

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND WORKS COMMITTEE**

**WESTERN SYDNEY SCIENCE PARK AND AEROTROPOLIS  
DEVELOPMENTS**

**At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Thursday 31 October 2024**

**The Committee met at 9:30.**

**UNCORRECTED**

**PRESENT**

Ms Abigail Boyd (Chair)

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg  
The Hon. Scott Farlow (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine  
The Hon. Mark Latham  
The Hon. Rachel Merton

**PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Hon. Peter Primrose





**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the second hearing of the Public Accountability and Works Committee's inquiry into Western Sydney science park and aerotropolis developments. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we're 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 or watching the broadcast.

My name is Abigail Boyd and I am Chair of this Committee. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence that they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside 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.

**Mr ANDREW JACKSON**, Director, Planning and Regulatory Services, Penrith City Council, sworn and examined

**Ms KYLIE POWELL**, Director, Futures and Strategy, Penrith City Council, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our first witnesses. Thank you so much for making the time to give evidence today. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

**KYLIE POWELL:** We would, please. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Council acknowledges the vital role that the Western Sydney international airport and aerotropolis will play in the land use, tourism and economic development of the region. Shared investment to shape our region is necessary to support and maximise the major investment made by government in the Western Sydney international airport and aerotropolis. We continue to support transformative projects like these whilst ever the opportunities for the residents of Penrith have been understood to outweigh the impacts. Council and our stakeholder partners have long advocated for the coordinated and early delivery of infrastructure, such as north-south rail, to bring about the anticipated opportunities associated with the airport. It is important to note that north-south rail was a key commitment in the Western Sydney City Deal, agreed to by Federal, State and local governments, recognising its criticality to unlocking the economic potential of the region.

Access to jobs continues to be a real issue in Penrith. Penrith LGA is home to 220,000 people. We have 84,000 local jobs and 115,000 employed residents. Our ratio of jobs to local working resident is 0.8, less than one job per working-aged person. Council acknowledges Sydney Science Park as a significant opportunity for fostering innovation, education and economic growth in the region. Council supports the park's potential to create a hub for scientific research and technological advancement, which can attract businesses and talent to the area. At the time of inception, this project was recognised by council as having catalytic potential for the region, bringing with it the provision of much-needed jobs, particularly high-end jobs close to home for Penrith's growing population. Access to the Sydney Science Park has now been improved with its connection by rail via Luddenham station.

In addition, while we continue to advocate for north-south rail full length, we are delighted to see the progress of the first stage of the North South Rail Line from the airport to St Marys station. Council has actively and thoughtfully responded to the significant opportunity this affords our community, shown particularly through the preparation of the draft St Marys master plan, which is on exhibition from Monday. In modelling the development potential under the proposed master plan, it is estimated that the town centre could provide around 11,220 dwellings by 2041, which is 9,300 more than today, 3,630 more than current zoned capacity and 1,200 more than would've been allowed under the TOD SEPP within a 400-metre radius. Importantly, the master plan will deliver more commercial floor space, ultimately seeking to increase the jobs to three times more than exist today. This work demonstrates, in a very clear way, council's commitment to delivering housing and jobs.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** We understand that the scale of development proposed across the region will take time, bringing with it major challenges and needing a staged approach matched to the availability of infrastructure. We have significant dwelling and employment land capacity across our LGA. A New South Wales Government commitment to planning and infrastructure is needed to unlock and expedite the unrealised capacity. Council continues its efforts to ensure that the necessary servicing is in place to support jobs and housing growth. We have been intentional with our efforts to collaborate with partners to understand and jointly plan for growth. We have actively shared our housing forecast and sought to understand from government their housing forecast assumptions and servicing assumptions for employment lands, including the example of water servicing to assist with planning our resources spatially and over time. We continue to advocate for appropriate and timely funding commitments for critical supporting and enabling road infrastructure to meet the people and freight movements that will be generated.

In addition to this, council is currently preparing a growth strategy to assist with planning and decision-making for jobs and housing growth that is supported by infrastructure. The growth strategy will assist us to identify Penrith city's future infrastructure needs to 2041, with a specific focus on identifying any current and future infrastructure gaps; to provide a frame work for infrastructure delivery to support projected employment and housing growth across our planned growth areas; to articulate how a lack of appropriate infrastructure may stifle growth in population and jobs and, as such, impact our local economy; and to recommend infrastructure delivery process improvements. These efforts are intended to support council in making strategic decisions and advocating for the necessary infrastructure and servicing needed to support jobs and housing growth in this time of very significant transformation.

In concluding, we reiterate that council remains a committed partner in fostering growth in the region and delivering housing and jobs closer to home in our community. Council supports the airport on the basis of the

opportunities that it presents Penrith, and Western Sydney more broadly, provided that there is adequate investment in the infrastructure needed to activate the airport and the aerotropolis as well as mitigating impacts appropriately. Equally, council advocates for infrastructure and services to support the broader growth of Western Sydney. To this point, the availability of public transport in our region is key, and projects like the North South Rail Line and the rapid bus network are critical to enact any change of travel behaviour in Western Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** In your opening statement you mention the opportunities that come from the development in relation to jobs and growth in the area. It has become clear that a large part of the strategy around the industry that is going to be surrounding this airport is the weapons manufacture and technology firms, or defence firms, as they are more fluffily called. Is there concern within the Penrith community or the community for which you are responsible with those sorts of jobs being the future of Western Sydney?

**KYLIE POWELL:** I think Penrith City Council's view and the view shared by the community is that the creation of jobs closer to home is critical for us. More than 55 per cent of our population leaves the area every day for work, so it has been a clear objective of the council's for some time. In saying that, it's around a diversity of jobs—we are really aware that that diversity is required, so there's a whole range of target sectors that we would seek to pursue in terms of that job generation. Our economic development strategy tells us that health and education are actually the two largest sectors likely to deliver those jobs for us, but we are absolutely open-minded about the range of sectors and industries that may contribute to those jobs required. It's a huge task.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** And just dealing with the aerotropolis itself—it's 11,000 hectares. It's unrealistic to think that there will be a single industry that takes up that significant footprint. While the industries that you've mentioned will be part, hopefully, of the future of the aerotropolis in Western Sydney, as Kylie said, we are building a new city, and it takes a lot of industries and commerce to do that.

**The CHAIR:** When you look at what the Bradfield Development Authority is doing, though, in terms of its focus, it has held its second industry round table just recently and it was purely in relation to weapons manufacturers and weapons technology. Everything we've seen so far is showing the front-footing of that industry ahead of others, with the advanced manufacturing facility that was marketed to overseas weapons manufacturers as being a bit of a sweetener for them to establish their operations around the airport. Is that something that the council has specifically considered? Are there any concerns around the future reliance of the people in Penrith on the weapons industry for their jobs?

**KYLIE POWELL:** It's not something the council has specifically considered, no. I would have to say that that focus you're describing is not the experience that we have within our local government area—remembering the boundary is Elizabeth Drive. We've got a lot of development coming forward in the Mamre Road precinct, for example, and there's a whole variety of developments coming forward there. There's Amazon, there's Toll, there's Coles. There is a whole variety of things coming forward, and we're not experiencing the particular focus that you describe.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Kylie mentioned Mamre Road—absolutely correct. In many ways, I think Mamre Road is going to be the canary in the coalmine for the rest of the aerotropolis. There are 29 applications that have been lodged either with State or local governments so far. The industries that you touch on haven't been part of that. The logistics and the other enterprises that Kylie mentioned are going to be there. Again, I think a perception that the industry in the aerotropolis is going to be skewed towards that—while there has been some activity to attract international business generally, as we build a new city, I don't think we've necessarily got a concern that it's going to overshadow all other industry.

**The CHAIR:** The other councils we spoke to at the last hearing were concerned about the lack of two things: a direct freight rail connection to the airport and a dedicated fuel line to the airport, and the impact that would have on surrounding roads as we're seeing increased traffic, particularly if we're transporting fuel—hazardous goods transportation. Sorry, I haven't had my coffee. Is Penrith council also concerned about the impact that will have on its roads, and what is it looking for from the State Government in relation to that?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Penrith council is on record as raising that specific issue around fuel in repeated submissions to government on the aerotropolis, absolutely. There's no doubt that there are significant limitations in terms of the existing infrastructure, and there's a step change required in terms of the infrastructure required to support the ultimate operations of the airport. The fuel line specifically, as I said, has been the subject of many representations from Penrith City Council.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** And the step change that Kylie alludes to—road infrastructure in the aerotropolis, particularly on our side of the draw. We welcome the expenditure on Mamre Road. I don't know if anyone has been out there recently, but when you see the scale of development that's already happening—and also the conditions—the investment in Mamre Road is critical, just as the investment in Luddenham Road is critical, and

Elizabeth Drive. There are safety issues now, and things will only be exacerbated, whether it's the fuel vehicles or logistical movement in the future. We need that upgrade to road infrastructure, and the sooner that investment occurs, the better.

**The CHAIR:** Is Luddenham town centre within your local government area or within Liverpool?

**KYLIE POWELL:** It's a bit of both.

**The CHAIR:** We've been receiving concerns in relation to Luddenham being left behind, and that town centre, with the population going down and people leaving. What are your concerns in relation to that area and, again, what can the New South Wales Government be doing?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Again, council is on record in relation to this matter and has made submissions to government. Council's position has been that there needs to be a vision for Luddenham. What is the future for the Luddenham town centre moving forward? Clearly, it's incredibly proximate to the airport, which brings challenges as it relates to noise, clearly. But, also, we're of the view that it potentially brings a whole range of opportunities. We think the agribusiness zone surrounding the Luddenham town centre is a not-understood opportunity as yet. Look, we really think there is a future for Luddenham—it has an important role to play.

But that really needs to be defined in setting a vision and then, of course, planning controls come from there. We understand that there have been some issues raised around noise and the associated impacts as they might relate to residential development. That's really a matter for the Government, at this point. As I said, the council's position is that Luddenham ought to have a future. What is the joint vision for that town centre? Absolutely, it has been left behind. Absolutely, the planning framework and the planning future for Luddenham does need to be resolved. Again, council is on record advocating to the Government for the consideration of Luddenham to be brought forward.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Thank you very much for your attendance here today and outlining in your opening statements some of the challenges that Penrith faces. I guess some of the criticism we've received from other councils is that the airport and the connections to the airport are very much oriented towards the north in the first instance. You outlined in your opening submission about identifying some of the current and future infrastructure gaps. I was wondering, even in your context, what are some of those gaps that you see at present in linking Penrith to the airport?

**KYLIE POWELL:** As I said in the opening statement, it's really important to note that Penrith City Council has advocated for north-south rail full length. When we say that, we mean north to Tallawong and south to Campbelltown and Macarthur. With our local government colleagues in Western Sydney, through the negotiation of the city deal, we agreed that Western Sydney is fundamentally not connected in and of itself. Clearly, historically, Sydney has been connected east-west. North-south connections simply don't exist. For the region and the communities of Western Sydney, that's a real issue. We agreed that north-south rail ought to be the key commitment of the Western Sydney City Deal. As I said before, we were delighted that the first stage happened to be in our patch. We're absolutely maximising that opportunity. But we will continue to lobby for that to be connected full length because it's critical for the future of Western Sydney.

I think Andrew spoke a moment ago to some of the gaps from a road perspective and spoke to Luddenham and Mamre. But, of course, there are others in terms of the Werrington Arterial. We've long advocated for the Castlereagh connection to facilitate flood evacuation, for example. There is a whole range, I think, of missing connections. Having said that, this is a huge exercise that will unfold over many decades. Whilst we say that there are gaps, we also understand that these things need to occur over a period of time. I guess it's about prioritising and about maximising the benefits of what is really significant investment.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** One of the gaps that does exist, and it's not infrastructure, per se—although it could be considered—is one of the city deal commitments around rapid bus. That was important for connecting Penrith as a CBD and also other CBDs in Western Sydney. I think it's probably fair to say that hasn't progressed as we would've liked. There was a commitment that rapid bus would be available to the airport ahead of opening to support workers getting to the site et cetera. From our perspective, that's something that benefits the entire Western Sydney, and where there has been a gap.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If I can just clarify that point, are you talking about workers at the moment getting to the airport to construct the airport and the like, or are you talking about just prior to opening, for instance?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Look, at the time the city deal was struck the thinking around rapid bus was definitely for the construction phase and then very much the operational phase as well, acknowledging the fact that rail would be staged. It was both pre and post.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** What's your clarity in terms of the rapid bus connections at the moment and their servicing of Penrith?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** To the airport?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes.

**KYLIE POWELL:** We understand that it's in a planning phase but we don't have a time frame for it's delivery. Importantly, it was also that change in travel behaviour. There was the question about pre and post, but it was also around getting in early so as to not entrench vehicle-based behaviours and facilitate alternative behaviours. We understand it's in planning. I don't have a time frame.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Acknowledging as well, as part of the investment in the airport, there has been early commitment to key roads, such as the Northern Road. That upgrade for Western Sydney is really important, providing that connectivity. The expenditure on the M12 is critical to accessing the airport, so there has been some of that early commitment. It's the regional roads that we touched on before, from a road network perspective, that need to be there. But Kylie's point around creating behaviours from the outset is really important. We're building a new city and you want those opportunities to be available from the outset so people don't start with that reliance on vehicle dependency.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** You outlined some of the interest you've received around the Mamre Road area. Driving through, you see how it's effectively a domino effect, going down the road as you've got more warehouses and distribution centres taking place. I think along Mamre Road it's at two lanes for a good portion of it, and then it turns into a single-lane road. Is the plan for that to be fully upgraded to two lanes by the time that the airport is underway?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** The commitment at the moment to the Mamre Road expansion is that widening. The widening as committed is from the M4 to Kerrs Road to the south. We'd press for the full widening, all the way to Elizabeth Drive. I can't talk specifically to the timing of that. Transport could maybe talk to that this afternoon. That's the spine, but there are other key roads in that precinct—Aldington Road, Abbots Road—where we're actively working with the State Government at the moment and with the developers in those areas, because it's all well and good to have that spine sitting there but without those access roads, the Tolls of the world are not going to be able to get in and access their developments, which will turn on before the airport. So, in some ways, it's not so much an airport timing question for Mamre; it's tomorrow.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** From driving through there, it still seems very much oriented towards the M4 rather than oriented towards the airport. Of course, that's what you need at present, but into the future we're going to need a connection both ways and, that being right on the doorstep of the airport, it's so important.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Yes. That's why we're advocating for the extension south from Kerrs to Elizabeth. I mentioned the safety concerns there earlier. Elizabeth Drive and Mamre Road have huge safety concerns. We will work with government around some hotspots, but it's a more sustainable change that we need to be getting in that infrastructure now. Those roads that I talked to—while the M12 will provide a function, it's almost an access road straight into the airport from the M7. There are limited off-ramps. It is the heavy lifting that Luddenham Road, Mamre Road and Elizabeth Drive, for us, will do. There's Link Road and Fifteenth Avenue in the Liverpool area that will be needed to make the place work and function.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Does council expect that the metro to St Marys will operate on a 24-hour-a-day basis?

**KYLIE POWELL:** We would like it to, but our understanding is that it will not be 24 hours and that there will be a closure period. I think the closure period is around four hours overnight. We would absolutely like it to be 24/7, but we understand that's not the proposal.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** If it was 24/7 and passengers from the airport, for instance, as opposed to getting there, arrived at St Marys, where would they go, given that the train system doesn't operate 24 hours?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Clearly, there's a whole lot of transformation that will occur in St Marys. We would see that there would be, moving forward, a whole range of hospitality tourism opportunities in St Marys for people arriving from the airport. Those things don't exist right now; hence, council's work on the master plan to bring forward that transformation of that particular town centre. But the metro also interchanges with the T1, which provides broader opportunities for people to move through other parts of the city from there.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** My second question is related to this. One of the issues that strikes me—and I'd seek your advice on this—is the issue of the famous first and last miles. We are talking about major roads and a metro. I'm concerned and interested how employees, staff and workers at the airport will actually do

that first and last mile for their jobs, for local schools et cetera. How much attention do you think has been paid to that in the planning?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Without doubt, the last mile is really critical. If I go to the comments I just made about Mamre Road, Mamre Road is the spine. But to get to the Toll warehouse it's upgrades to Aldington and it's upgrades to Abbots that are required, and looking at putting an intermodal in that area. I think at this stage the focus has been on the really big, shiny things. The more regional road network, which delivers the last mile, is probably not advancing as quickly as it needs to be. The reality is—and this applies to all of Western Sydney and the aerotropolis—there are scarce resources to go around. The Government and councils need to make decisions about how we prioritise the infrastructure expenditure that we have available to us. I think that's probably why Transport initially is focusing on those large, city-shaping pieces of infrastructure. But the last mile, without a doubt, is really practical. We tend to work with developers around delivering some of that, as I said we're doing at the moment.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I'm just aware that, for instance, in putting any transport in, you need the ability of people to actually get to those transport hubs and get away from them. I just hope that those involved in planning at all levels are actually having some focus on those issues; otherwise you're going to end up with people lacking in adequate car parking or in adequate bus services et cetera. That has ended my questions on this point.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Thank you, Mr Jackson and Ms Powell, for your attendance. Why did the council ever think that a science park could be built at Luddenham?

**KYLIE POWELL:** The council considered the science park in the context of the Government's strategic planning framework. The Government had explored the Western Sydney Employment Area and then the broader Western Sydney employment area. The Sydney Science Park land was absolutely identified in that framework. The proposal came forward to council and, as I indicated in the opening statement, council saw it as a transformative and catalytic opportunity to see those sorts of opportunities and diversity of jobs come forward.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But that doesn't answer the question. Why do you think a science park was ever going to be built there, other than hope?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Proximity to the airport, diversity of surrounding lands and opportunities, and the uniqueness of the proposal, with other opportunities like it not being available in proximity—so a unique proposal, proximity to the airport and a visionary opportunity.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** And the nature of the jobs that were being proposed were the exact sorts of jobs that, at the time, Penrith council was calling for as part of our submission to the broader Western Sydney Employment Area SEPP. That was consistent with our objective of increasing local jobs and the nature of those jobs.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Eleven years after council's first consideration of this, how many of those jobs have been provided?

