area of 40 kilometres?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Correct me if I'm wrong, but that is still a Transport for NSW road?

**MATT FULLER:** The highway itself, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Which goes through the middle of Orange. Correct?

**MATT FULLER:** Correct.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** There have been applications, though, in time from council to look to transfer that to them some time ago. Obviously the distributor has since become a Transport for NSW road, but have there been any discussions with Orange City Council to transfer any of your ownership, as Transport, of Summer Street to council?

**MATT FULLER:** I'm not aware of any recent, but I'll take it on notice as to what may have happened across the department.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Okay. This might be you, Mr Fuller, but it's regarding some oversize/overmass questions. Just to confirm, do you still have a team that's embedded in EnergyCo to coordinate freight routes and future developments and projects with the renewable energy zones?

**MATT FULLER:** We have a memorandum of understanding with EnergyCo, and we have a team within Transport that we have a dedicated funding arrangement to support the renewable energy zone projects for the Central West-Orana development. As I said this morning, there are now a raft of other responsibilities that the Minister highlighted also in regard to Transport chairing and leading a steering committee around the transport and logistics related to the renewable energy zones and their establishment. We also sit and partake in a whole-of-government steer co around the energy infrastructure road map.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When renewable energy companies look to advance their developments, whether it's within or not within renewable energy zones, at what point do they need to liaise with Transport for NSW to discuss their routes of travel for mostly the turbine blades?

**MATT FULLER:** Depending on the proponent, we have been engaged with some of them in the very early stage, thinking of their developments. That's the ideal scenario and then, with others, it has been later in the process. We absolutely work lockstep with the department of planning in terms of any conditions that are placed on any development for the considerations not just in terms of the road infrastructure but also the logistics and the impact that has on the community—so ensuring that it's done safely, ensuring that it's done at suitable hours so as to minimise the disruption to other road users, and to ensure that it's able to be undertaken in a way that it's efficient, productive and minimises any negative impacts it might have.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Have there been any approaches to Transport for NSW from RES Group, who is developing a renewable energy project at Kerrs Creek on the outskirts of Molong in the Cabonne shire?

**MATT FULLER:** I would take that on notice and check in with the team. It's highly likely that they may have had discussions.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's not; they're terrible. My question is, though, how can a renewable energy proponent not engage Transport for NSW when they wish to move 80-metre, 90-metre turbine blades on the Mitchell Highway through communities like Molong? When these companies are challenged about their engagement, not only with community but with the enabling infrastructure of moving these blades, how can Transport have not been contacted by them? Are there shortcomings in this process from some proponents?

**MATT FULLER:** I think in terms of a process, I think that's pretty robust. I think us and many developers understand the process they need to follow and the way in which working with Planning, in particular. We would need to then engage with proponents on the logistics aspect. It is a very large aspect of these developments. Like I said, we've had varying degrees of engagement with different proponents. Some do it very early and very transparently, and are really good to work with. We've had others where it's been quite late in the piece, when they're literally discussing more finite applications and things that we're brought into those discussions. Needless to say, the process is there as a safety net, if you like. Knowing the discussions that are going around the table at the whole of government between the varying departments, I think any examples where they haven't had early engagement would be called out at some point, and we would be made aware and seek to engage with them. Otherwise, it just won't get an approval.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Does Transport for NSW have an embedded or dedicated representative that deals with applications from proponents looking to build renewable energy projects or wind turbines in our State forests?

**MATT FULLER:** Not specific to State forests. As I said, we have an MOU with EnergyCo and we have a dedicated team. It's a development team that works with not just REZ projects but other projects on ensuring



that we're talking to proponents about suitable conditions of consent and also, hopefully, proactive works we can do and discussions in terms of road improvements and things that might be required to facilitate the projects.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Has Transport for NSW, to your knowledge, been contacted by either the proponent that wishes to build a significant amount of wind turbines in and around Oberon and the State forest that borders Oberon, or Oberon Council, about the freight route it wishes to take through O'Connell, which would desecrate and destroy an active and established war memorial?

**MATT FULLER:** I'm not aware. Mr Hayes, are you aware of any—

**ANTHONY HAYES:** No, I am certainly not aware of it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's been heavily publicised in the media.