**KYLIE POWELL:** We're aware that, whilst there has been some lead in infrastructure works provided, clearly there's no development out of the ground at Celestino. That's a matter really best addressed to them. What council can do is put in place the planning framework to allow and to encourage and to facilitate development to come forward. What we can't do is obligate a proponent to come forward with an application.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** There are things the council can do. Are you aware that, two years after the final approval for the so-called science park, Celestino approached the State Government to lift the number of residential dwellings from 3,400 to 30,000—that is, to turn what you thought was going to be a science park into just another Western Sydney housing estate?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Council is very aware that Celestino have a view around those planning controls. Council's position is that those planning controls were put in place for a reason at the time. That reason was about ensuring a balance between residential and non-residential development. In the fullness of time, with a metro station on the site, those controls perhaps are no longer fit for purpose. However, it's our view that there needs to be an evidence-based process undertaken to explore and determine what an alternate set of planning controls ought to look like. As part of the precinct planning process for the aerotropolis, there is a master plan opportunity that proponents can avail themselves of. We've encouraged Celestino to consider that opportunity. It's our view that if those planning controls are to be considered, that is the appropriate path for the proponent, as I say, to take to undertake an evidence-based process to determine what a future set of planning controls ought to look like.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Can I just interpret that answer, because it was quite extensive? The original ambition for council modifying the approvals or the zoning was for a science park, as my honourable

colleagues pointed out. But then in the fullness of time, it has kind of morphed into "well now we want all of these residential dwellings", which council, I'm assuming, doesn't see as an appropriate balance because you need jobs and residents, not just residents with no jobs. But then because of the advent of the metro, then maybe it's okay. Do I interpret your answer correctly?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Yes, you do. As I said, the planning controls are historical. There was no station on the site when those planning controls were set. It was absolutely about ensuring a balance. Council's focus was about jobs. We understood that there was an opportunity for an appropriate level of residential development to accommodate that and so crafted very specific planning controls to ensure that outcome or objective.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** But this potentially throws that balance out now, doesn't it?

**KYLIE POWELL:** It's our view that there ought to continue to be a balance.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** But how do we achieve that then?

**KYLIE POWELL:** An evidence-based process to determine what a new set of planning controls ought to look like. We're open-minded about that. We don't have a view about what those numbers ought to look like moving forward and we haven't had alternate numbers put in front of us to consider. The elected council has not taken a position on what a new set of planning controls might look like.

**The CHAIR:** Which year did Celestino come to the council with this proposal to begin with?

**KYLIE POWELL:** The original proposal, Madam Chair?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**KYLIE POWELL:** The original proposal started in 2013. The planning proposal was forwarded to the department of planning to be made in 2016.

**The CHAIR:** When they approached you in 2013, were they called Celestino at that time?

**KYLIE POWELL:** I can't answer that.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Neither of us were at council at the time. I don't know what name they went under.

**KYLIE POWELL:** I'm happy to take that on notice, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** My understanding is they didn't really do very much as Celestino until 2015.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They haven't done much; they haven't done anything at all other than put up a tent.

**KYLIE POWELL:** I'm happy to take that on notice. Alternatively, I think they are appearing later.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Has the council also received representations from Celestino to go to this 30,000-dwelling housing estate?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Celestino has certainly indicated its desire to see the planning controls revisited. We've had no formal proposal put in front of us.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Are you aware that in 2015 Transport for NSW wrote to the council saying, "Don't go forward and advertise the science park plan until we can advertise and establish the Outer Sydney Orbital route," which at one stage was going to cut right through the middle of the science park site and also the south west rail line? Why did the council go ahead in defiance of that request from Transport for NSW, furthering the interests of the land developer?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Madam Chair, I'm not aware of that correspondence from Transport in 2015.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can you take that on notice and look at the council records?

**KYLIE POWELL:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What representations does the council now make to Celestino about fulfilling its commitment for 12,000 knowledge-based jobs on site? The one obvious thing they could do is they promised to locate the Baiada headquarters to the science park; they clearly haven't done that in defiance of their commitment. Has the council made representations to them?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** The Sydney Science Park is zoned. The zoning was picked up in the recent work the State Government did around the aerotropolis SEPP. As Kylie said, undertaking development is at the discretion of the developer. The planning framework is in place. We have a development application in front of

us at the moment from Celestino for upgrades of parts of Luddenham Road, which are access points to that site and which are critical works. That forms part of the \$58 million VPA that we entered into with Celestino at the time of the rezoning. The actual undertaking of development is in their hands. The controls remain in place that require a certain amount of commercial floor space to be provided before residential floor space. It's up to the developer to bring that to life.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Does the council support those triggers?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** The triggers that exist at the moment, as Kylie touched on, were the triggers that were put in place as part of the original zoning. That was something that was important to council, because we did not want it to become a Trojan Horse for residential development, hence why we require commercial to occur before any residential.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Does the council still support those triggers? Has it made representations to the State Government to release them?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Going to Kylie's point, as part of the planning process that the New South Wales Government went through, our anticipation was that once a decision had been made around metro station locations, that would have been reflected in the planning documents. Once that did not happen, we made representations to ensure that those triggers were maintained. Our consistent advice since that point has been if there is to be any further up-zoning on that site to reflect the emergence of metro and our current conditions, that there is a master plan in process that is in place that Celestino can avail itself of. We would be engaged as part of that process.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What does that mean? You're open to a housing estate because there's a metro being built there?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** No.

**KYLIE POWELL:** With any revised set of planning controls, we would still want to see that overarching outcome or objective of delivery of jobs and an appropriate balance between jobs and residential. We would want to see the that overarching outcome maintained in any revisiting of planning controls.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** To that point, are you saying that the trigger doesn't need to be there? Before, you said there should be a trigger in terms of the jobs before the homes there, so to speak. Are you saying you've changed your perspective on that, potentially?

**KYLIE POWELL:** No. I guess what we're saying is that the controls were set at a point in time. They may no longer be fit for purpose. We are open-minded about them being reviewed, and the master plan is the process to do that. Whenever they look like moving forward—whether they be triggers, caps or otherwise—that outcome of jobs, and not simply residential, needs to be maintained.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is this how Penrith council does its urban planning? You can rezone rural landscape land into employment land through other processes. A metro station arrives on your land and the council is willing to entertain a situation where, clearly, this developer had no intention of delivering any of these jobs at any stage. Within two years, they're trying to turn it into a housing estate. Instead of the council reading the riot act to the developer, you sound like you're happy to go along with it.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Going to the question about the timing, when Celestino—or whatever the entity was referred to at the time—first came to us, there was a broader strategic planning context that had been set by the State Government for this area. That was the broader Western Sydney Employment Area. The science park and that precinct were identified. At the time, there was absolutely a strategic planning framework within which we were, and the State Government were, assessing the proposal from Celestino. As Kylie has just said, we are not saying that we just want residential. Fifty-five per cent of our residents leave the LGA every day to go to work, and that's not good enough. We want to improve that. The vision for the aerotropolis is primarily focused on commercial and industrial jobs. There will be residential pockets, absolutely—just as there are planned around Bradfield. It makes sense to have residential around metropolitan stations, but it also makes sense to hub commercial businesses and sectors et cetera. We're not saying that we are supportive of a straight-out residential estate.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** No, but isn't the crux of the question that you presumably had a fairly fixed ratio in mind in terms of jobs to residential dwellings. There is a strategic kind of stepped approach, wasn't there? This is what should have happened, presumably: Let's provide the infrastructure so industry can go there and create the jobs, and then let's have the dwellings and there is a ratio between housing and jobs. Has that desirability ratio changed? I think that is what the question is. In other words, does the developer get a windfall

because, all of a sudden, it's five residential dwellings to one job instead of one to one, to caricature it. Is that the case?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** I'm not going to speculate on what that ratio is. As Kylie said—

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** But didn't you have a ratio in mind originally?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** There was a ratio that was in place.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** What was that?

**KYLIE POWELL:** The original planning controls had a maximum of 3,400 dwellings, which I think you referred to earlier. In addition to that, as to the ratio question, there was a number of residential dwellings relevant to the non-residential GFA. So the non-residential GFA needed to be delivered before you got those residential dwellings, and there was a series of stages outlined as that moved forward.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** There's this new planning instrument, the Bradfield City Centre Master Plan. Has the original ambition been reconciled, in your consultations with the State Government, in that plan?

**KYLIE POWELL:** I'm not aware that the Bradfield City Centre Master Plan applies to this site.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** It applies to Bradfield.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** In terms of this site, have there been discussions with the Government on "This is what was originally desired for this area; we want it to be maintained"?

**KYLIE POWELL:** The original planning controls were translated into the aerotropolis planning controls. That's what continues to apply. If the proponent was of the view that they wanted to pursue alternate planning controls, that's absolutely a matter for them. They have the ability to come forward with an application through the master planning process. They've not done that at this point.

**The CHAIR:** When Celestino—which I understand was called EJC Corporate Services back in 2013—put this proposal forward, at that point they had no track record of having ever delivered any kind of development, is my understanding. How does council approach that? Is that a consideration? From a layperson's perspective, how does somebody who just has land but no experience in developing something get approval for such a massive project?

**KYLIE POWELL:** I hear your question, Madam Chair. I guess I would say to you that when an application comes forward to council, we need to assess it on its merits under the environmental planning legislation. That legislation doesn't make provision for us to consider track record in the fashion that you describe. That's not a factor that we can consider in determining a proposal.

**The CHAIR:** So it's a legislative issue, then.

**KYLIE POWELL:** A planning proposal and/or a development application, we need to assess under the Act.

**The CHAIR:** Right, you can't say, from a due diligence perspective, "It's clear that this is never going to happen". There's no point in the process where you get to make that sort of assessment.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** As Kylie said, it's a merit-based assessment. There are conditions that are put in place. For example, I spoke earlier around—there's a VPA, a voluntary planning agreement, that exists between us and Celestino or EJC. That's a commitment to \$58 million worth of infrastructure. That was a specific element of what we considered to be the necessary conditions that they needed to meet. So while we cannot do due diligence, as part of our merit-based assessment, we will identify a range of conditions that any developer would need to respond to and meet on a particular site. The fact that they have the ability, or they have basically made the commitment to doing that—as part of the merit-based assessment, that's what we take on board.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In 2013 Celestino lodged their Sydney Science Park master plan with Penrith council to rezone these 290 hectares from basically farmland to residential, commercial and industrial. The master plan identified seven development stages. At stage two they planned to accommodate a railway station, even though at that time, in Transport for NSW, there was never any intention to have a north-south line. The preferred plan was to link the Leppington line through to Badgerys Creek for that airport access. Why weren't the alarm bells ringing at the council that, with the railway station, ultimately, this developer wouldn't provide a single knowledge-based job—and they haven't—and instead this was just a sham to con the council into approving a future housing estate in Western Sydney, which, of course, are a dime a dozen.

**KYLIE POWELL:** While station locations hadn't been identified at that time, certainly the *Broader Western Sydney Employment Area - Structure Plan* that Andrew referred to earlier did identify a centre in this

vicinity. It also identified future potential connections in a broad way. Whilst specifics had not been determined at that time, certainly there was a broad intent for particular centres and particular infrastructure to be provided. The proponent was clearly hopeful that the station was to be on their side, as no doubt anybody else and many others were also.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They've won lotto twice, haven't they? They had their farmland rezoned by your council and the State Government for employment land, and potentially residential, and somehow, post-2013, they've got a metro station being built in the middle of cow and horse paddocks. This is the greatest farce in the history of Western Sydney planning, isn't it? It's a high bar to set. There have been a lot of shonky, farcical developments, but nothing matches this, does it?

**ANDREW JACKSON:** Sydney Science Park sits amongst the 11,000 hectares of the aerotropolis surrounding the Western Sydney airport. There's a lot of land that is within there. There has been a commitment to a number of metro stations, not just on that site, and the determination of those was a matter for Transport. In terms of the site as it sits there today, it's consistent with the strategic planning and it's consistent with building a city around a new international airport, and it just so happens to be on the metro line, which other sites are as well.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** It's an amazing coincidence that they got their station, but we'll explore that later in the day. Has the council downgraded its employment and development forecast for this second international airport in Sydney, given that it's single runway, it's the equivalent of Coolangatta and it's competing against the major heavily invested airport at Mascot? So far there's zero take-up at the aerotropolis for a single job. There's zero take-up at the science park for a single job. You've got the Mamre Road employment land potential and, most realistically, of course, the first site for warehousing and manufacturing and so forth will be the Federal Government-owned business park—a large tract of land to the immediate north of the airport site. Haven't we got into some weird cargo cultism to think that these four locations will accommodate jobs when, realistically, it's only the Federal Government business park right next to the airport that will be the first site for take-up and these others will probably take decade after decade to see anything happen?

**KYLIE POWELL:** I think it's fair to say that some of those locations you refer to have been slower than we might have anticipated in terms of jobs being delivered, absolutely. But I would also point to other locations, like the Nepean Hospital, for example, and like what we call "the quarter", that area through to Western Sydney university. That is an important job generator for us as well.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What's that got to do with the airport?

**KYLIE POWELL:** My point is around generation of jobs. Your question was around council's job forecasts. What I'm suggesting to you is that there are a number of locations that we see jobs being generated from. The airport is one of those.

**ANDREW JACKSON:** You made reference—again, underpinning employment forecasts—to the airport being one runway airport. The competitive advantage that this airport provides is a 24-hour—that is an advantage that it has over Kingsford Smith. That will be a major contributor to the performance of that airport and the underpinning of economic activity in Western Sydney.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Well, how much? Because there's some limited freight potential but the chances of international tourists landing at Badgerys Creek, catching a metro to St Marys, changing there at midnight and getting the heavy train line into Sydney, of course, is minimal. The original director of the aerotropolis project said it becomes a white elephant unless you've got direct transport links to the centre of Sydney. That would have been the Leppington line extension, of course, that was junked by Stuart Ayres in preference to this St Marys white elephant that's being built.

**KYLIE POWELL:** As I said before, we absolutely acknowledge that there is a whole host of other road and rail connections needed. We continue, as I said before, to advocate for the extension. Government made the decision that the first stage of the rail was to go from the airport to St Marys. We're delighted, and we're going to maximise the opportunities that come from that for our city and our community.

**The CHAIR:** Unfortunately, we have run out of time. Thank you so much for your attendance. There may be some supplementary questions, and there definitely were some questions taken on notice. The Committee secretariat will be in touch in relation to those.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**Professor ROBERTA RYAN**, Independent Community Commissioner for the Western Sydney Aerotropolis and Orchard Hills, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** We now welcome our next witness. Would you like to make an opening statement?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Thank you for the invitation to appear. I'm not sure that I can address the terms of reference specifically with respect to the science park. My role as the independent community commissioner has been to work with the small landowners at the aerotropolis and now at Orchard Hills. I was appointed initially to the role of the independent community commissioner by Minister Stokes, subsequently reappointed by Minister Stokes and Minister Ayres, and then subsequently reappointed by Minister Scully with the change of government. The work that I've been doing is largely focused on assisting the community of the aerotropolis with the scale of change that they're confronting. It's really divided, broadly speaking, into two parts: first, working with particular issues as they emerge for the community; and, secondly, assisting with agency coordination because there's the role of both the councils here but a number of agencies are in play for whom coordination and focusing on the place-based needs of the people in the aerotropolis is quite challenging. I've done a lot of work around that.

I've provided a sort of summary document. I've also prepared three reports to government raising the issues for the community and the aerotropolis. The third report was not available at the point when I was invited to appear, so I'm very happy to provide that to you. That's kind of an update, but I did try to summarise the ongoing key issues in the document that was submitted to the Committee. I'm happy to take questions. The only other point I'd make by way of an opening statement is that I think it's fair to say that the Western Parkland City Authority and all levels of government fundamentally didn't understand the community with whom they were dealing when the establishment of the airport occurred and when all of this work got underway. In the 11,000 hectares that we're talking about, there were roughly about 10,000 people living there then in 2021. There's about half that number there now.

For the most part, that community doesn't have water and sewer. The majority of the people who lived and continue to live in the aerotropolis are largely post-war migrants—what are sometimes called brown-suitcase migrants who came with nothing and they were fleeing war-torn countries, for the most part southern Italy and the former Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Croatia and so on. They're a community who made their lives. They're an aged community now because of that migration history. They lived on land which, as I said, didn't have water and sewer. Much of the land floods and has been subject to contamination and dumping and all sorts of things over a long period of time. Some years ago, when you bought a suit from Reuben F. Scarf, you were given an acre of land in this area, so it goes to point out, I think, the kind of relative value of the land.

Many of those people, if not the majority of them, didn't work in the regular paid workforce. They either worked on the land or they worked in factories in Western Sydney. Partly because of the water and sewer issues and partly because of the nature of the lives that they've had—they've worked very hard on the whole—it's all about their kids and the next generation and what they can do for their families. They're people for whom government is one thing. When Transport comes along and says, "I'm going to put a road through here" or, "Here's the flooding or the drainage issues that Sydney Water wants to deal with" or, "Here's the department of planning wanting to talk with people"—for people who live in this part of the world, government is just government.

This whole lack of capacity for the governments to work in a way that was coordinated and responded to the needs of this particular community was really very poor. By the time I was appointed, there were extremely high levels of distress in the community. There were a lot of very angry public meetings, with people threatening both to harm themselves and to harm others. It was a very hairy context when I first was appointed. We've come a long way since then but there's an awful lot to do. I say that by way of opening remarks to remind everybody that this community has been through a lot and there's a lot of heat and intensity around the issues, particularly from the point of view of the smaller landowners.

My work with the larger landowners has been very limited but many of the issues faced by the smaller landowners are also faced by the larger landowners in terms of getting this land to be delivered for productive purposes. The point of rezoning the aerotropolis is the 200,000 jobs that were part of the Western Sydney City Deal anchored by the airport and the metro stations. So the fact that we're still at the point where very few jobs have been delivered, following on from the previous conversation, we could potentially—I'm happy to take some questions about my view about what's led us to where we are at this point. I say that by way of opening comments to potentially help the Committee understand the context of the smaller landowners.

**The CHAIR:** Firstly, in the last term of Parliament I chaired the inquiry into compulsory acquisition of land by Transport agencies and I hear what you're saying about that. We really did see that level of distress, depression and relationship breakdowns that had resulted from government acquisition of land and a real feeling of unfairness. We made a bunch of recommendations. Particularly, we had been to Orchard Hills, and we'd seen

what had happened in that area. Obviously that was under a previous Government. The question is has anything got better?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** No. There have been a number of inquiries, including your own. There have been a number of reports. I have made recommendations in all three of my reports to both sides of government. Acquisition absolutely continues to be the single most important and confronting issue for the people who live in the aerotropolis, coming off the back of what was an extremely challenging process, as you would've heard, by metro in Orchard Hills. Key recommendations of mine have been made repeatedly. Much of this is not new, although there's a new twist in the acquisition piece that we might want to talk about. Of the four key issues, acquisition is at the top. For the remaining landowners, while they're smaller landowners, whilst there are fewer in number, the issues are more complex that I'm dealing with.

With respect to acquisition, we have this thing where different agencies want parts of people's land at different times. We have these un-gazetted corridors—for example, the Outer Sydney Orbital—which creates an affectation on people's property, which prevents them selling that property at an appropriate value. I've recommended in all three of my reports that what we need is a government front door for acquisitions. Say it's Transport who needs a part of a person's property first, as I put it, they should go first. They should acquire all the land that's earmarked for acquisition, or potentially the whole site. Most of the people I'm dealing with are in the five to 10 acres—that's not small in some contexts but they're small landowners in the context of the aerotropolis.

My recommendation is government should have a front door. Whoever needs land first goes first as the acquisition agencies and government agencies sort out who pays for what behind the scenes. Of course, the earlier you acquire property that's needed for government, the cheaper it is in terms of the public purse, because this land continues to increase in value. There's been some modelling done on this. There has been a ton of work done in this space. But the key issue for the current delay in bringing land to industrial and commercial uses in the aerotropolis is this very unsatisfactory acquisition process. I've made recommendations. I try to avoid the how, but I think there is an obvious case for the Office of Strategic Lands, which sits, at the moment, in the department of planning, to drive that acquisition process for whoever needs to go first. Then the landowner only deals with one agency. Mostly, in the small landowner case, their whole property will be acquired. As I said, the agencies can work out who owes who behind the scenes.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Is this from your report in 2021—the 40 recommendations?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes. I've made that recommendation.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** But haven't all of the recommendations been accepted?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** That recommendation was well regarded, and I have had verbal feedback from all of the relevant Ministers that this is a really good idea. That is not actually occurring to this day.

**The CHAIR:** It has not been implemented.

**ROBERTA RYAN:** No.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** So there were 40 recommendations which the Government accepted in full, and a small number would be subject to available funding. It says here 37 have either been addressed or work is ongoing. Was that part of your submission?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** That seems incongruent with what you were just saying.

**The CHAIR:** This is government speak, isn't it?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes, it is. One of the recommendations on which work is ongoing is having the Office of Strategic Lands as the front door for the acquisition process. There has been a pilot—

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Just to be clear, it is true to say that the vast majority of these things have been worked through. It's just that these things are critical—these outstanding ones. Is that what you're saying?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes. Many of them have. This one, with respect to the front door—as I said, there's been a pilot for a small number of landowners to see how this would work, but the application of this is not yet widespread.

**The CHAIR:** That was one of the recommendations of our report as well—that we have this kind of joint agency. The other part of that acquisition process that was particularly troubling was the experience people were telling us about in terms of their treatment by agencies and that sort of interpersonal—has that got any better?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** No. I have provided a number of case studies in the document I provided to this Committee, where people are in extreme, serious distress, and they just keep being asked for more documents and keep being spoken to. It's an area in which there is a lot of work that needs to be done. The Committee might be aware of the Goldmate decision, which, again, I'm happy to provide a fact sheet on—I'm no lawyer here—just to provide some basic information. That was a decision by the Land and Environment Court earlier this year, that for acquisition for the aerotropolis—the decision in the Land and Environment Court, of the commissioner, refers to a specific area but it does include most of the aerotropolis. It's currently under appeal. The appeal goes to the Land and Environment Court later in November.

The case is called *Goldmate v Transport for NSW*. Goldmate took the department of transport to the Land and Environment Court to contest the value that they were offered during an acquisition process. The outcome of the Goldmate decision is that the whole of the aerotropolis is now defined as being for a public purpose, and what that means is that the agencies—and this is in play as we speak. It's been happening. In my view, many acquisitions were delayed waiting for the outcome of the Goldmate initial Land and Environment Court hearing, which means that people are being offered the value of the land at the pre-zoned land prices.

A property, post-zoning, for a small landowner might be worth—I'm making up the numbers—\$20 million. Post-rezoning, they're being offered the pre-rezoning—so an RU2, for example—value for that property. That is being applied by all agencies as we speak. You can imagine the level of distress that the application of value according to the Goldmate decision poses for these people. Not only has the acquisition process got hairier and more complex, but many of the acquisition matters happening in the aerotropolis have multiple requiring authorities. We still don't have a gazetted Outer Sydney Orbital and we now have the application of the Goldmate decision, which means people are being offered grossly unfair values for their properties. As I said, that's being appealed, but the agencies are now moving quite rapidly to make offers to people because they're taking advantage. It seems to me to be quite a deliberate move.

**The CHAIR:** The Government could change the legislation to refer more to the replacement value for people rather than the value of the property they're selling.

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Exactly. The just terms legislation is meant to take into account market value as well. I, for one, can't understand how this is being transacted in that way.

**The CHAIR:** It's really sad.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Professor Ryan, thank you for the work you've been doing. Obviously the best form of acquisition is private sector investment at Bradfield. To visit Kelvin Park, which I assume you were referring to earlier on with your depiction of those families, it's quite sad because people there had an expectation of Bradfield City rezonings and the opportunity to sell their property at enhanced value. The former Government had over 20 MOUs with companies internationally. There were ministerial trips to Europe and big promises of a thing called "aerotropolis" that haven't eventuated. In fact, you go to Kelvin Park today and the only thing that has changed is that Liverpool council has put on the street signs that this is Bradfield City, when in fact it is the Kelvin Park that we have all known for 50 or 60 years. Nothing has changed. Are you aware of any private sector investment interest and forthcoming purchases in Kelvin Park and Bradfield?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes, and there are a lot of options out. There is a range of what I would call mid-tier developers, not necessarily what you might call the big-end developers. But there are certainly a lot of options. A lot of properties across the aerotropolis have been optioned. Plenty of properties have been sold, but we're not seeing the jobs being delivered on the ground and we're not seeing the infrastructure required to support the delivery of those. Besides the acquisition challenges, the other big challenge is the poor infrastructure. You would know the state Badgerys Creek Road is in. Many of these roads are in such terrible condition. You can picture—and I've seen it for myself—people coming from other countries looking to invest in the aerotropolis. They get out of the minibus, they look around, see the state of those roads and think, "This is pretty expensive industrial land with very poor supporting infrastructure."

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Why wouldn't those companies have as their first priority the Federal Government-owned business park to the north of the airport site? If you're doing manufacturing or warehousing or freight, wouldn't you go there? It's right next to the airport as opposed to many kilometres away at a science park or so-called aerotropolis.

**ROBERTA RYAN:** I'm not really the best person to answer those kinds of questions. I don't deal with the major landowners and I don't really understand the background to their decision-making. My experience is with the smaller landowners who experience the amenity impacts of that poor infrastructure—trucks coming in and out with massive amounts of fill. There's quite a lot of activity, so the remaining smaller landowners there are

suffering not just incredible uncertainty, if they've got an acquisition layer on their property, but they're suffering significant amenity impacts. It's a pretty tough place to live if you're still a residential person there.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You did mention earlier that land is being sold. Who is it being sold to?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** I can just see a range of development activity occurring and I presume and I hear. People I dealt with three years ago no longer live in the aerotropolis, so I'm assuming they've sold their properties. That's the way I experience what's happening.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What's the pattern of who they're selling to? Are they speculators coming in thinking, "I can sit here for 20 years until some commercial or retail company buys me out"? Are they the type of land sales, do you think?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** I just don't know. It's just not a question I can answer.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** We're not seeing any land sales that relate to what you might think of for the construction of Bradfield City, though, are we?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** The Bradfield City site is subject to a master plan, which, as you know, was recently released. It was recently finalised—it was out for comment. I think the role of the Western Parkland City Authority, in its previous iteration, was investment attraction, as well as infrastructure coordination, as well as being pivotal to coordinating the eight relevant local government areas for the city deal. I had the opportunity to evaluate the outcomes of the city deal in its first phase. At that point, there were about 1,200 jobs, on the promise of 200,000. Admittedly, it was early days. But that was then. I've requested that the final evaluation report be made public. It never was, even though that was an initial commitment. I think what we're seeing with Bradfield City now, again, just from my observations in terms of the Bradfield Development Authority, is absolutely a focus on investment attraction. You can see there is activity in that space. But we are going to have an operating metro station. It's not clear to me where people are going to get on, who the people are who are going to get onto it and who the people are who are going to get off it.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They live in Oran Park and up and down Camden Valley way. That's who they are.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Basically, in its original conception, you had all this light and colour around these myriads of thousands and thousands of jobs and there was going to be this aerotropolis and all this activity going on. It appears as though there was a lack of not just planning but also will to provide the necessary infrastructure up-front so everything else falls into place. What's your assessment now? Are we kind of whipping it into shape?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** I mentioned—and I think I had it in the document I provided the Committee—there are four key issues. One is the acquisition issue. We've talked a little bit about that. The second key issue relates to the lack of forward funding for infrastructure. Despite the best efforts of the relevant public agencies, and council—I mean, Liverpool council is central to the aerotropolis, while Penrith council is less so in terms of the aerotropolis proper—the funding is not available through government to provide the infrastructure that is required to have this precinct move forward and provide those jobs. Whether it's for the acquisition of open space or whether it's water—the Committee would be aware of the challenges Sydney Water is facing with respect to funding the stormwater scheme plans—councils don't have contributions coming in the door that can enable them to fund the open space that's required. Transport just doesn't have the available funding to deliver the kind of infrastructure required.

This precinct doesn't have water and sewerage. This precinct has significant flooding issues and requires significant at-scale stormwater solutions. The road issues are very significant in the aerotropolis precinct. Whilst there have been some upgrades to Elizabeth Drive and so on, the central issue to the delay in delivering this precinct is the lack of forward funding for infrastructure. It's not just the coordination issue; it's where the money is coming from. When you speak, as I do, to these government agencies and you say, "Why haven't you gazetted the corridor? Why can't you progress this person's acquisition with respect to their circumstances because they clearly meet the hardship requirements?", the answer is, "We don't have the funding." I've made a number of recommendations. As I said, I try to stay out of the "how". It's not really my job. I try to describe what's going on and the "what". But I made a number of recommendations in my last report, which I will share with the Committee if that's of value, with respect to mechanisms for forward funding infrastructure. This precinct will not deliver the jobs required at the pace required without significant infrastructure investment.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** I accept your evidence that the funding's not there at the moment to induce the infrastructure to do what we want to do, which is create jobs and housing and all the rest, but has there been a refocus on the problem?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes, there has. The appointment of INSW to act in a role of some infrastructure coordination, particularly with respect to the transport infrastructure delivery, is very welcome. That is the first serious move in the time that I've been involved in the aerotropolis with respect to seeking—

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** That's the identification of what we have to deal with and what we need, and then that presumably induces the requirement for the funding.

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes, and the required budget bids and so on for that funding. But we are a significant way down the path here. Clearly the public investment has been enormous in the metro. I guess that leaves infrastructure investment coffers emptier than they might otherwise be, but I think it would be fair to say that the scale of the infrastructure investment—the cost of the acquisitions required to make the land available for the essential services—was completely underestimated. It has been across both governments. This Government is making some serious moves to address that issue with respect to the role of INSW in that coordination space and, as you say, getting a better grip on what the picture is. But that has previously not been done, to my knowledge. All these transactions occur at that one-on-one level, which doesn't elevate the kind of solution—the way forward for the problem.

**The CHAIR:** How many properties do you think are without proper water and sewerage connection?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Agencies would know that but, for the most part, there isn't water and sewer in the aerotropolis. The idea that the larger developers forward fund that kind of infrastructure is one of the models that is thought about, but there are a lot of fragmented landholdings here. The way Sydney Water works, for good or bad, is that they put the water and the sewer down according to how many DAs they get. "Looking at all this, now the development front is occurring here, we will then put the water and sewer pipes down." But, as you know, it's the wrong way around, and all of that prohibits or gets in the way of moving this precinct forward.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Professor Ryan, to your evidence that there is not enough money to fund all the infrastructure that's required, part of the challenge at the moment as well that it is individual landholders, effectively, who are subsidising the Government, in a sense, by the Government not moving forward. They're not able to actually move forward with their own land as well, given that challenge. You talked about that hardship process. Have you had any success whatsoever in terms of being able to achieve any outcomes for some of those landholders with the hardship process?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Yes, we have. We've advocated very hard for individuals. Agencies are responsive, but it's pretty intensive, ongoing and stressful for the landowners and requires a lot of advocacy on my part and my office. We would be talking with 20 landowners a week, on average, who are stuck in some of these issues. It's a very difficult process to move the agencies forward. Where we have had success—although it faces its own challenges in implementation—was with the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan. As the Committee would know, that was at-scale biodiversity mapping for the precinct to assist with saying, "Here are the important areas that require conservation with respect to fauna and flora and corridors." That mapping was done at scale in advance to assist with the development process so that every landowner doesn't have to then go through the process of mapping the CPCP and so on.

For many landowners in the aerotropolis, this process inadvertently created really significant unfairness. Just say you have a well-vegetated 10-hectare piece of land, whereas your neighbours have illegally cleared for years and there has been a lack of regulation. It's a bit sort of cowboy territory out there; it has been historically. There has been a lot of illegal clearing. There has been a lot of asbestos dumping, particularly on the border of the airport land. The bikies come in, they motor down the streets and people know to go inside. It's been a pretty frontier spot for a while. But people who have probably never heard of land-clearing laws or anything have cleared the land to plant—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Market gardens, or whatever it might be.

**ROBERTA RYAN:** Exactly. It's been a very neglected part of Sydney for a very long time. I think people are very surprised when you tell them people don't have water and sewer on the boundary of the new Sydney airport. There has been a lot of clearing of land, and the people who have valued their bush amenity and so on now find themselves unable to realise the value of their property in comparison to their neighbours. One of the things that we were successful in doing—as part of the process, if your land is to be acquired for transport or just for a road, for example, as part of the just terms legislation, for the valuing of the land, you have to disregard the public purpose.

That's not how it works for the CPCP. For the CPCP, it's treated as if it's an affectation in the same way that flooding is. That land, if it's got CPCP mapping on it, instead of being valued at whatever the neighbour's land is valued at, is treated as if it has an affectation, as if it flooded. What that means is that land that's sold next

door for \$30 million—exactly the same land, but because these people have looked after the trees and wanted that natural environment, they are now having this process that treats them very unjustly.

One of the successes that we did have was that we made up a category called "compassionate acquisition," which was to address the unintended unfair outcomes for people who have CPCP on their property, and there was a successful budget bid. That is administered through the department of planning through the CPCP team there, and we prioritised it from a list of about 20 landowners who find themselves in this situation. This fund was to assist them to get a fair value for their property. So that process is underway.

There have been no actual acquisitions under this, even though the money has been set aside. It took a while to go through a budget cycle and so on, as these things do, because the landowners, particularly one on Aldington Road, are still unhappy with the value that's being offered for the property. That contest goes on, but it is something that was an unintended consequence of the CPCP, which was to assist in creating certainty. It's the uncertainty and the complexity which create significant challenges for people.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Similarly, I've seen challenges where there's a double whammy, effectively, where you've got a property that's identified as designated open space, stormwater management, and then it's also applied in terms of its valuation from the Valuer General with recent sales, effectively, in the area. Because that hasn't actually gone through and there hasn't been an acquisition, it's still being assessed, let's say, at \$30 million or something for the property when, realistically, it's going to be a compulsory acquisition at a much-reduced value to that. Have you had any success working with landowners in that position as well?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** No, but there are many that we have supported with hardship acquisition applications. Something my office does a lot of is support landowners with hardship applications, because obviously it's complicated—lots of paperwork, lots of things required. Valuation and all of this kind of stuff is something that people would never be accustomed to. They have no idea what's going on, really. We've done a lot of work in that space to assist people. But the barrier is the lack of funding that's available for those acquisition processes, now made much worse by the Goldmate decision which throws open the whole "What's the underlying value that this land should be acquired at?"

**The CHAIR:** Unfortunately, we have run out of time, unless there was a final, urgent question?

**ROBERTA RYAN:** If it's okay, could I just mention one comment, which is that Luddenham village still remains a kind of white patch on the map. I think you might have received a submission from the Luddenham Progress Association. We've done a lot of advocacy around Luddenham. There has been a lot of work done. It's one of those things where the State planning department says, "We can't finalise the rezoning without the noise corridors from the planes being sorted", and then the Federal Government says, "It's not a matter for us; it's a matter for the State department." You have this historic village, where many people still live, on the boundary of the airport—you can see the airport from there—which remains a white patch on the map and remains unzoned. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm happy to send those documents.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. There may be some supplementary questions, but the Committee secretariat will be in touch.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**Mr JOHN CAMILLERI**, Chairman, Baiada Group, sworn and examined

**Mr MATTHEW SCARD**, Chief Executive Officer, Celestino, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** I now welcome our next witnesses. Thank you for your appearance today. Did you have a short opening statement you would like to make?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes, I did. Good morning. I am the CEO of Celestino, which is part of the Baiada group. I am joined today by John Camilleri, who is the chairman of the Baiada group. The Baiada family owns the Baiada group, which has been in business for over 60 years in Western Sydney. The business is now a national business. Thank you for inviting us here today and to those Committee members who joined us at a recent visit at Sydney Science Park. I have prepared a short opening statement to assist the inquiry.

Celestino's vision for Sydney Science Park is to create a mixed-use city, with jobs in research, education and health sectors, and to be integrated with thousands of homes and over 80 hectares of quality open space. We remain committed to delivering on this vision; however, lengthy delays have significantly hampered our project. We are as frustrated as anyone that we have not been able to activate our project. In summary, Sydney Science Park was rezoned in October 2016, and our first precinct was approved in 2017. In August 2018, the New South Wales Government, on its own initiative, started a separate rezoning process as part of the planning of the aerotropolis. This was the beginning of significant complications and time delays. We could not act on our development approvals obtained since 2016, and council was reluctant to issue new approvals, knowing that changes to our planning controls were coming.