**ANTHONY HAYES:** I'm happy to take those details and look at that, though. As Mr Fuller said, the team we've set up is looking at infrastructure challenges, ongoing maintenance challenges, the relationship with councils, and the operational challenges in terms of providing permits for OSOM movements. All of it needs to be dealt with, not just with EnergyCo but more broadly. This is a 10- to 12-year challenge ahead of us; we need to get it right.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** If you could, Mr Hayes, take on notice whether there have been any approaches regarding the freight routes that would be used for State forest DAs and applications which include Oberon, Sunny Corner State Forest and Mount Canobolas near Orange, and specifically, as to whether Transport for NSW has been approached by either EnergyCo, Oberon Council or the proponent themselves, which I think is Stromlo Energy, for an alternate route through O'Connell, or any other alternative suggested, which includes removing trees that are defined as a national war memorial. That's the question. I'm happy for you to take it on notice, but that's the context.

**MATT FULLER:** Broadly speaking, I can say that any heritage considerations—as we've just heard in relation to Mount Victoria—whether they be significant trees, artefacts or other considerations, would all be taken into consideration on any development application or proposal before it even gets to that point, and we would hope to look at suitable alternatives.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** This will be a tricky one for them to deal with. One really important question, Mr Fuller, is around traffic modelling. Within your dedicated team that are in EnergyCo, do they need to look at traffic modelling for every DA or for every new renewable energy project?

**MATT FULLER:** Just to clarify, our dedicated team is not in EnergyCo. Our people are in Transport, dedicated to the renewables projects. When it comes to traffic modelling and other broader considerations, the short answer is absolutely yes. More broadly, what has been discussed across the whole of government is not just traffic modelling in relation to the movement of components for the renewables infrastructure but also cumulative impacts brought about by things like the construction of construction camps, the increase in requirements on schools, policing and the local road network considerations for the increase in vehicle patronage in those sorts of areas. There is an awful lot of work happening, not just by Transport but by other parts of government, particularly Planning, on cumulative impacts brought about by the transition to renewables.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Just to operationally understand this, staff are in Transport but they're dedicated to work with EnergyCo on renewable energy projects. Got it. My question is around the modelling. Any time that EnergyCo approaches Transport about a new proponent, a new renewable energy development, in particular around wind turbines, traffic modelling must be done for the route that they wish to use. Is that correct?

**MATT FULLER:** Correct. Traffic modelling, planning, proposed routes, proposed requirements for upgrades or alterations to those routes—there are a range of things that need to be considered.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you know of projects where Transport has advised EnergyCo or the proponent that, based on traffic modelling, it couldn't support the development?

**MATT FULLER:** I'd have to take that on notice specific to traffic modelling, but I am certainly aware of energy infrastructure projects where we have gone back to proponents and sought alternatives to what may have been considered in their original application.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** As part of the modelling, do they look at how long a particular road could be closed to local traffic or local residents?

**MATT FULLER:** Any impacts to, whether it be local, regional or State, road networks are considered and they would need to be absolutely forthright about any proposed closures or impacts to broader use by the community.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I have one final question before I go to Mr Fang. With regard to the old Regional Road Fund, we've confirmed they're election commitments. If they're \$10 million or above, there will be a gateway process and an INSW assessment as well. If in the future an assessment comes back that suggests one of those projects doesn't have a BCR of one, that does not mean that those projects in Transport for NSW's lens would not be approved, because they're election commitments. Is that correct?

**MATT FULLER:** Correct. There is no minimum requirement for a BCR.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Murray, you alluded to the fact that there was a restructure underway in Transport for NSW. Is that correct?

**JOSH MURRAY:** That's correct.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** How many people outside of the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong areas have been involved in the decision-making process for this reform? Have you got many voices from rural and regional parts of your department providing input into this restructure?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Yes, under normal practice, but as each of our divisions go through the consultation processes, there are built-in layers of feedback to get from all throughout the organisation. As you are aware, we have a very diverse and regionally-focused organisation, with lots of staff in various parts of the State who have been engaged in that.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'd agree with the "diverse" part, but perhaps not "regionally focused". We'll come to that. You've spoken about the feedback. I'm more interested in the decision-making itself. When it comes to this restructure, how many people who are currently based in rural and regional areas are involved in the decision-making around this restructure—not in relation to providing feedback and commentary, but actual decision-making in relation to where jobs may be increased, decreased and where the restructure is occurring?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Thank you for the question. At the moment, that would be difficult to answer. There are various modes of that restructure happening because, of course, we have the leaders, many of whom are present at this table, who have done work in restructuring their organisations. That hasn't been a geographic focus; that's been looking at the task that they need to do and also ensuring that we have the right coverage across New South Wales. As that work continues—and there may be elements that need to roll out that would have particular geographic teams that would be involved—then those decisions would, of course, be happening at a local basis, whether that's in suburban locations or with people who are based in regional New South Wales.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I guess to get a better view of it, how many senior positions would you say exist outside of the Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong area? How many senior positions do you have based in rural, regional New South Wales in your department?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I will take that on notice but we did have a question in one of the other estimates hearings for Transport, where we talked about ensuring the right level of regional representation. While we have made changes regarding the regional and outer metropolitan division that has existed up until now and is going through a similar consultation process at the moment, we are ensuring that the roles that represent and reside in regional New South Wales are redistributed properly where they can have the most impact in the new organisation.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Is there a plan to focus those positions in rural and regional New South Wales and not centralise them into the Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong areas?