By 2021, there was still no end in sight to the aerotropolis planning process. At this time, we asked government to help save our project and include our current master plan or even exclude Sydney Science Park from the aerotropolis planning so we could act on our 2016 rezoning. This request was ignored. In 2022, some four years after they started, government completed the aerotropolis planning. This resulted in new planning controls for Sydney Science Park that overrode our existing planning controls and approvals. Also, given the way the new controls worked, we would have utilised less than 25 per cent of our land. The controls were also extremely costly. We have basically had to rethink this project and start again.

As the project stands today, we still believe in our vision. We are finally ready to go on the planning side and we are fully serviced at our own cost. However, Sydney Water stormwater charges are still not known. This is likely to cause further delays until we have certainty around this massive cost. While this is being resolved, we are still progressing with a planning approval for our first 15-hectare precinct. That will include commercial buildings, education, open space as well as housing. I would like to remind Committee members that we are in legal proceedings against Sydney Metro relating to compulsory acquisition of our land for their metro. We may need to take some questions on notice if they relate to the matters in the proceedings.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of the timeline of setting up Celestino as a property developer or a property development company and when the first applications were made in relation to the science park, can you talk us through the timeline of how that all happened?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Celestino was a development company that was formed around 2014. It was E. J. Cooper and Son prior to that. The Sydney Science Park landholding was acquired in 2010 and the planning proposal was initiated in 2012. That was initiated through to Penrith City Council, which then obviously led to a Gateway determination in 2014. There was a revised Gateway determination in 2015, which then led to the LEP amendment in 2016, which is when the land was rezoned.

**The CHAIR:** So rezoning in early 2016?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** The question I asked Penrith council before was when they got this application. Given that Celestino—or E. J. C, as it then was—didn't have any former or prior experience in relation to developing property, on what basis did you make your claims and how did that happen? Again, as a layperson, if you're looking at how a particular proponent of a development gets approval for it, what were the steps that you had to take to prove that you could deliver?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** There are two parts to that question. The first part is, in forming a development company, you seek development expertise by hiring the appropriate personnel with that development expertise. I was one of those. I started in 2010 at Celestino. I ran the Gables project in Box Hill. That was running at the same time as this Sydney Science Park project was going.

**The CHAIR:** When did the Gables first start then?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We started development there in 2015-16 off the back of the planning proposal that was approved.

**The CHAIR:** That's still after the original proposal for the science park was put to Penrith?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Correct. But the point there is that, with the appropriate personnel and skilled external consultants that we used in development, we were able to work on that project and put it together.

**The CHAIR:** In relation to the Gables, I understand that was sold recently to Stockland for about a tenth of what it was envisaged to be valued at. Is that correct? Wasn't it \$4 billion or something it was supposed to be valued at and then it got sold for \$400 million and something, or have I got that wrong?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I may have to take that on notice because I think there may be a mix of the economic value that comes with a project versus the actual land value of the project.

**The CHAIR:** But that was only for around 900 homes?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We developed approximately 1,000 homes and the remaining land, which I think under approval was about another 2½ thousand, was what Stockland bought off Celestino.

**The CHAIR:** The new proposal for the science park area—we've heard it reported as being around 34,000 homes. Is that correct?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** It is 3,400.

**The CHAIR:** So the 3,400 which was the original plan, is that still going to be the plan going forward?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Correct.

**The CHAIR:** Final question before I hand over to my colleagues. In 2016 the then-CEO, I believe, of Celestino joined Mike Baird on a trade and investment mission to Israel. What was the purpose of that, from Celestino's perspective?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I wasn't involved at that time. It's something I'd have to take on notice.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I could take it on notice. I can help you vaguely. It know it was a large contingent of people that went over there. I don't believe Mr Vassallo went on his own with Mr Baird.

**The CHAIR:** No, he didn't.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I think they looked at water technologies and quite a few other science-based industries over there. I think it was a very short tour. I could take it on notice and give you a precise agenda for the tour, the whole lot. I know it was science-based technology; that was the purpose of the whole visit. I think there was quite a large contingent, from memory.

**The CHAIR:** It stuck out because I've got the list of all of the business delegates that went. There were law firms and consulting firms, and academics, and then there were companies like Optus, NAB and McKinsey. Celestino kind of stuck out as "for what purpose was Celestino involved in that delegation". It seemed a bit out of step if we were looking at property development at that time. How does one get invited to go on one of those delegations?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I'm not totally sure because we didn't orchestrate it. We were invited, so it's hard for me to answer. I actually don't know who the organiser or organisers were, to be honest with you, at that time. You're taking me back eight years, so I apologise.

**The CHAIR:** I understand. If it's possible to come back with any details you have about what was discussed, who met who and what the purpose of that visit was from Celestino's perspective, that would be very useful. Also, is this the only trade mission that Celestino's been on? Has Celestino sent representatives to other countries for trade missions?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We have internally made trips with Celestino staff—

**The CHAIR:** With government.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** —to Silicon Valley and all these other science-based technology parks. In fact, I think they covered dozens of parks. This is going back 10—

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes, 10.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Ten or so years. With Government, none come to mind.

**The CHAIR:** Just the one to Israel.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** That was it. We were invited to that, so I can't tell you who organised it. I don't know.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today. By way of background, our Chamber has a call for papers power, like an FOI power, and a few years ago documents were called up about the Sydney Science Park. They show that in your initial lodgement of this application with Penrith council, and also the State Government, Celestino always had a very high expectation and promised that there would be a rail station as part of the development. Do you recall that?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** No, I'm not aware of any promise of any rail station at all.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** One of the consultants who looked at these documents said, "Preliminary discussions between Celestino and the New South Wales Government about the rail line at the science park appear to have occurred prior to the date of lodgement December 2013," seemingly as early as 2011. Mr Camilleri, did you have discussions with Gladys Berejikian in the early years of the O'Farrell Government about the need, or you thought the need, for a rail station at the science park location?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I don't ever recall meeting Gladys Berejikian regarding the—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** She was the transport Minister at the time.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** No, I'd never met her in that capacity and I don't believe I met her as Premier, Mr Latham. I don't recall it, no.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Did anyone else from Celestino, to your knowledge, lobby the State Government as early as 2011, 2012 or 2013 about the location of a rail station at Luddenham?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I'd have to take that question on notice, but I'd be very doubtful of that.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What about Stuart Ayres?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Sorry, what's your question, sir?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Lobbying Stuart Ayres as Minister for Western Sydney and member for Penrith for the rail station at Luddenham.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** No. Certainly not myself, if you're asking me that question.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** At budget estimates here on 10 March 2021, Mr Camilleri, Mr Ayres said that he knew you and you'd met a number of times, and he said that Celestino had lobbied him for a train station on their site. So that didn't involve you in the numerous meetings you had, listed in his ministerial diary over five years?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I would've met Mr Ayres on perhaps two or three occasions and, no, I don't recall lobbying him for a train station at all.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Who at Celestino did?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I don't know whether anybody at Celestino did.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Ayres—do you think he's mistaken in saying that he received representations from your company for that train station? He said that under oath here.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I can't speak for Mr Ayres, sir. I really can't.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How do you explain these conclusions that were drawn in the documents by the consultants to Sydney Metro looking at past transport planning? There was never any plan to run an airport line north of the Badgerys Creek site to St Marys. And, if there was, it would've gone through an existing population centre like Luddenham. How did you end up with this metro station being built now at your site in the middle of cow and horse paddocks?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I don't believe that's a question for us, Mr Latham. We don't determine where rail lines or train stations go. We couldn't answer that question.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Your evidence here is that Celestino never made any lobbying or representations to State Government Ministers to secure that metro station now being completed?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** What we did, if it assists your question, sir, is in 2021 we submitted a USP, which was a very lengthy document. That included a train station. That was rejected in—what was it?—September mid-2021, I think.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes, mid-2021. That was rejected.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How have you ended up with this train station?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Can I ask quickly, why was that rejected in 2021? What reasons were you given? Also, what stage of the proposal did it go to, in terms of the unsolicited proposal?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I don't have the reason with me, but we can take that on notice and provide that to you.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We could take that on notice—yes, absolutely. For sure.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Thank you.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Sorry, Mr Latham. I didn't get the end of that question.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What lobbying and representations did you make personally, or did your company make, to the State Government through this period after 2011 to secure the rail station, the metro now being built at Luddenham?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I didn't make any personal representations or lobbying to government to get a train station on our site.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, when you say you didn't make any personal lobbying, I understand that Celestino has a couple of lobbyist firms that it uses.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Did any of those firms lobby on your behalf in relation to the train station?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We had two lobbyists back 10 years ago, from memory. Kerry Chikarovski acted on our behalf. But, again, that was disclosed as appropriate.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Taylor Street Advisory.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We've engaged TSA for the last, roughly, 10 years.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** So in the wake of the rejection, there was lobbying on that particular issue?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We were a member of the Western Sydney Rail Alliance, which had numerous members of four councils—CEOs of those councils—and other major landowners in Western Sydney. It was all about linking together the east-west rail links in a north-south manner.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Presumably if they're employed to get an outcome on the company's interest, those lobbyists would've reported back to you?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** One would think so.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Would you have documentation to that effect?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We'd have documentation, but are you referring to anything specific?

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** I don't know, because I'm not privy to your documentation or your consultants' reports. But presumably they came back to you with, "This is where we're up to on your remit that you've given us". If it was related to the train line, we would like to avail ourselves as a Committee of those documents, if they're available.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We have documentation, without a doubt. I'm not sure of the reporting that TSA provide us with.

**The CHAIR:** Again, I just want to clarify the answers that you've given to Mr Latham. The Western Sydney Rail Alliance is also a client of Taylor Street. You were using Taylor Street. When you say that you weren't personally lobbying, or Celestino wasn't lobbying for these outcomes, were any of these other entities lobbying for outcomes of the kind that Mr Latham was referring to?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I imagine they would have.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I assume so, yes.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I assume they would have been.

**The CHAIR:** Right, and then you would know.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You used Mr Brown from Taylor Street as a lobbyist and you helped fund the Western Sydney Rail Alliance, yes?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes, we contributed to that.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How much?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I don't know. I'm happy to take that on notice. Whatever the retainer fees are, Mr Latham, I think.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The purpose of that rail alliance was to scuttle the Leppington line extension, which had been planned for for a number of years, and proceed with the north-south metro, which has now resulted in this station being built at Luddenham. That's right, isn't it?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I couldn't comment in terms of scuttling other rail lines. We're not in that position, but there would have been lobbying for—

**MATTHEW SCARD:** For a north-south.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** —a rail line heading north and south.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** A funded organisation on your behalf?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** On many participants' behalf. They act for—I don't know—dozens of parties, I understand.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** At any time, did you, Mr Camilleri, or anyone from Celestino meet with Transport Ministers or Stuart Ayres to lobby for that north-south line?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** As I said, I don't recall that. I met Mr Ayres in all that time on less than a handful of occasions, and principally it was to brief him on what we were doing because he was the Minister for Western Sydney. It was his job and our duty.

**The CHAIR:** I just want to ask one more clarificatory question on the lobbying, if I can. I also understand you've had Barton Deakin as lobbyists since 2020. Is that correct?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Barton Deakin were engaged for a Pyrmont site. It was not Sydney Science Park.

**The CHAIR:** It was a specific project.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes, for a specific project.

**The CHAIR:** Got it. Thank you. Mr Primrose.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Just two quick questions—one upon notice. Can you please give us a list of all the consultants that have been used in relation to the project? Is that okay?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** In a certain time frame? That'll be a long list over the whole project. Is that what you're asking? From 2010 to—

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Yes. And, where possible, the dates that they were employed. Secondly, we call many of these consultants. Will you be able to confirm that you will give approval for them to release any information in relation to matters that they were lobbying for on your behalf?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I think we can take that on notice.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I can take that on notice. There may be items there that are commercially—

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Commercially sensitive, yes.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Please take that on notice and come back to us.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Sure. No problem.

**The CHAIR:** Taylor Street was employed as a lobbyist specifically then for the science park project rather than as a general lobbyist. Is that correct?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We'd have to have a look.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes, we'd have to take that on notice. They may have been engaged on other projects as well. I honestly don't know. We'll take it on notice and advise you which projects they did or didn't work on.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In developing your proposal and then trying to market it, Celestino signed agreements with Federal and State Liberal governments; with CSIRO; and ANSTO for a Catholic STEM high school; Transport for NSW, autonomous vehicle hub; the Westmead medical precinct; and also a disability agreement with the then Minister John Ajaka. How do you explain that nothing ever happened and there was no tangible result for the science park out of this extraordinary number of agreements that were reached with government?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** As per the opening statement, we've suffered significant delays with the project. It's been very difficult for us to continue with any of those arrangements or agreements when we don't have a project to be able to move forward with them. So that does not mean we're not still able to do that as we move forward, as mentioned in the opening statement. However, with CSIRO, we have still been working with them with our Urban Living Lab, which is a collaboration between CSIRO and Celestino to look at how we challenge business-as-usual urban development in helping build and envision our city for the future. That Urban Living Lab was also the start of our STEM schools challenge that we're doing, which has been going for over four years now. We started with one school and 80 students, and just this year we finished up with 22 schools with 1,600 students.

I'm just trying to show you that we haven't given up. We haven't stopped. We have been trying to continue with our project, including other infrastructure that we've still been building over the last four years, including water mains and high voltage power, to allow us, when the planning is right—as I mentioned in the opening statement, we are ready to go. As I mentioned in the opening statement, we are pretty much ready to lodge our first precinct for development.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What are you ready to go with? Two years after your final approval in 2016 you met with the State's planning officials to say you'd like to lift the limit on residential dwellings from 3,400 to 30,000—that is, another housing estate in Western Sydney.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** And it looks like the water facility, the powerlines and the metro station are all facilitating residential development rather than the 12,000 knowledge-based jobs that were originally promised. Is that your plan?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We should still have both, residential jobs—the size of the property is there, the development controls are there. The 30,000 that you're talking to, on my understanding, is a submission that we made to the LUIIP, which is the Land Use and Infrastructure Implementation Plan, which was the first phase of the aerotropolis planning where they were seeking feedback to industry about how landholdings would be developed in the framework of the aerotropolis. In that submission, the 30,000 was for our whole landholding, which is 490 hectares. That's 203 hectares more than the science park landholding, which has the cap of 3,400 dwellings and the 470,000 of non-residential GFA, which we still have today. Once that moved forward past the LUIIP, that 30,000, that fell away because it was rejected and we've moved on.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In the original promise of the development, the company said it would locate the Baiada national headquarters and laboratory at the science park. That's an obvious thing you could do. It is your investment and your money, not companies you need to attract. Why hasn't that happened?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** May I respond? Mr Latham, as Matt pointed out in his opening statement, we've been held up for just under five years with this project through the new aerotropolis planning. I can tell you there were many meetings conducted within our group to move our head office there. It wasn't an idle promise. We couldn't wait any longer. We actually doubled and tripled the size of our head office where we are now in Western Sydney. If that growth continues, it's not out of the question that one day it could be at science park because a lot of our staff live in Western Sydney, so it actually suits us. But from 2018 to 2022 it's been frozen, on hold. Not even Penrith council could deal with our DAs, in their defence, because we've been waiting on the planning to be finalised.

In terms of our laboratories, if I may finish answering your question, they will be going there. We've had to temporarily move them from Bringelly, and spent \$3 million to \$4 million to locate them at Marsden Park for about two to three years until all this planning is finalised to send them back to science park. We don't enjoy tearing that money up, but we couldn't locate them at science park. We still can't. As of today, as Matt said in his opening statement, October '24, here we are—we still don't know what the stormwater charges are. October '24!