**JOSH MURRAY:** Yes. If we go back, I launched this in mid-March this year, this process to roll out, while obviously not wanting to disrupt any operations that were ongoing, but one of the abiding principles of the operating model of changes that I asked for was that we ensure that a statewide model means exactly that: It is statewide focus. You get the right regional representation—I had seen that in my early period as Secretary—the strength of the connections between our regional teams and local councils in particular.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** In relation to senior service positions, there's obviously a commitment from the Government that they're going to reduce the number of senior positions. Are you able to detail how many positions have been, I guess, removed from the department so far and how many of those were out of rural, regional areas? Is there a percentage amount?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I would have to take the regional percentage on notice. It's certainly one of the filters that we put on any restructure considerations, the reach of the role, as well as the scope of the role, the spans of control in terms of direct reporting lines and the appropriateness of those. In terms of the overall progress, as you say, each government department has a 15 per cent target or an overall sector-wide target of 15 per cent reduction in senior executive positions. We are working our way through that process. Transport has the largest, if not one

of the largest roles to undertake in terms of the New South Wales public sector, and around 93 positions have been impacted as of last financial year, the close of the financial year.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** And what does that represent in relation to a percentage?

**JOSH MURRAY:** It's about 6½ per cent.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** You've got then probably another 100-odd positions-ish?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I have spoken to our teams and to the organisation of the need for our sustainability, to over about a three-year period remove about 300 senior executive roles. But that also relates to the ebbs and flows of the capital program.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** In relation to the natural disaster teams that you've got, where do you base them out of? Are they based out of regional areas where you're likely to see or historically you've seen those natural disasters strike, Lismore or down on the South Coast, where it might be bushfires or floods or the like? Where have you got those teams based out of?

**JOSH MURRAY:** I'll ask Mr Fuller to talk to that.

**MATT FULLER:** Thanks for the question, Mr Fang. We have teams located in different locations around the State. We've got some sort of hubs, if you like, or cohorts, particularly in the northern region in Newcastle. We've got people in Wollongong, some in Sydney. We've also got dedicated people who have been placed with and have been working alongside the impacted areas. As an example, we've had people up in the Northern Rivers working with councils. At the moment, I'm not sure of the exact numbers, but I know we've got a handful of people working alongside Lismore City Council as we speak, finalising their sizeable claim in terms of their essential public asset restoration claims. It's really about, I guess, assessing the need and then placing our people where that need is and trying to line up the capability and capacity with the complexity that's being borne by the local government area and trying to support it the best way we can.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I do think, however, Mr Fuller, you've alluded to what is my understanding—that the majority of those teams are based in the Sydney, Newcastle or Wollongong area. They're not predominantly based in those rural and regional areas where we would love to have those positions based so that they're bringing the well-paying jobs and job security that is afforded to Transport for NSW employees.

**MATT FULLER:** We do have people dotted right across the State that are currently providing services to natural disasters.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** We'd like some more. We'd love some more.

**MATT FULLER:** Absolutely, and reform gives us the opportunity to continue to reassess that. At the moment I could give you examples. We have technical assurance people that are based out of the western region and the southern region that are working north. We deploy people as per the need. We've got people working in the background on the administrative functions that are situated in Parkes. We have a range of people spread throughout the State and on this one, particularly given the extent of the disasters from 2022, it's really been a case of not so much all hands on deck but really scrambling to get as many hands as possible from different areas to that function and a lot of those people are spread across regional New South Wales.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Mr Fang, if I may?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** You may.

**JOSH MURRAY:** While overall, in the last year Transport for NSW has reduced head count, our regional headcount has increased by 200 positions.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I appreciate that. How many of them are senior positions though? Because my fear is that there is a centralisation of the senior positions in the Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong area. Whilst there are increased jobs in the rural and regional areas, we want those decision-makers out in our regions because ultimately the decision-makers, if they live in our areas they better understand and then I don't end up with situations where the Marshalls Creek Bridge is delayed by another couple of years because people haven't been able to be part of the decision-making process.