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** With all due respect, none of the documents that have been available to the Legislative Council indicate planning delays or the sorts of problems that you're mentioning. And I'm not too

sure stormwater charges are an obstacle to locating your national headquarters as promised. You have rebuilt the national headquarters? Where have they gone?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** In Pendle Hill, just 15 minutes away—and it's full.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Well, that sounds good, but it was promised to go at Luddenham. Why hasn't that promise been fulfilled?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We haven't been able to build anything on science park until the aerotropolis planning was finished, which was '23, '22, 18 months ago.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** For the benefit of the Committee, can you provide us with the various applications that you lodged to do any of this work with the State Government or Penrith council? They don't show up in the material that was released to us.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We'll take that on notice and provide that material.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The main change that comes out of the material is that two years after your final approval, you wanted to turn it into a 30,000-dwelling housing estate. That's the main change that we can see and what appears to be the reason why the knowledge-based jobs and none of the investment has ever been delivered.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** As I said in the opening statement, we are still committed to that vision, those jobs and the housing.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** So you're planning the manufacturing jobs, the science jobs and a 30,000-dwelling housing estate?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** The 30,000 dwellings was tied to the LUIIP submission, which was declined because it was the 490 hectares. We're talking about Sydney Science Park on the 280 hectares, which is what is zoned for mixed-use open space within the aerotropolis and Northern Gateway.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Why, in 2016, would the viability of the development involve the 12,000-plus knowledge-based jobs and just 3,400 dwellings, yet two years later you needed to go to 30,000 dwellings?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** It's just showing the potential capacity of the site.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You didn't know that in 2016 or 2013, when you lodged this process?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** They were different development controls.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They were different development controls?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Correct. The aerotropolis board brought in new development controls.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If I can seek some clarification on this, Mr Scard, in terms of both of those proposals, you were talking about two different parcels, effectively. Did one application relate to one confined parcel and then the other application related to a larger parcel? Is that what occurred here or was it a change of the original parcel of land as well in the LUIIP application?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I'd have to take that on notice in terms of the detail. It was an additional 203 hectares that was outside of the science park put together with the science park landholding. That was where that proposal came from.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Did that seek to change the science park planning proposal you had—the original proposal?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I think that was in response to where they were heading with the aerotropolis precinct planning.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If you could take it on notice in terms of the exact details, that'd be helpful for us for our clarification.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Absolutely.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes, for sure. Sorry that I don't have that detail here.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Further to Mr Latham's question, did you make an application to relocate the headquarters or not?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** There was a DA for that building, the Baiada building—I would have to confirm it—in, I think, 2015 or 2016. It was around the rezoning time frame.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Scard, in relation to the answer that you just gave Scott Farlow, wasn't your application to Planning to abolish the development triggers for residential to remove them on the science park site?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** In what time frame?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In the meetings you had in 2021—this involved Mr Camilleri and yourself—you met with Brett Whitworth from the department of planning to discuss the draft aerotropolis precinct plans, the SEPP, and you lobbied to overturn the prohibition on detached housing at the science park site to lift the 3,400 residential cap to have more residential to "better support a new school and abolish the floor space triggers for the commercial development". That's what happened, isn't it? It wasn't about a new site; it was the existing science park site, where you sought to have the triggers abolished so that you could build 30,000-plus dwellings. Your submission on 27 January 2021 recast the Sydney Science Park by saying "detached housing is the cornerstone of this vision". That's in your own words, isn't it? Your earlier evidence was misleading, wasn't it? We're talking about the science park and what you tried to do.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We are talking about the science park, yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In your own words, in January 2021, you said that "detached housing is the cornerstone of this vision", and you tried to have the development triggers lifted to build 30,000-plus residential dwellings on that site, didn't you?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I understand what you're talking about, Mr Latham. In 2018, that 30,000 was an assessment with the extra landholding. The actual 20,000 or 30,000 that you're talking about in 2021 is an assessment of the development controls on the Sydney Science Park land. It just happens to be the same number.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But you tried to have the development triggers lifted, didn't you? Abolished?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** The development triggers to develop 10,000 square metres of non-resi, or commercial, before doing one house, we found it was difficult commercially, particularly when there is a need for housing out at Sydney Science Park. So we were asking the question: Is it possible to amend those triggers so that we could do them both at the same time?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How many houses did you want to build?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** It was 3,400.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But why then would you say in your submission to the department in January 2021, "Detached housing is the cornerstone of the vision for the science park"?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** It is one of the cornerstones—jobs, housing, smart jobs, commercial development and research, and health.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How many houses would you build if you had permission on the land holding you've got at Luddenham?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** That depends on market demand at the time for—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, if you had a chance to lodge an application, it's well over 30,000, isn't it? That's what you've applied to the department of planning for.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Not necessarily. It's going to depend on the dwelling densities that would be developed on site, being apartment sites, terraces, manor homes, all the way down to detached dwellings.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** We heard on evidence earlier this morning that there was a conscious decision to plan to have infrastructure and jobs created first, and then you bring the demand in, which makes total sense. Wouldn't it be, in the commercial sense, much more attractive to have that uplift in quantity of housing, from a purely economic gain sense?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Not necessarily.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Really?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I think you could argue one way or the other. Commercial development, the appropriate time frame, market and uses, tenants.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Did you do any internal modelling on the various viability in terms of economic gain of, what was it, 30,000 houses versus commercial development?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I wasn't involved at that time.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Would you have documentation to that effect?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I can take that on notice and respond to that question about commercial versus residential.

**The CHAIR:** Can I get some final clarification on that 30,000-plus discussion? Can I confirm that the evidence is that, in relation to the science park bit of land, you have never sought to expand or increase the number of houses beyond 3,400 that were to go on that bit of land? Is that correct?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We have.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, you have?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Of course you have.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I think we might be—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Neither of you were present, but are you aware of a meeting on 23 October 2019 where John Vassallo, the former CEO, and Chris Brown—obviously there lobbying, supposedly part of this Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue—met with Minister Stokes's advisers, two of them? They summarised the meeting, with your submission to the LUIP being exhibited, the closure of that in 2018:

Celestino's submission to the Stage 1 LUIP sought to alter planning controls for the Sydney Science Park which will result in an increase to density, building heights and retail floor space for the site. The submission requested the following changes:

- increase in density (from 3,400 to 30,000 dwellings);
- increase in height of buildings—

up to 70 metres high—

- removal of the gross floor area cap applicable to the site;
- increase in retail floor space—

and then as a separate measure:

- inclusion of land immediately to the west to be identified as 'urban land' ...

These are just facts, aren't they, inconsistent with what you mentioned earlier on?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I'm not so sure whether they're inconsistent or not, but I'm not aware of that meeting.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The meeting with the Minister's advisers was to increase the residential density on the Sydney Science Park site to 30,000 dwellings and, separate to that, to identify the land that Mr Scard mentioned earlier on, west to the site, as urban land as a separate proposal. Yes? This is how the Minister's office documented it. There has been four or five attempts to increase the number of residential dwellings on the science park site to over 30,000, all documented in the material we have before us. How can you act vague or unsure about this?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I'm just trying to understand what your actual question is, Mr Latham. I can't comment on—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I'm asking, why have you come here to mislead this Committee, under oath, about what you've tried to do with planning officials and ministerial advisers in moving from a science park with 12,000 knowledge-based jobs to 30,000 residential dwellings—all clearly documented here—time after time?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I'd firstly like to comment—we haven't turned up here to mislead this Committee.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That's how it sounds.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** It may sound that way, but I assure you we haven't turned up for that purpose. If we've made applications—there would have been many over time—or met with government officials or bureaucrats to change what our original plan was, I don't see the problem with that. I don't understand—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The problem is it's not what your evidence indicated earlier on. That's the problem.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, just as Chair—

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** It might be my interpretation of your questions, I'm sorry.

**The CHAIR:** And I want to give you the chance to correct the record, because I don't have the *Hansard* in front of me right now, but I heard a response to the question from Mr Farlow basically saying that there wasn't a proposal to increase the science park number of residential dwellings to over 30,000. That was actually in relation to another piece of land and two pieces of land. That's what I heard clearly. Now what I've been hearing in response to Mr Latham's questions is that actually, no, in relation to that science park land by itself, there have been proposals to increase it to over 30,000 residential properties on that land. Is that correct? Which of those is correct?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We'd best take it on notice to clear it up.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We'll take it on notice to clear it up, so we can give you a chronological order of what we did and when we did it all. We don't have all of our documentation here with us as to meetings and plans we've put in or meetings we've had with the council or government.

**The CHAIR:** No, but the science park is a pretty large part of your ongoing business, isn't it? You would think—sorry, I'm just trying to understand how you wouldn't know the answer to that. If this is such a large part of your investment portfolio, and you've got a real vested interest in realising value out of it, how do you not know how many residential properties you want to have on it?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** What we don't know is the specifics of when we applied for something and how many et cetera, which are these very detailed questions. We don't have that information here with us. We asked to be made aware of what questions you might need so we could come armed and make this more productive. We don't have that. We simply don't have it with us. If it's okay, we'd like to take it on notice and respond to Mr Latham's questions formally.

**The CHAIR:** I'm happy for you to take on notice the specifics around what has happened in the past but, sitting here in front of us today, how many residential properties do you ideally want to see on the science park land?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** It's actually, quite honestly, a moving feast. We have had so many models done internally, from 3,400; there'd be 12,000. The development controls change, so that amends our plans as well. I couldn't tell you until we really get stuck into it. Feasibilities will determine that as well.

**The CHAIR:** But more than 3,400?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Ultimately. That 3,400 dwellings can sit on less than 20 per cent of the site so, if it's capped at 3,400, we'll have 80 per cent of the site unused. We see that as an absolute waste of land, and if that's the—

**The CHAIR:** But that was your original plan.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** That was the original plan, but things change over time. Nothing stands still.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I guess when you had that original plan, you didn't have a metro that ran through the site. Is that correct?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Our plan wasn't predicated on a train station being on the site.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** So, to the point of things changing, that's a fairly significant change.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** It is a change, yes.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Wasn't there lobbying for a train? I thought—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** These documents indicate in 2013 you were telling Penrith council, and subsequently the State Government, you had a high expectation that there would be a train station on the site.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I'll have to take that on notice because I'm not aware of saying that to Penrith council.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Celestino did, clearly, in the documentation we've got.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** If that information could be provided to us, we can respond to it. I don't have that information.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Luddenham station is set to be open in 2026. When people get off at Luddenham station, what will they find at the Sydney Science Park?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** In our opinion, not a great deal.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** What are your plans? When you think things will actually be set in motion? I think you used the term "get stuck in" before. When do you expect to be able to get stuck in and to be able to move forward with developing something at the Sydney Science Park?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Our application for our first 15-hectare subdivision for the science park was submitted for initial assessment yesterday for SEARs.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yesterday?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yesterday. We've been working on that for months, to make that happen. That will set us up, as I mentioned before, for education, research, open space and residential dwellings. I think there was a comment in our submission about that. That will also include bulk earthworks and active transport links to the station so that we can then—we're future-proofing it, but we're also connecting that future community to that station.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** So you are effectively building out from the station. The station and the town centre there will effectively be the focal point, and then your plans are to build out from there.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We're building in a location that is efficient to build; it's close to our first intersection. As I mentioned before, the cost to develop in the aerotropolis is very high. We couldn't develop four kilometres into the project, so we are developing right at the front door with our first precinct. Subsequent to approvals, we should see that in construction in 2026. We'll have construction underway when that metro is happening, so any of those future workers that are attending site for that construction will be able to use that metro station.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** But, in answering your question, it is not at the train station.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** No, it's not at the station.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** It's a few hundred—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I am just looking at the map in terms of the science park boundary. Whereabouts is it in that precinct?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Bottom right, fronting Luddenham Road, and along the southern boundary heading west.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Fronting Luddenham Road, yes.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Bottom of the page.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** It sits just outside the 800-metre zone from the metro, which also allows us that time to assess what's best placed around the metro.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Is part of that reckoning and reasoning behind it that you are looking still at potentially getting maybe higher densities around the train station itself?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Possibly, in time, but we don't know.

**The CHAIR:** The one thing we did see on our site visit was the water treatment plant. What is the current status of that, and what is the plan for that?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** The plan still remains the same. That's still under construction. I think it's pretty close to being finished—at the end of this year or early next year—which will be then ready for us to connect to our future development.

**The CHAIR:** Is there an intention of using that for other purposes? I know there was some talk of connecting to a hydrogen hub and all sorts of other things. Is that still a plan?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** That's something that we'd have to talk with Sydney Water about. We will be using that Sydney Water plant and the space in there for the STEM events and for education purposes as well.

**The CHAIR:** What about commercial interest in that from other players?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I can't comment on that in terms of the Sydney Water treatment plant. I don't know.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can I take you to the Outer Sydney Orbital? When you first lodged your plans with Penrith council, you had the major problem of the preferred route for that orbital cutting right through the middle of the Sydney Science Park site. How was that problem overcome?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** The problem of?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The Outer Sydney Orbital, a very wide corridor taking in rail and road, was originally planned to cut through the middle of what is now the Sydney Science Park site. How was that problem overcome?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** I'm not sure. That would be a question for Transport for NSW. I was not involved at that time.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Have you got records of the intensive lobbying that Celestino undertook to Ray Williams, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Western Sydney and also Transport for NSW through this period, and also the Federal defence Minister, Marise Payne, who was said to be a supporter of the Sydney Science Park project, to try and get the Outer Sydney Orbital moved to the Defence land at Orchard Hills? This happened in 2015 and 2016. In March of 2016 the consultant for Transport for NSW said the preferred route was to cut through the middle of the science park site, but you managed to have it moved to the eastern side near the twin hills estate.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Twin Creeks.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Twin Creeks, yes. Could you take that on notice—

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** —and list the lobbying, because plenty of people in New South Wales would like to have your strike rate for success in lobbying the State Government to get these things done. Mr Camilleri, you've got no recollection of lobbying any Ministers or officials about the route of the Outer Sydney Orbital?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** None whatsoever—categorically.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Back to Mr Latham's question before about the MOUs that you've entered into with the New South Wales Government, the Federal Government and the like, what's the status of those MOUs at the moment? Are they progressing at all—like, what is it, the CSIRO living hub?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** The living lab?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes, the living lab. Where is it to be located? What's the status of those at present?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We are still running the Urban Living Lab with CSIRO, but that's a program; it's not a building or a head office. As far as we're aware, that went to Bradfield.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Were there any financial benefits that were provided to—I shouldn't say financial benefits. As part of those MOUs, did you receive any funding from the State Government or the Federal Government?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** There was one MOU—I'd have to take that on notice—regarding an arboretum that we sought funding for research around greening Western Sydney and urban heat island effects. Unfortunately, that got cancelled because of the aerotropolis precinct plans. We were unable to provide a site to be able to act on that funding, so that research project was lost. That was another one that was under the Urban Living Lab.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** With the STEM school in the Catholic sector, their organisation said they never had any capital plans for this; it was never in their forward planning at all. Why was it ever advertised?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We can't speak for the Catholics.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, but you can speak for yourselves though. Why did your organisation constantly list on your website all these agreements with government, none of which have come about, including the Catholic STEM high school for which they had no capital allocation or planning?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We can't comment as to whether they had no allocation internally, Mr Latham, but I can tell you that we had an MOU with the Catholic school that got amended and extended. We had various plans; we met with them frequently. We were intense with the Catholic side. I don't understand that. I can't comment on what their internal financial plans are. We're not privy to that.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What ever came of Andrew Constance's autonomous vehicle hub agreement with Transport for NSW? There was going to be a research centre there for what I think he called the Jetson city, with the flying cars that were going to be developed in research.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** As mentioned before, all those MOUs—sadly for us as well—have been paused or lost, and we need to reinvigorate them once we have certainty in our future project.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can you give us a list of those that are paused and also a list of those that have been lost, on notice?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We can take that on notice, yes.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes, for sure.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of the viability of the science park, are you concerned about the development at Central station of the Tech Central precinct? Do you see that as being in competition for some of the businesses you might otherwise have attracted?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** That's a very good question.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** That's a very broad question.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Very broad.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We'd be more concerned with what the Government's doing at Bradfield because, I think, as they stated publicly a few years ago, the Greater Sydney Commission thought that the Sydney Science Park was a great concept, and they have copied it. I think they are on record saying that. We don't get excited about having to compete with the State Government because we certainly don't have the pockets that they have. That, in itself, has made us rethink our plans. We still believe in the vision. We are going to proceed with it. We have poured a lot of money into this project, where a lot of developers might have packed up and left. We haven't, and we are not going to. But it might be a smaller amount of science now, given whatever Bradfield and the Government are going to do there. CSIRO were with us, on board, fully on. Whatever happened there? They will be at Bradfield now. That's done and dusted.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** That's our understanding.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes, that's our understanding. I think there are a number of those as well that have occurred. We are simply not in a position to compete with government.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You're saying they copied you at the aerotropolis?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I think they've gone public on it, Mr Latham.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That's why nothing has happened at either site?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I guess we'll take it as a compliment, to start with, that they thought the science park was a great idea. So it confirms our vision, which we are still committed to and we remain committed to, and we still pour money into this site. I'm happy to say to this Committee that we are not far off \$100 million that we have poured into it, including the Sydney Water treatment plant, which is a major cost for us. We haven't got one cent of revenue out of it.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You're about to, though, with the acquisition of the metro site. The Government is going to pay you for that.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We don't want to make any large assumptions here, but that's a matter that's in litigation.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** So it's not true to say that you will get no revenue from government.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** No. I was about to say to you we've had no revenue, and we're not forecasting any revenue for the next three to five years out of the development that we do. We're talking about a resumption now. I think they're separate issues.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Can I ask about the Sydney Water sewage treatment plant? I understand you've got an application in for reticulation services to be connected to it. Was there any lobbying for that to be brought forward?

**MATTHEW SCARD:** To be brought forward? I'm not sure about that part, but the—

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** It appears as though the decision to build it and put it out there was somewhat out of sequence, so I'm curious as to—

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes, out of sequence—sorry to cut you off.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** That's not for us to say it was out of sequence. That's a decision that Sydney Water would make. That agreement we came to with Sydney Water took—I'm guessing now—probably two years to put together. It's a fully blown commercial agreement that we have paid for fully. It's a substantial cost to us. Clearly Sydney Water saw merit in that agreement and they proceeded with it. We paid for it, not them. Whether it was out of sequence or not, we're not in a position to comment. We don't know the—

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Was there an original timeline that was altered in the wake of the negotiations with Sydney Water?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** It would have been delayed, without a doubt, from the originally envisaged timeline. We work with each other—been a great partner. We're nearly at the end of that road.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Were the lobbyists involved in those negotiations?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** No. I don't—no, we did that directly.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Directly.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Our previous CEO did that with Sydney Water, but it was a long road getting that agreement signed off.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** You've got documentation to that effect?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Would we be able to be availed of that?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Can we take that on notice? It is a commercial-in-confidence agreement. We just have to take advice on it.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** Sure.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I've got nothing to hide.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes. Likewise, if you also could take on notice what the cost of that to Celestino has been.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We'll take that on notice. Absolutely.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** We'll take that on notice.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Yes, we will.

**The CHAIR:** Just to note that, if there is information that you are concerned about in response to these questions on notice, you can ask for that information to be kept confidential so that it's just for the Committee's benefit. There are rules around whether or not we accept the request but that is something we could consider. We talked earlier about that trip to Israel in 2016. If you could let us know on notice whether the Government paid for that, any part of that, or whether that was self-funded by Celestino for Celestino's part of that role, that would be very useful.

**MATTHEW SCARD:** Yes. That's no problem.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** For sure.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Most importantly, Mr Camilleri, how's Sunshine in Paris going to go on Saturday?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Oh, Mr Latham!

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** This man is the breeder of Winx, by the way. I know we've given you a hard time today. We give you credit for that.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** No, you haven't given us a hard time.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How will Sunshine go on Saturday? Can she beat Bella Nipotina?

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I just wish you had some influence in Racing NSW in getting us a better barrier draw, mate.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I wouldn't go to him.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I know you do.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** We've drawn out nine again, Mark.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You ought to see where my mare keeps drawing.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** Where?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** At 13, 15, 17—so nine's not too bad.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I didn't realise you liked horses so much.

**The CHAIR:** Okay.

**JOHN CAMILLERI:** I like this.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** He's always got a horse in the race.

**The CHAIR:** That concludes our session. Thank you very much for making yourselves available and for providing the evidence you provided today. It has been very useful. The Committee secretariat will be in touch about the questions taken on notice and any supplementary questions.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

**Ms ANGELA JEFFERY**, Head of Project Delivery, Sydney Metro, sworn and examined

**Ms JUSTINE KINCH**, Director, Western Sydney Aerotropolis, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

**Mr SIMON HUNTER**, Chief Transport Planner, Transport for NSW, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back. We now welcome our next panel of witnesses. Would you like to commence by making a short opening statement?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I would. Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today. As I said, my name is Simon Hunter. I'm Chief Transport Planner, so I can address some of the questions around our strategy, some of the corridors and questions around fuel pipelines. I'm joined by Ms Justine Kinch, who focuses on integrated transport within and supporting the aerotropolis, and Ms Angela Jeffery, who is the head of project delivery at Sydney Metro. On behalf of our agency we would like to acknowledge the submissions and witness contributions so far, which really, I think, talk to the scale and complexity of planning for and building a new city within our greater metropolitan area.

With Western Sydney evolving at an unprecedented rate and the new Western Sydney international airport presenting huge opportunities for local communities, we know and understand that the corresponding development for our transport infrastructure network and the services on that network are crucial to realising the vision for this area. As other recent parliamentary inquiries have heard, transport is a key enabler for this development, and it will support the creation of jobs, emerging industries and economic activity.

The long-term government vision for activating the aerotropolis is underpinned by extensive land use and transport planning work, done in collaboration with our colleagues in other agencies, including the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and with the communities. Whilst we think that we've made great progress to lay the foundation for the network to support the unlocking of development and the airport opening, we recognise that there is plenty more to be done, including significant investment from government. In Transport for NSW we continue to work closely to develop the network to support that future growth, ensuring that we respond to land use decisions and needs when we're prioritising and sequencing each stage of the work across the aerotropolis.

Our work is also being used to help inform a sector plan that Infrastructure NSW is developing for the aerotropolis, and that will work to bring together the inputs of our colleagues across Planning, Water and, of course, Transport, to provide that clear staging plan and identify pathways for accelerating work where it has the potential to deliver early benefits. Transport for NSW has welcomed the support of the INSW Co-ordinator General to consider how we can streamline our business case processes and help to deliver things in a speedier manner for communities and realise the benefits of these investments. We also know and understand that industry is keen to see this new infrastructure in place, and we are working with developers and industry bodies in a regular way.

The budget and funding commitments from both the Australian and New South Wales governments this year are going to help us deliver some pretty important upgrades on Elizabeth Drive and Mamre Road over the next couple of years, and we're aiming to share some upgrades and some information about these upgrades going forward. These upgrades that have been worked on will build on the existing infrastructure and services that are or are nearly completed, including Bringelly Road, the Northern Road, the M12 and the M7-M12 interchange and, of course, the new Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line, and some of the bus services that have been talked about and committed in previous plans. Transport for NSW remains committed to partnering with communities and industry to help deliver this new city. We look forward to answering your questions this afternoon.

**The CHAIR:** There's a lot to talk about. Transport for NSW presumably keeps a lobbyist register—who is coming in at whatever times. Are you able to provide on notice the lobbyist register records that you've kept since 2013? I just want to know what meetings have been held in relation to what.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Absolutely happy to take that question on notice and we will provide what we can. I don't know—Ms Kinch, do you have any information on the protocols that we followed in the aerotropolis work or any of that that might help provide a bit of context?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** A little bit of extra context. We engage regularly with developers in the precinct and stakeholders in the precinct to update them on our transport plans on a regular basis. We do keep that forum open. It's publicly available information, but we invite all developers in the precinct to that to hear our plans so they can continue their work. With respect to anything to do with a development application where we're dealing directly with developers, we also have full records of all of those conversations.

**The CHAIR:** That's what I'm interested in, in particular, especially around the Sydney Science Park, just to see what discussions were had there and when. One of the most perplexing things about the way that the airport has been designed is in relation to this fuel pipeline or the lack of. Can you talk us through two things: given how perplexed people are, whether there's any opportunity for it to be reconsidered in terms of putting that dedicated pipeline in; but also in the absence of that, what the plans are to ensure that that fuel can be safely carried on our roads without destroying the roads as well.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm happy to answer that question. As you'll be aware, when the commitment was made to the airport, there was a significant challenge around moving aviation fuel identified, and a fuel pipeline was identified, as we understand, in around about February 2016 and then classified by Infrastructure Australia as a high-priority near-term project. Project planning has been carried out by Transport for NSW over the years subsequent to that to look at the most effective and sustainable approach to delivering fuel pipelines, looking to minimise the impact of construction on the community and environment. The Western Sydney airport fuel line pipeline project was part of the *NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023* and was also an action for Transport for NSW in the conditions of approval for the Western Sydney International Airport.

The movement of fuel, as you've rightly pointed out, is currently dominated by road in New South Wales, but pipelines have proven to be quite an effective route for transporting fuel from import terminals to inland depots. In the *NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023*, Western Sydney fuel pipeline was identified as a key action to reduce distances travelled by road tankers, particularly through some congested parts of Sydney. Transport for NSW has identified a shortlist of available fuel pipeline alignments, and we've been working with the Western Sydney Airport Co to support them in seeking out fuel supply to the airport via pipeline.

The most recent information I have is that in April 2023, Western Sydney airport ran an expressions of interest process to provide the opportunity for bona fide interested parties to express their interest in the design, construction and operation of a fuel pipeline from a fuel terminal to an existing New South Wales port. Transport for NSW is available to continue to support the Western Sydney Airport Co on that, and we've provided our inputs to help inform their decision-making around the potential alignments of those pipelines.

**The CHAIR:** That sounds promising. From the discussions that we had with Western Sydney—sorry, I've forgotten the name of the corporation but the entity that's running it—when I asked about this in our informal briefing, there was a suggestion that it wouldn't be possible to have a pipeline until the airport was commercially viable. Whose responsibility will it be to fund that pipeline? Is your expectation that it's something that will have to be borne by the airport operator as opposed to by Transport or by the New South Wales Government at some point?

**SIMON HUNTER:** It's a good question, Chair. If you do require more detail, I'm happy to take it on notice, but my understanding is that those pipelines are commercially viable entities themselves so that there is potential for them to be developed at zero cost to government. I don't want to speculate, but if the airport is advising that there's not an option until the airport is fully up and running from a commercial point of view, perhaps that is because the funding and financing can only be done when there is the significant throughput and volume.

**The CHAIR:** I guess the question is whose responsibility is it or whose decision is it as to whether or not we are using roads to transport fuel or to actually pay to have or to partner or whatever it is with somebody to have a pipeline?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm not aware of any fuel pipelines that have been constructed by Transport for NSW or New South Wales government agencies, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** It sounds like then that if it's not a condition of the development, then it's really just up to the airport operator as to whether or not there is one?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Again, my understanding is there was a condition of approval for Transport to investigate it. I am not sure that that extended to delivery.

**The CHAIR:** In the absence of a pipeline, though, it will be Transport's responsibility to ensure that those hazardous goods can be delivered on our roads safely. How does that impact on your planning, not knowing what the airport operator is going to be doing?

**SIMON HUNTER:** That is a good question. In terms of the timing around any pipeline and the delivery of that, I'll have to take that on notice. Equally, if there is detailed information around how that movement of goods is being planned for, I don't actually have that to hand, so we'll have to take that on notice as well.

**The CHAIR:** The airport is going to open in 2026—is that right? I always get this date wrong; I think I keep forgetting what year it is. If there is no pipeline by 2026, presumably there is quite a lot of work to prepare for the fuel to be delivered by road. It concerns me that it sounds like that planning is not yet in place.

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Perhaps I could assist Mr Hunter. We are anticipating that the fuel will be trucked in initial phases by road. We don't yet know where the fuel supplies will be coming from, but we'll be using our standard requirements for moving heavy vehicles through the precinct and beyond. Once we've got more confirmation on where that fuel's coming from, we'll work with the airport on those routes to make sure that they are as safe as possible.

**The CHAIR:** From a technical perspective, when you then have that route, is there work that needs to be done to reinforce roads, or do agreements need to be entered into with councils in terms of who's responsible for maintenance and upgrades?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** There are requirements around the movement of those—moving fuel through our roads. With respect to road upgrades and maintenance, we're working on that as part of our road network for the airport precinct. All the major freight roads—we've already delivered the Northern Road, Bringelly Road, and the M12 motorway will be complete ahead of the airport opening. All of those roads are new and will help facilitate the movement of the fuel.

**The CHAIR:** But again it depends on the route as to exactly where it's going to be coming from.

**JUSTINE KINCH:** It does.

**The CHAIR:** The decision not to have 24-hour metro access to a 24-hour airport, what are the chances—how do we make it so that it is 24 hours?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The metro obviously needs maintenance. It's been designed to be a high-frequency, safe and reliable metro. Our city operations and our north-west operations are achieving 99 per cent reliability, largely underpinned because of the maintenance regimes that deliver those services, and the Western Sydney airport metro will be no different. It will operate for 20 hours a day. The four-hour maintenance period will make sure that we are delivering that high reliability. There will be interconnections with the T1 line at St Marys, so we will work with the timetabling to make sure that that's a seamless transition and work with the provision of bus services for the four hours overnight to make sure that people can still move around Western Sydney and access the airport in that maintenance period. When we were designing the system, we did look to international examples. One that we reference is the Heathrow Airport. It also has a similar maintenance period and works with a bus service, a heavy train service and metro service, in combination, to allow for that necessary maintenance.

**The CHAIR:** But the Heathrow Express is effectively like a tube; it only takes 15 minutes. It's a very quick service to get you into the centre of London. It's very different to getting on a bus, swapping at St Marys and then getting on a train. For somebody who is coming from overseas, what—

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The maintenance period for the Heathrow service is similar. We have looked to international services where that service isn't 24 hours; it also has a maintenance period. We've looked to those examples. We will continue to look at how the timetabling works.

**The CHAIR:** In Heathrow, when you arrive, there's no point where you can't get either the Heathrow Express or the tube, pending some terrible weather event—which has led to, often, you can't get out of Heathrow. Normally, they have it so that either they have the heavy rail or the tube available at all times. There's always that option to just hop onto something. Heathrow is every half-hour in the dead of night but the rest of the time it's every 15 minutes for the Heathrow Express. Again, that's a very different option. How long will it take if you have to get a bus and then swap at St Marys to get into the centre of Sydney after landing?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The bus would be a connection back to St Marys, so it will be a connection that is similar to the metro. It's a replacement, if you like. The metro will be a five-minute service in the peak periods. And for that four-hour period overnight, where the maintenance is occurring, it will be similar to what you've described at Heathrow, where you might have one service or another service but you can still move around from the airport to where you need to go. This won't be any different to that.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, but it's not a bus. Sorry, I don't want to labour this point, but there's a big difference between getting your luggage, scooting along, going straight onto a flat entrance into a tube or a train, and then standing there with your luggage for 15 minutes and then getting off, as opposed to getting on a bus, having to lift your luggage up and putting it in the thing. It's a very different experience for travellers. Is there any future in which we end up with 24-hour train or metro from Western Sydney airport?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Because of the maintenance needs—the railway itself needs to be maintained and all of the trains need to be maintained—that window for maintenance has been reduced to the most efficient period that's possible. For the 20 hours when the metro is running, we are seeing over 99 per cent reliability and availability of our metro service on north-west and on city and south-west. This will be the same. For the 20 hours that it's running, the people accessing the airport will have a high frequency, safe, reliable metro, and a replacement service for the four hours where that absolutely critical maintenance needs to occur to underpin that reliability and the safe metro that's offered for the 20 hours.

**The CHAIR:** Because we only have that one rail option.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Hunter, can I take you to what seems to be a previous role you had in the determination of the corridor for the Outer Sydney Orbital? What was your involvement at that time around 2015-16?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I wasn't directly involved with the corridor planning at that point, Mr Latham. I was in a role of Transport for NSW then. It was a strategic land use planning role. There was a peer role of mine, a major projects transport planning role, that existed at that time, and the team that did that planning reported into the executive director of that team.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Was that Ms Gardiner-Barnes?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I reported to Ms Gardiner-Barnes at that point. I think my peer that you're looking to identify was Mr Tim Raymond.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Do you remember in November 2015 a memo that Ms Gardiner-Barnes approved, drafted by you, advising Penrith council that they shouldn't go ahead with the public exhibition for the Sydney Science Park because your department, your agency wanted to finalise the route of the Outer Sydney Orbital to get that in place and make sure that land use thereafter followed the best possible corridor for the Outer Sydney Orbital?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I don't recall the memo specifically, Mr Latham. I do remember there were ongoing discussions with Penrith council at the time. Subsequent to that period, there was significant consultation with council and with other stakeholders around the Outer Sydney Orbital.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Penrith council went ahead and exhibited Sydney Science Park against your best advice, unfortunately. Then Transport for NSW put two Outer Sydney Orbital corridor options out for public consultation. There was a so-called yellow option that cut through the northern part of the Sydney Science Park and a blue option to the east. Do you recall any subsequent consultancy reports from AECOM and a further consultancy report identifying the yellow option as the best one to proceed with?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I don't, Mr Latham. As I indicated, that team didn't actually report into my function at the time—the team that had worked on that corridor planning. So I'm relying on the advice that I've been given.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is Geoff Cahill still involved as the head of the corridor preservation?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm not sure about the appropriateness of me providing advice on the status of specific public servants.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Does he still work for Transport for NSW? Back then he was the head of the corridor preservation unit. Do you recall that?

**SIMON HUNTER:** At the time, yes, I do.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Maybe we need to call him as a witness, but why would he have intervened in May 2016, cc-ing into his email to some of his colleagues, Jeremy Spinak from Celestino, saying, "Jeremy Spinak has just phoned and stated that their preferred option is for the Outer Sydney Orbital to go along the eastern alignment rather than across the western northern alignment," which would have cut through their property, and then that's what exactly happened. How often in these corridor negotiations would one company receive this sort of preferential treatment?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm not aware of the email that you're referring to, Mr Latham. If you wish to table it, I'd be happy to take that on notice. Per the Chair's earlier question, I think we're going to come back with a list of any engagements with lobbyists. I also don't have records with me of discussions with Celestino, but I'm aware that there were some at the time. As I've indicated, I wasn't involved.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Right.

**SIMON HUNTER:** My understanding of the process that was followed for the corridor was that in the Long Term Transport Master Plan that was identified in 2012, this was identified as a future priority and then there was subsequent work undertaken to identify various route options before settling on a preferred option.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The maps seem to indicate that the only deviation from the highest ranked corridor along the entire 80-kilometre length of it was the one that benefitted Sydney Science Park, as Mr Cahill emailed the Celestino representatives to say, "That's what we're likely to do." It's this sort of strange S-bend, if I can describe it that way, that runs across the top of the airport site and then goes further east to miss the science park. Have you got a recollection of that? Was that the only variation in the 80-kilometre length?

**SIMON HUNTER:** My understanding is there were a number of changes to the corridor as a result of the exhibition and feedback that was received on that. With regards to the Sydney Science Park site, I understand there were several key design considerations including the viability of using Defence land, directness of connection with the Western Sydney Airport, navigating crossings with the metro line and the Warragamba pipeline, the undulation of the land to the west of Luddenham Road and collocation with the M12 Motorway. The collocation with the M12 Motorway, as I understand it, was one of the biggest factors in the decision because the option that had previously gone through the Sydney Science Park was not compatible with the M12 Motorway.

These two projects, the corridor alignment, the Outer Sydney Orbital and the M12 Motorway, were being developed at the same time by separate project teams. My understanding is that, to address the incompatibility between the two projects that had arisen, the Outer Sydney Orbital alignment was changed to interchange with the M12 at its current interchange point, north of the airport, and then use the M12 between the M12 and the Northern Road as part of the alignment. This change significantly reduced the overall land requirement and will lower the future cost of delivering that project.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can I just ask who prepared that briefing note for you?

**SIMON HUNTER:** The briefing note was prepared by officers that work in my team, in the corridor identification and protection team.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Okay. You're now in charge of the corridor preservation?

**SIMON HUNTER:** That team now reports in through me, yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Are you able to, on notice, assist the Committee with furnishing correspondence lobbying efforts by Celestino and other correspondence to Mr Cahill and others that relate to how this change was made to assist the Sydney Science Park?

**SIMON HUNTER:** As we have taken on notice the question from the Chair around any intersection with lobbyists, we will provide what information we can. Again, my understanding is that it was largely due to the M12 and Outer Sydney Orbital project intersection that the decision was made to change the alignment. If there are records of correspondence that haven't been picked up in previous inquiries or calls for papers, I'll absolutely ensure that a search is undertaken for them.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I suppose, quite frankly, the change in this correspondence looks to have been made because Mr Cahill was lobbied by Celestino and he said, "If that's what they want, that's what they should get," effectively. Could you revisit of the correspondence and the briefing note you've been supplied with to see if that's the case?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Yes, if you can provide the correspondence or any of that, I'll absolutely ask that it be looked at.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Thanks for that. Ms Jeffery, are you aware of Sydney Metro research about the origins of the alignment of the Badgerys Creek to St Marys metro and the decision to have a station at Luddenham at the Sydney Science Park?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Yes, metro undertook a business case to analyse the best alignment and the number of stations to complete the business case analysis. Sorry, does that answer your question?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Are you aware of a preliminary town planning report commissioned by Sydney Metro's external lawyers, Ashurst, that indicates that Celestino kind of got a nod or a tentative agreement from the O'Farrell Government as far back as 2011 that if they went ahead with this Sydney Science Park, they'd end up with some form of rail station?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** I'm aware of the report. The report was commissioned to assist with the acquisition process and the market value assessment. That underpinned the submission to the Valuer General in relation to that compulsory acquisition.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The author of the report writes, "Preliminary discussions between the proponent Celestino and the NSW Government about the rail line and the station appear to have occurred prior to December 2013, seemingly as early as 2011." Then the author, a respected planning consultant, sought from Sydney Metro some further information and background material as to what those discussions might have been and was somewhat frustrated, in that in the response from Andrew Miller, acquisition manager, Western Sydney airport, Sydney Metro, all he could say was, "It's considered there was a high expectation from the landowner, Celestino, that a station would be delivered to Sydney Science Park." It raises the obvious point: How did they know this before the second airport was even announced and before anyone started these detailed studies? How did Celestino know as far back as 2013 that they were getting a rail station?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** That report was commissioned to assess, in line with the Act, the market value. That was really the focus of the work that the team had commissioned the report for and served its purpose in assisting the market value of the land.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Well, in all fairness, sure, the consultant was doing what you've described but was also incredibly curious as to how a metro station now being completed in the middle of cow and horse paddocks—and we're all concerned about that—and how the proponent, Celestino, had a high expectation and some form of agreement with the then Government that they'd get a rail station before they'd even had their planning material finalised at Penrith council or at the New South Wales planning department. Could you on notice undertake to look at the material the consultant was seeking in that regard?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Yes, happy to.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** If it's available, it would be incredibly useful to this Committee in solving one of the great mysteries. Just on this question, how have we ended up with this very important and expensive metro station being built at Luddenham in the middle of horse and cow paddocks?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The metro station selection process is subject to a business case. It happens on all of the business case analyses that are undertaken for a metro project. There are two stations at the airport, obviously servicing a business park and the terminal station itself. There's a station at the aerotropolis site, which is government-owned land, and then there is a station at St Marys, which interchanges with the T1 line. In between those two stations, being the St Marys station and the airport, there was a consideration as to the best location for intermediate stations. That was influenced by topography; geotechnical information; the Warragamba pipelines; job creation; providing the greatest catchment for the community and the future, noting that this project is the first step in developing Western Sydney; and journey time. All of those aspects have really influenced the best assessment for where the stations could be, noting that there's significant Defence land in between Orchard Hills and Luddenham. Those aspects have influenced the station locations.