**JOSH MURRAY:** Again, it was one of the fundamentals of the operating model change, that in the previous structure it seemed that only one division was responsible for—if you looked at it on a base basis, I know people didn't work like this, but there was almost a presumption that only one division had the interests of regional New South Wales at heart and everyone else was a facilitating function. So we have deliberately made the change to exactly what one of the elements you're talking about, which is ensuring local decision-making and coverage.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I will hold you to that, Mr Murray. My last question, Mr Carlon. It will please you that I'm going to throw the ball up in the air and see how much you want to swing at it. Would you agree that road improvements and increased police presence are more impactful than average speed cameras when it comes to managing vehicle speed?

**BERNARD CARLON:** What I would say is that there are comprehensive evaluations being done of a range of different measures in terms of road infrastructure. For example, where we've invested in things like audio tactile and those other barrier systems, wide centreline, in a selection of around 260-odd projects, we saw a 44 per cent reduction in the overall injuries from crashes, a 33 per cent reduction in fatalities, and a 54 per cent reduction in serious injuries. From a policing perspective, police do a fantastic job and they are out there on the network covering as much as they can, particularly in regional New South Wales.

The role of police in road safety has been critical and we have a very strong partnership with policing over 40 years in terms of our support for police and enhanced enforcement, and in particular on those long weekend double demerit periods, where the additional effort that we put in with police and with communication. Those long weekend periods have the lowest rate of fatalities of any day of the week, so a critical part of the puzzle. The international research, as well as the research on our heavy vehicle average speed cameras, shows about a 53 per cent reduction in fatalities where they are applied to those lengths.

The international research on fatalities is about the same. So in Norway, the UK and other jurisdictions, we see about an overall 53 per cent reduction in fatalities and significant reductions in Norway and the UK in serious injury crashes as well. International and world's best practice is around a safe systems approach to reducing trauma on our roads. Where one of the pillars fails in a crash—so the barrier system may not be there on that particular road, but at the same time there is police enforcement on that road, or there is an average speed camera, or the design of that particular vehicle actually saves someone's life.

We need to be looking at all aspects of the system and not trading off one for the other, essentially because we've got a target for a 50 per cent reduction of fatalities in New South Wales by 2030, and a 30 per cent reduction in serious injuries. We are way above that target now. We were under it a year and a half ago. In the last five years there have been more than 600 people who've died on our roads where somebody was driving too fast and more than 5,000 people admitted to hospital with serious injuries where someone was driving too fast. Clearly we have a major challenge in actually reducing that level of trauma associated with speeding on the roads. Road design, vehicle safety features, police enforcement, automated enforcement, all have a critical role to play.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** But in relation to slowing vehicles down at the point where they are on the road, as opposed to a number of weeks ahead when they might receive the letter in the mail—the visible policing, the visual component to indicate to a driver that their speed is currently being monitored at that point, either by a police car or a mobile speed camera with their signage, is more likely to provide a behaviour altering enhancement than a letter two weeks later in the mail. Can you see that is the case?

**BERNARD CARLON:** Yes, I think the honourable member will be very pleased that Revenue NSW and our regulatory area have actually worked really hard and really well together. People are being issued infringements now within a week or sometimes a maximum of 10 days across all of our camera automated enforcement programs. So people are getting that message much more quickly now.

The research is very clear. Whilst at that point in time the interaction with police is a great educational experience for people in changing their behaviour at the point in time, actually getting an infringement and demerits is the major deterrent for people. The research has been very clear about this. People, particularly those who admit to speeding regularly, are principally motivated to change their behaviour when they get caught. Two-thirds of the infringements are issued by automated enforcement in New South Wales. It plays a critical role in ensuring that people change their behaviour as a result of us enforcing the Parliament's laws that have been put in place to keep people safe.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I can see I'm not going to convince you otherwise.

**BERNARD CARLON:** The evidence is pretty clear.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** No, I accept that is the case. I do feel that perhaps visible policing is more effective; however, it's a philosophical discussion that we can continue in later estimates, Mr Carlon. Thank you very much.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Just going back, Mr Fuller, you spoke about, in a previous answer, oversize, over mass and obviously traffic modelling and the overall impact. From what I've seen, proponents with Transport's approval are starting to look at, and proposing to use, the local road network to move significant freight for these projects—in particular, turbine blades. I suppose the question is how does Transport measure and support

the community when the access of these large loads are taken on these local council roads, community roads, which are possibly already congested due to the poor road network, or they are congested due to mining traffic, maybe, through the Hunter Valley. Is all that taken into account?