**The CHAIR:** The business case, then—who was that written by?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The final business case was written by Sydney Metro.

**The CHAIR:** Does Sydney Metro use any consultants to help prepare those business cases?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Yes. There are consultants commissioned from time to time for various aspects. The consultant commission that Mr Latham has spoken to happened several years after the business case. It was commissioned to assist with the assessment and the fair market assessment of the acquisition that was undertaken. So it's separate—

**The CHAIR:** I mean the business case that was written in relation to this or, basically, that was used to support this metro station being where it is. Which consultants helped write that?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Can I provide that to you on notice?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** I think it was Cox, but I'll have to come back to you, if that's okay.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Why did you proceed with this station and alignment given that the metro business case that you've referred to estimates that the line will have peak loadings of 880 passengers per hour, or just 11 per cent of the capacity of the metro in one direction. That's peak.

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The business case was completed and submitted to government, and government made the decision to deliver the project. The metro itself is the first step in developing and executing a longstanding plan. The project itself will, over time, deliver diverse jobs for the future. It will deliver housing outcomes and great places.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That's not what I asked. Did the business case show that for 89 per cent of the time in peak, the metro we're talking about through Luddenham to St Marys will be empty?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The business case showed that in 2056 there would be, as you've called out, the number of passengers being able to access the metro. But it will be servicing and connecting Western Sydney to Western Sydney. It will be connecting the rest of the world to Western Sydney and Sydney more broadly and providing those jobs and economic—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** And Sydney Metro relied on a benefit-cost ratio for the project of just 0.75, with 18 per cent of the benefits flowing to public transport use and 64 per cent to urban development benefits, mainly for Celestino, which is now pressing to turn its ghost science park into a housing estate.

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** There were 23 benefits that underpinned the business case that was submitted to government and the project then funded for delivery. We're really excited to be delivering that project.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What did Sydney Metro recommend to the Minister, though? This particular alignment and station?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** After the analysis that was undertaken and all of the option analysis that was completed as part of the robust business case process, the recommendation was made to government.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** For what is now being built?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That was your recommendation, off a benefit-cost ratio—

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Mr Latham, I just want to get the timeline there. So the business case was prepared with the help of one or more consultants, which you'll check and come back on, and then signed off by who before it then went to who?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** It's submitted to government, and then—

**The CHAIR:** Which bit of government?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Central government. It's submitted to Cabinet for consideration and then funded as a project. Once the project is funded, then it's delivered.

**The CHAIR:** Did it get signed off by the transport Minister before it went to Cabinet?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** I'd have to take that on notice, but that does sound like a standard process. I would like to take that on notice to confirm for sure.

**SIMON HUNTER:** The business case would've also been independently assured by Infrastructure NSW as part of that investment decision-making process, followed by the New South Wales Government.

**The CHAIR:** If it's possible to provide on notice a chain of who approved what and when in relation to that business case and the project, that would be very helpful in clarifying.

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** I'm happy to do that.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** If the benefit-cost ratio was 0.75, what was it for extending the heavy line from Leppington to Badgerys Creek?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** I'd have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can you? That would've been part of the analysis to look at alternatives.

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** The business case was prepared just before I joined Sydney Metro, so I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I think it's also a matter of record that up until the cities deal signed by Stuart Ayres, all of the planning out of Transport had been to extend that Leppington line. If you can find the benefit-cost ratio for that, it would be very helpful. I'm reliably informed that it's a lot higher than 0.75. With regard to your point, Mr Hunter, about Infrastructure NSW, how do you explain the heavy criticism by Infrastructure Australia of the Badgerys Creek to St Marys line, where they said that there's not sufficient evidence that the proposed project is the best solution for linking Western Sydney airport by public transport? They concluded that the benefits of the project do not justify its costs.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm not probably best placed to answer that. I don't know, Ms Jeffery, if you had seen—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Can you take that on notice, if someone in the transport system can provide a response to the heavy criticism of Infrastructure Australia, who basically said, as per the business case, that this thing is a white elephant?

**SIMON HUNTER:** What I would say, Mr Latham, is that there have been a series of strategic planning documents since 2018 to now, about integrating—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Further back to 2010.

**SIMON HUNTER:** Well, the Long Term Transport Master Plan in 2012, perhaps, was a significant plan under the then government that identified a series of future and long-term infrastructure networks. The planning for the Western Sydney airport really changed quite significantly when there was the investment decision-making around the Western Sydney airport to come online. Subsequently, the Greater Sydney Commission, as it was at the time—planning for that Metropolis of Three Cities, with a third city in the western parkland—and Transport for NSW, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, undertook a rail needs study that recommended, I believe, in the long term both the extension of a link from the south-west rail link as it is now and a north-south metro spine. These are all currently being investigated through business cases that were an election commitment of the Minns Government as well.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Are you referring there to the Western Sydney rail needs scoping study?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I am referring to that as one of those documents, yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** It found that the Leppington line extension was a less expensive \$6 billion option against \$11 billion to St Marys and also "the simplest way to provide a train service to the proposed Western Sydney Airport". Why wasn't that advice accepted?

**SIMON HUNTER:** My understanding is that the Western Sydney rail needs study states that the north-south rail link between Schofields and Campbelltown-Macarthur, via the Western Sydney airport, should be prioritised, and that other east-west links merited further investigation.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I think we're talking at cross-purposes. This is a comparison between the St Marys metro and extension of the Leppington line, where the scoping study found that the Leppington extension was less expensive and a better way of linking up to the airport. Can you take on notice any documentation as to why that advice wasn't followed, please?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm happy to take on notice what the evidence was around that. My understanding is that it was a decision of government that was made in consultation with the Federal Government as well around what they would prioritise initial investment in.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I'm sure it was a decision of government, but I hope you understand that when we visit the Sydney Science Park and you see no private investment there at all, a government-built water facility and, most absurdly, a metro station in the middle of horse and cow paddocks, your average taxpayer would think, "Why the hell have we ever funded this?"

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I have two quick questions. I think they're both following up questions asked by the Chair, initially. My first question is the same one that I asked in estimates for years of various transport and planning Ministers, and that is in relation to the fact that we're actually going to eventually need a fuel pipeline. What's the reason that after so many years no easement has yet been identified or no alignment has yet been identified, in terms of planning, from wherever it will come into the airport?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Mr Primrose, there have been some options identified. I believe that those options for potential pathways were shared with the Western Sydney airport, who, as I indicated in response to the Chair's question, we understand ran an expressions of interest process in April 2023. I'm not privy to the details or the outcomes of that investigation or the results of that EOI process.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Every time I've asked this, for years, I'm told, "Obviously you'll need a pipeline." I mean, you can't have trucks going up and down, along with other vehicles, forever. When I've asked it most recently, when we visited the airport, I was told all of that is commercial in confidence and yet concrete's being poured. Concrete's being poured not only around the aerotropolis; roads are being constructed. Presumably, this thing is not going to be a huge flyover across various residential areas, and those areas are being constructed. We have medium- and high-density et cetera locations. I'm trying to identify how it is rational, having known for well over a decade that we're going to need a pipeline, that there's no alignment identified which will allow planning to take place around that, rather than possibly the issue of demolition being required when this actually goes in.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think we're going to have to take—

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Am I missing something here?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think we're going to have to take that question on notice, Mr Primrose. My recollection is that the decision of the former Government was to partner with the airport and enable them to have access to the materials Transport had developed, with a view to this being a potentially commercial, standalone proposition.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** When you take it on notice, is someone with far greater intellect than I obviously have able to explain why, in terms of the planning for an airport, when it's been clearly identified now for over a decade that you're going to need to have a fuel pipeline, no-one yet can say where it's going to go? I'm not asking who's going to build it but where it is actually going to go. Which suburbs is going to go through? Who should be planning now around the aerotropolis and the airport generally, where construction is taking place and, as I said, roads are being constructed? How is the pipeline going to affect that?

I don't know, so I would like you to take that on notice because I've been asking this in budget estimates of sundry Ministers now for well over a decade, and the only answer I get is "Yes, it's required. It's commercial in confidence and we don't know." My second question is the other question I've asked in budget estimates for years. Given that we're talking probably about an airport that's largely going to be a freight airport for a long time, what are the options relating to freight rail and a link to this airport, rather than simply having more trucks on Western Sydney roads?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I've not been involved in any investigations of a rail link to the Western Sydney airport for freight. We will take that on notice. My understanding of the airfreight—

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** The last person who took that on notice from me was Minister Ayres when I asked him in budget estimates a number of years ago.

**SIMON HUNTER:** I believe he might be appearing this afternoon.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Yes, and I'm looking forward to asking him the same question.

**SIMON HUNTER:** My understanding, Mr Primrose, is that the aviation supply chains typically don't rely on rail as their primary mode of moving the aviation freight and that it is largely a road-based movement—and that's based on it being higher value, lighter weight freight than what is typically transported by rail. I'm not sure that there would be a demand case for a freight rail-specific link to an airport with the supply chains and logistics chains the way they work.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** It's not only the airport but the logistics developments around the airport. You're saying they probably won't need a freight rail system?

**SIMON HUNTER:** No, Mr Primrose, my answer was specific about the airport and aviation freight. With regard to serving the freight needs of Sydney and of Western Sydney, the New South Wales Government is investigating the development and delivery of an intermodal terminal and a Western Sydney freight line to connect to that Mamre Road precinct as part of the future planning for how we move goods around the city.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** When is it expected that a decision might be made on that?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Funding has been provided to develop a business case for that. A strategic business case has been developed and we're now in the process of developing a final business case. I don't have a timing of when the Government may consider that business case and make an investment decision.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** What would be your expectation about when that would actually be operational?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I think, in some public documentation—I think it might have been from one of the planning agencies—there was some discussion around 2036 or not before 2036, but that's very closely linked to the operations capacity and throughput at Port Botany. We can take any further detail of that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** While we are on rail, the Inland Rail project—where will the nearest station from that be, and are there proposed connections between Western Sydney airport and the Inland Rail?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I would have to take that on notice. I am not across the specifics of the Inland Rail project.

**The CHAIR:** My other question is in relation to the preservation corridor for the train line. Is there a possibility then that we will end up with a heavy rail line going past the airport as well so that we have that rail option, or was that never a factor—sorry, I don't have the map in front of me—of where the rail corridor is being preserved? Will it go through the airport?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Current investigations on the corridor has it going into the Bradfield City Centre, which would be a logical interchange point to Sydney Metro.

**The CHAIR:** So we are never going to have an airport that is serviced 24-hours by rail.

**SIMON HUNTER:** The current protected corridor, I believe, is an above-ground corridor that ends in Bradfield City Centre. Any detail around when that may be constructed or the operations of that, I don't believe, has been made yet.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Ms Kinch, regarding road infrastructure, has work begun on Fifteenth Avenue?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Yes, we have recently received funding, \$50 million, to progress the planning work for Fifteenth Avenue. This builds on the strategic business case work we've completed for the new section of Fifteenth Avenue at the very western end where that adjoins Bradfield, and it builds on the strategic business case that we're finalising now at the eastern end—the Hoxton Park Road end. This will allow us to look at the full corridor.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Have you broken ground and physically started the upgrade?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** No, we haven't done that. As part of the initial \$50 million for the planning work, we are working closely with Liverpool council to see what early benefits we can bring forward within that funding envelope.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** When do you plan to break ground?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** I don't have that information yet, unfortunately.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** You don't have a date, a month or a year that we could be made aware of?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Not yet, no.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Just to clarify, the funding commitment—it's still at the planning stage.

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Yes. The funding was for planning work but, through our feedback from community and our work with Liverpool council, we are looking to see if we can accelerate some early benefits for the community. There are safety and congestion issues in certain parts of the corridor, and we're going to look to see if we can address those.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Has your department considered Picton bypass as part of the planning of Western Sydney Aerotropolis and surrounds?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** I would have to take that on notice. It is actually not within the aerotropolis road network.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** My further question on that is in terms of funding allocated to the feasibility study of the Picton bypass concept. Is that another one that needs to be taken on notice?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Yes, unfortunately.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** My third one on that is, in terms of that project, is it divided between New South Wales and Federal contributions?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Picton bypass?

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Yes.

**JUSTINE KINCH:** I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Mr Hirsh, as head of strategy, planning and innovation for Infrastructure NSW, are you aware of the scheduled commencement for Oran Park station?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I'm sorry, I think that may be a question to one of the following witnesses, Said Hirsh.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Yes, okay. The rail line from the aerotropolis linking to the existing Leppington station—when are works scheduled to commence?

**SIMON HUNTER:** That's subject to a business case process that's currently underway, so we don't have information about when government may make an investment decision.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** A business case?

**SIMON HUNTER:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Would there be a time frame on when that might be and when we might learn more?

**SIMON HUNTER:** I don't have that information to hand.

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Government, both State and Federal, have allocated \$100 million to consider that extension, plus an extension to Campbelltown-Macarthur. That business case will consider a heavy rail option as well. It has started; it has commenced. As you can imagine, a business case of that scale will probably take about 18 to 24 months. We will be ready for a submission to government for consideration sometime in 2025-26.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Sorry, 2025-26?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** Yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** That that business case is expected to be presented to government?

**ANGELA JEFFERY:** In that time frame, yes.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** What consideration has been given to the Camden and Wollondilly local government areas in relation to arterial road improvements with the expected continued increase in congestion?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** With respect to the Macarthur council—Camden, Wollondilly and Campbelltown—Transport has, about four months ago, commenced a six-month program to look at that region holistically. What that is looking at is trying to put some really clear priorities in place around transport infrastructure and trying to look at the connections needed to connect the area to itself, but also through to the aerotropolis and also the Illawarra.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** To clarify, in four months we hope to have a six-month program to review this?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** No. We have a six-month piece of work which we commenced about four months ago. We are working with councils on that piece of work to try to bring together those priorities for the area.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** We've heard some evidence today already in terms of the challenges that Bradfield is going to face in being able to attract people. I think it was the community commissioner's evidence about Badgerys Creek Road in particular. You're going to have a metro, which is going to go between the airport itself and Bradfield. What are the plans in terms of Badgerys Creek Road upgrades as well?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** We have completed a strategic business case for seven of the key precinct roads in the aerotropolis. We've recently received funding from the State and Federal governments to progress the final business case for Badgerys Creek Road South and the Eastern Ring Road, which together form that north-south corridor east of the airport.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** In terms of when that will actually be delivered, though, rather than just the business case, is there any clarity on that?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** No, we don't have any clarity on when an investment for delivery will be made. In the interim, we will be doing some betterment works along Badgerys Creek Road South to support bus services that will be using that road.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** So it's safe to say at the moment that when the airport opens there won't be any significant upgrade to that road.

**JUSTINE KINCH:** That's right.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** With respect to Mamre Road as well, there is the widening to Kerrs Road at the moment, which is funded, underway and largely taking place. What's the trajectory in terms of further widening upgrades of Mamre Road down towards the aerotropolis and I think down to Luddenham Road?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Currently, Mamre Road is looked at in two stages. Stage one between the M4 and Erskine Park Road, early works have started on that now for delivery. The major works will start on that next year. The section from Erskine Park Road down to Kerrs Road is what we call Mamre Road stage two. Our intention is to exhibit the REF for that road in 2025. We did receive funding in the recent budget—joint funding from the Federal and State governments—to progress the delivery of Mamre Road stage two. We obviously haven't yet entered into procurement, so we don't yet know what the delivery strategy is.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** That stage two is to Kerrs Road, right?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** That's right.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** What about beyond Kerrs Road, down to Luddenham Road? Is there any plan in terms of extension there?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Down to Elizabeth Drive?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Is it Elizabeth Drive?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** Yes. There are no plans for the upgrade through there. The long-term plan from Kerrs Road south—Mamre Road would connect down into Devonshire Road to create a really strong north-south freight corridor. In the section between Kerrs Road and Elizabeth Drive we are looking at some early or interim works around safety and access, just to ensure that the road is functioning safely.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** In the terms of reference, we're looking at the impact of these developments on land. I've received reports about the impact on schools relating to Mamre Road and a situation where land has been rezoned. The congestion of the development on the school environment is leading them to have to relocate. What happens in a situation like this? Does the Government have a role here?