**MATT FULLER:** Absolutely. These projects and the size and scale of the renewables transition is a complex overarching program of work. As you rightly point out, it's coupled with what are already very busy corridors. I think one of the things that perhaps will give you confidence, particularly in our recent discussions, is the Minister referred to a meeting this morning with myself, the secretary, the secretary of planning and other members of our executive. Ms Drover was there as well. We spoke with all of the Upper Hunter councils, as an example, about the key issues affecting them and their transport network and how it related to other planning considerations. We gave them a commitment that we are being very pragmatic about the requirements they have in terms of ongoing maintenance of those road networks.

We've already committed to reclassifying some of those local and regional roads that will support the development of the energy transition, and we will continue to consider that and be very sensible working with local governments, supporting them as best we can. As I said, the other impacts, like cumulative impacts, we will work in with the rest of government. There is now a very high degree of transparency, right across government, with almost every department sitting on that steering committee that guides that work, with definitive requirements and accountabilities placed that Cabinet have signed off and agreed through Ministers and senior executives in the varying departments to ensure that those sorts of considerations are considered broadly across government.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With regard to that contribution, Mr Fuller, has Transport for NSW worked out what the overall impact is to those councils on the road network? You spoke about it before.

**MATT FULLER:** Some of that work is still underway. Some of that where we've assessed even without the overarching cumulative impact, if you like—we've already made those pragmatic decisions to transfer roads and take ownership and responsibility for those both for their upgrades and ongoing maintenance.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you be able to share what the total traffic modelling is?

**MATT FULLER:** No, I don't have that to hand.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Can you take that on notice as to what the total impact is?

**MATT FULLER:** I don't know if we have a total impact on the overarching development. As I said, that is something that's being worked on across whole of government at the moment.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you have what is has been to date on the projects you've reviewed?

**MATT FULLER:** I don't know that we would have a cumulative number. We would have been assessing projects on a case by case. It's a recent decision across government that we have actually now broadened these considerations to really properly understand it at a more cumulative, whole-of-program level.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When you looked at this, was it ever supported from Transport? To replace the Denman Bridge, did Transport ever review whether replacing that bridge may be of lesser impact and greater efficiency than the overall impact that you've been talking about today?

**MATT FULLER:** There is wide variety of impacts and considerations—anything from speed to being able to service these developments and the critical need that is the renewables transition, through to long-term investment and overarching impacts on communities. As you pointed out, the Denman Bridge is immediately adjacent to a population within Denman, so the more pragmatic decision seemed to be to bypass Denman and to go around through the Wybong and Bengalla roads and to utilise different parts of the network.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** In order to make that assessment within Transport, because obviously there is also the will of government and what they want to prioritise and spend money on—but with regard to efficiency, was replacing the Denman Bridge looked at from a department level?

**MATT FULLER:** It was certainly something that's been discussed and considered. But, as you would be aware, that would take numerous years, to undertake a piece of infrastructure like that, and it would be a sizeable investment. So it was—

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** So it became cost prohibitive.

**MATT FULLER:** No. It wasn't necessarily a cost-only decision. It was really about, as I said, a consideration around a range of things, but what seemed to be the sensible decision and what was supported by local government as well was to utilise parts of the regional road network and to reclassify those into the State road network so that the State assumed responsibility for their uplift and their maintenance.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** When you say "support of local government", you're saying that Muswellbrook Shire Council supported the use of their local road network to get in and around their LGA to move these turbine blades.

**MATT FULLER:** We certainly had very collaborative discussions with the Upper Hunter councils, and my understanding is they were supportive of us reclassifying those roads, taking on that responsibility for both uplift and maintenance, yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** With that said, the Opposition have no more questions, Mr Murphy. Does the Government have any questions?

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY:** No questions from the Government.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Dig them out of the hole!

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** No, they've done well. Thank you to everyone and to all the Government officers for your attendance today. The Committee secretariat will be in touch in the near future regarding questions that were taken on notice and any supplementary questions. I suppose there is an opportunity now—is there anything on notice you wanted to deal with now or are you happy to take it on in written form? Ms Drover?

**CAMILLA DROVER:** The prior Chair mentioned a pipeline near the M1 to Raymond Terrace project. We understand that pipeline is being developed by Santos. It's completely independent of the M1 to Raymond Terrace project. We don't believe it will impact construction. In fact, we will be very well advanced, if not complete, by the time that pipeline would go through, given where it is in the development phase at the moment. And we also believe that the construction methodology for that should not impact the M1 to Raymond Terrace project either.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Anything else? We get an early mark. Thank you for attending today.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**