**JUSTINE KINCH:** I can probably comment on a bit of that. When we're planning new works that have impact to any property owner, we obviously engage with them. That Mamre Road precinct is going to have long-term intermodals, road upgrades and the like around it. In terms of facilitating relocation options, government does engage in those conversations with landowners to find suitable locations. We have had a number of safety issues raised in the precinct around the schools. Transport, Penrith council and the department of planning have been working together with the community commissioner to put some interventions in place, such as improved monitoring, compliance checking and some minor improvements around signage and line marking to ensure that road users understand speed limits and the like. We have had numerous issues in that corridor. We're trying to address them as much as we can.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for coming along and giving us your evidence today. To the extent that there were questions taken on notice or supplementary questions, the Committee secretariat will be in touch. That concludes this session.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**Mr KEN MORRISON**, Chief Executive Officer, Bradfield Development Authority, affirmed and examined

**Ms NATALIE CAMILLERI**, Executive Director, Strategy and Development, Bradfield Development Authority, sworn and examined

**Mr TOM GELLIBRAND**, Chief Executive, Infrastructure NSW, sworn and examined

**Mr SAID HIRSH**, Head of Strategy, Planning and Innovation, Infrastructure NSW, affirmed and examined

**Ms MONICA GIBSON**, Deputy Secretary, Planning, Land Use Strategy, Housing and Infrastructure, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Ms Camilleri, I can't help but ask: You're not any relation to John Camilleri, are you?

**NATALIE CAMILLERI:** No, not to my knowledge.

**The CHAIR:** I invite any of you to make a short opening statement, if you'd like.

**KEN MORRISON:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks for the opportunity to provide evidence. The Committee has had the benefit of our whole-of-government submission as well as an onsite briefing and site visit, so I'll keep my remarks fairly brief. Together, the Western Sydney international airport, the Western Sydney Aerotropolis and the Bradfield city centre market transformational opportunity for Sydney will reshape the region. Federal and State governments are investing more than \$20 billion in infrastructure to support this transformation, including the new 24/7 international airport, due to open in 2026. This government investment is now beginning to be matched by significant private investment. Private proponents have already lodged planning proposals worth some \$9.8 billion within the aerotropolis area, and this investment pipeline is expected to grow significantly.

The scale of the economic development opportunity represented by the aerotropolis is very significant indeed. The Western Sydney Aerotropolis spans 11,200 hectares. If you were to overlay that with where we're sitting here today, it would span from the harbour to Botany Bay and from Bondi Beach to the inner west. The Bradfield Development Authority, which I lead, was renamed and its role refocused by the Government in May. Our role is now threefold: firstly, to deliver the new Bradfield City Centre at Bradfield, Australia's first new city in 100 years; secondly, to lead investment attraction for Bradfield and the aerotropolis; and, thirdly, to support economic development in the region through our advanced manufacturing readiness facility and our industry skills accelerator micro-credential course program. In doing this, we work closely in conjunction with Infrastructure NSW, who has responsibility for infrastructure coordination; DPIE, who has responsibility for State-led planning; and the airport and the other various infrastructure providers in the region.

At the heart of the aerotropolis is a new Bradfield city centre, which my organisation has the responsibility for delivering. This is being created on 114 hectares of government-owned land, which is equivalent to five times the size of Barangaroo. The goal is to create a new city, leveraging advanced manufacturing technology and connectivity to the airport. We're creating an urban environment, not a suburb or a business park. The master plan, which was approved just two months ago, provides for 20,000 jobs and 10,000 dwellings; 36 hectares of open space, including the iconic Central Park; and four civic centres, including major events and dedicated cultural spaces.

At Bradfield we've moved very much from planning phase into delivery phase, and progress is well underway. Our first building is nearing completion and will be open early in the new year. This will house the first stage of our advanced manufacturing readiness facility. Our civil works across the core part of the site are also well underway. Construction of our second building will commence next year. We're well advanced on a market process to appoint a development partner for our first super lot—a 4.8-hectare parcel of land within Bradfield—and we expect to be making that decision on a partner there in quarter two next year. We have a tender for digital infrastructure now out with the market, and our iconic Central Park is in the final stages of obtaining planning approval. There's a lot more I could say, but I'll leave it to questions.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** In June 2024 the Premier announced that Infrastructure NSW would have an expanded role under the coordinator general function in our Act, the idea being to coordinate infrastructure to support freight logistics and employment-related development in the aerotropolis area and for Western Sydney. Since that time we've been developing a sector plan for the aerotropolis in collaboration with other key government agencies. The sector plan is going to build on the existing New South Wales Government strategies and plans to support orderly development in and around the airport and within the aerotropolis, the objectives being to provide certainty to industry, the community and other levels of government on the Government's investment pipeline and the infrastructure priorities to maximise job creation and economic growth. The sector plan will primarily focus on transport and water-based infrastructure, which is the enabling infrastructure for development to occur and also to attract private investment.

**MONICA GIBSON:** Chair, a statement from me—and to add to some of what Mr Morrison and Mr Gellibrand have said. I think the Committee's well aware the Western Sydney Aerotropolis is expected to become a thriving economic centre and a contemporary metropolitan city. That is a really long-term plan, though, and the full activation of the aerotropolis is expected to take more than 30 years. It's estimated that at that development over 30 years the initial six precincts could provide 120,000 jobs and 35,000 homes. The overarching planning framework for the aerotropolis has been implemented, with more detailed master planning and individual development applications and assessments underway. Since 2024, development applications in the aerotropolis have been approved, with a total investment value of about \$2.2 billion, and we currently have about \$1.59 billion worth of investment in the development applications under assessment today.

One of those planning decisions Mr Morrison mentioned was the Bradfield City Centre Master Plan, which was approved last month. Various iterations of the department of planning and its predecessors have undertaken extensive strategic land use planning over the past decade, and that included work with the Western Sydney City Deal and the Western Sydney Planning Partnership. The department, through that process, worked closely with councils, other State agencies, the Federal Government and local landowners and stakeholders. The current statutory planning framework is set out for the aerotropolis in the Western Sydney Aerotropolis State environmental planning policy that was released in September 2020 and the Western Sydney Aerotropolis Precinct Plan, which was released in March 2022. They're the two plans we look at for the statutory planning framework for the aerotropolis and see them giving effect to Sydney's regional plan and the district plan for the western city.

**The CHAIR:** I wanted to ask a couple of questions, maybe firstly to you, Mr Morrison, just in relation to the focus on so-called defence industries or weapons manufacture and technology industries as partners for the precinct around the AMRF and Bradfield City. I'm interested to know what is guiding that. Where is the decision made? Does it come from government? Who makes the decision that this is an industry that we want around Western Sydney?

**KEN MORRISON:** I guess when you look back at the foundational planning strategies, the city deal had a focus on advanced manufacturing and the type of opportunity to be created at Bradfield. The Bradfield Development Authority, and its predecessors, have been funded by the New South Wales Government through four business cases, which also set out the economic rationale and the focus of the organisation and what was to be created at Bradfield, and then, of course, we've had the development of the master plan now approved which also takes a planning perspective on that.

To go back to your question around the governance around that, the BDA has a governing board in place. The board is a seven-member board; three appointees of that board are made on the recommendation of the Commonwealth and the chair is essentially a jointly agreed role. The authority itself is a State government agency, but that Commonwealth involvement in the board represents the origins of the organisation as part of the Western Sydney City Deal. The governing board is the authority for our strategies to deliver on our business plan and the mandate provided to us within our charter from the Minister. That is a snapshot of the governance framework.

**The CHAIR:** That is really useful. I understand one member of your board, Mr Binskin, is a ministerial appointment. Is that a Commonwealth ministerial appointment?

**KEN MORRISON:** He is a Commonwealth appointment. That's correct, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Who would he have been appointed by most recently?

**KEN MORRISON:** I would have to take that on notice. His term expires in February next year, so it will be three years prior to that. I'm not sure if that's this current Federal Government or the previous Federal Government.

**The CHAIR:** This is his second term on the board.

**KEN MORRISON:** I can provide those details if you like.

**The CHAIR:** He is also a board member of BAE Systems, and I note that that was not disclosed in any of the annual reports. I think it is well known, but it was not disclosed in the annual reports of the previous western—sorry, I forget what you were called.

**KEN MORRISON:** Western Parkland City Authority.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, the WPCA. To what extent—from what you're saying then, with the board governance—does having somebody who is so involved in the defence industry as one of those board members have on the strategy of what kind of industry mix we are going to have in Western Sydney?

**KEN MORRISON:** The board makes collective decisions; it's not singular decisions. I think the board collectively would see an opportunity in defence as part of that advanced manufacturing investment focus for

Bradfield. Mr Binskin is also a former CDC of the Defence Force, so he brings enormous experience to his role within the authority, which is highly valued. I think he obviously brings that knowledge and gravitas to the board, as do our other board members, and, in relation to defence, he brings a particular background in defence which helps guide the authority as we're focusing on that sector.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I understand he was Chief of the Defence Force—

**KEN MORRISON:** That's correct, yes.

**The CHAIR:** —in June 2018 when BAE Systems Australia was awarded a \$35 billion future frigate contract, the largest surface warship program in Australia's history. The following month he retired and took a role with BAE Systems as a non-executive director, so he seems very involved with BAE Systems. Given the memorandum of understanding that has been entered into with BAE Systems in relation to the aerotropolis, with the Government, does Mr Binskin excuse himself from discussions to do with BAE Systems?

**KEN MORRISON:** I've just been at the authority for less than three months, so I haven't been present when we've had any board discussions around BAE Systems. If I can answer in the general, yes, the way we manage probity in the board is very important. Our directors have various other interests and, at times, those interests mean that we need to manage potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interest, so we take a lot of advice and we focus on making sure we manage those appropriately. We had a board meeting last week, for example, where some of those conflicts arose and those conflicted members—this is not in relation to defence issues but in relation to other issues. We sought probity advice. We had probity advisers on hand during the board meeting and, for the relevant discussion where the conflict arose, those board members with a conflict sat out for the duration of that discussion and did not play a role in the resolution on that item. I can only speak with authority on what I've observed in my time with the authority, but I know that that's been a focus for the organisation from its inception.

**The CHAIR:** The authority has had two industry round tables so far, I understand, as part of the industry round tables series. The first one was on freight, but the second one was in relation to aerospace and defence, and I believe it was hosted by Mr Binskin. Is that a role that you would expect a board member to be doing? Is he actively out there spruiking defence and trying to get people from the industry into Western Sydney airport?

**KEN MORRISON:** Again, that round table predated my time in the organisation, but what would have happened—and I'm happy to confirm this on notice—is that we would have invited Mr Binskin to be part of that. Obviously he brings significant expertise and stature to a conversation around that sector. He has an air force background. Aerospace is not just defence; it is also a key part of the expertise that he brings to the authority. So, yes, if you have a director with significant expertise in a sector where you're trying to do investment attraction, then it would be a normal practice to use that director and involve that director in a forum such as that.

**The CHAIR:** It is fair to say then that the authority has that as a focus of investment, having defence weapons manufacturing—

**KEN MORRISON:** Certainly it's one of the focuses. We have our overall advance manufacturing focus; defence and aerospace is one of those. So it's certainly a focus.

**The CHAIR:** Before I hand over to my colleagues, it would be useful—again I've forgotten the acronym. The western park—

**KEN MORRISON:** Western Parkland City Authority.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. It used to always publish minutes of board meetings. I haven't seen that recently, I don't think the authority has been publishing board minutes. Are you able to provide the Committee with board minutes and declarations of conflicts of interests, and also a list of who attended that round table with Mr Binskin?

**KEN MORRISON:** I'll take that on notice and come back to the Committee on that.

**The CHAIR:** I understand that in addition to the 2019 MOU that Gladys Berejiklian and Stuart Ayres signed with BAE, there's been some more recent ones that the authority itself has signed with BAE. It would be good to get some details around that.

**KEN MORRISON:** We'll come back to you with more detail around BAE and the authority forum.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Morrison, how many MOUs have been signed with corporations with an intention in the MOU that they might invest and locate themselves in the Bradfield City area?

**KEN MORRISON:** I understand it's 48.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Could you provide a list of those to the Committee?

**KEN MORRISON:** We can, yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How many involved defence companies?

**KEN MORRISON:** I couldn't tell you off the top of my head. It would be a fairly small proportion of those.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They're hard to secure, aren't they, because of the very long lead time in investment, procurement and funding?

**KEN MORRISON:** Yes, I think that's true. It's also true that the phasing of Bradfield has meant that at the time when those MOUs were signed, it was very early in the development of the concept which is now coming to fruition. At Bradfield, we are moving from a planning phase to a delivery phase. We are only now at the point where, for those companies or other companies or future perspective companies, that we can be taking that interest and providing the opportunity to locate in Bradfield. I think part of the timing issue you're referring to is also contingent on the phasing of where Bradfield has been to this point, which has very much been in a planning phase, now in a delivery phase.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In terms of delivering investment and location in Bradfield, how many of the 48 MOUs have achieved that in practice?

**KEN MORRISON:** At this stage, we're yet to open our first building. Our first building will open early in the new year. Then we'll have a second building under construction, also early in the new year.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What's the first building?

**KEN MORRISON:** The first building is a building which we've developed. The first building and the second building, their primary purpose is to house our advanced manufacturing readiness facility.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Built by government?

**KEN MORRISON:** Built by government, correct.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How many tenants have you got signed in so far?

**KEN MORRISON:** The first building, the major tenant is our AMRF, our Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility. We also have a—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is that a private company?

**KEN MORRISON:** No, the AMRF is a company wholly owned by the BDA, so it's a government-owned company. It is designed to be a shared services, industry and innovation accelerator for the region.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How many tenants have they got, then, from those MOUs?

**KEN MORRISON:** At this stage, we've got the AMRF being the primary occupant of the first building that opens. We've also got Western Sydney University and the CSIRO being in what we call the AMRF Connect, which is an augmentation strategy around AMRF. Hitachi is the third party for which we have agreement for lease of the first building.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Are they the only private company that's locating at Bradfield so far?

**KEN MORRISON:** In that first building—because the first building is, as it says on the tin, the first building and will only open early in the new year—that's correct. Our second building is a building which is significantly larger than our first building and we'll have multiple private tenants in that. The marketing campaign for that will commence next year. We're yet to stage when that will commence.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That's a government-funded building and no private sector tenants have signed up as yet?

**KEN MORRISON:** We haven't started constructing that building yet. That's right.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Of the 48 MOUs, did Hitachi have an MOU?

**KEN MORRISON:** They do. That's right.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** So you're one out of 48. What do you think went wrong with the other 47?

**KEN MORRISON:** We've been in a planning phase and we haven't been at a point where we are creating buildings or partnering with private sector developers to create buildings which those tenants can go into. We're now finishing that planning phase and moving into the delivery phase. Our job, in the next two years particularly, is to roll out those next components of Bradfield and attract that investment in. Of course, the parties that have

been with us since 2018 and exhibited that interest in being in Bradfield hopefully will be a core part of that, but we'll also be making that opportunity available through normal government procurement marketing processes for a broader set of companies to be there.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Morrison, call me old-fashioned, or maybe I have some weird attachment to the virtues of the market economy, but I would've expected that if you had 48 MOUs, they didn't have to come into some government-funded building—that a company keen to locate because of the exciting potential of the airport and so forth would buy some land, build their own facility and get cracking with their investment. Has any of that happened?

**KEN MORRISON:** We've been doing the enabling infrastructure for the core part of Bradfield. There's also been the development of the master plan, which has been approved in the last two months. That and then our sequencing of the site are the things that drive what opportunities have been available. The strategy has been, and I think it is a good strategy, to develop that AMRF precinct, developed by the Bradfield authority itself through building one and building two—that super lot—with a development partner. We're in the process of procuring that and then that partner will be out there in the marketplace bringing people into that site.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Good luck with building one and building two. It sounds like the old Soviet Union to me, I've got to say—that you're allocating a building. Not sure you'll get Elon Musk and others with that approach. Do you know how many of your 48 have defected and have gone down to the Federal Government business park adjoining the airport?

**KEN MORRISON:** I'm not aware of whether the airport has signed any tenants up into that space.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Gellibrand, I never really know what Infrastructure NSW does, other than that big hole in central Barangaroo that you created. I'm told now that you're doing USPs. What do you do at the aerotropolis that the Bradfield authority, Transport for NSW, the planning department and Sydney Water don't do?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Thanks for the opportunity to—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Justify your existence.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** —explain what we do.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Out at the aerotropolis we work really closely with key agencies—you've just mentioned a couple, Sydney Water and Transport in particular—to make sure that, as far as possible, their plans are correlating with the plans that Monica mentioned before.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You're the planner of the planners.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** No, I'm the coordinator. In fact, the role that I've been given by the Premier is the role of coordinator-general, as provided for in the Act, making sure that, as far as possible, Transport is bringing forward their investments as quickly as possible.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Why can't Transport do that themselves? Isn't that their job? That's why we pay a lot of people good money, to bring forward their investments. Why do they need you to tell them that?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** That might be a question better directed to the Premier.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** He doesn't answer questions, so I may have to ask you.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** I'll attempt to do so on his behalf. Transport definitely had plans to provide infrastructure to the aerotropolis. When we looked at them, they involved reasonably elaborate business cases that were going to go on for several years, and we didn't see actual works commencing until around the 2030 mark. So we sat down with Transport and said, "Surely there are other ways of advancing your infrastructure and you should be able to do it more quickly." The Government has agreed to make sure that some of the elaborate requirements around business cases can be revised. Transport needs to make sure they know what they're building, so they need a design, they need to check out the environmental requirements, heritage, geotech and get a design and go to the market. But the need for elaborate economic analysis for upgrading Badgerys Creek Road or Mamre Road are seriously questionable because the road exists, it needs to be upgraded and there's development demand there. It needs to get on and build it.

You need to know how much it's going to cost, but looking at elaborate alternatives for it, do-nothing option or different alignments, they're really not necessary, given that those roads are in place and need to be upgraded. We've helped Transport accelerate some of their plans. Sydney Water—we've worked really closely with them so that they understand the imperative of rolling out the water and wastewater infrastructure. Indeed, quite a few of their plans are well advanced in terms of water and wastewater. But in terms of stormwater, we've

worked closely with them, too, to basically persuade them to look at fast-tracking, look at alternatives, look at refinements to their designs to make sure that they can be deployed as quickly as possible.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is the precinct attracting a good number of unsolicited proposals?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Actually, I'm not aware of any unsolicited proposals in the aerotropolis. I'm aware of a significant number of development applications for development, especially around Badgerys Creek Road and Mamre Road precincts.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** On your website, it says you provide independent advice. What was your advice about the metro running from Badgerys Creek to St Marys, given that, in peak periods, it's going to be 89 per cent empty?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** We undertake assurance for pretty much all the capital projects that the State progresses. I think we've done 12 assurance reports on the airport and Sydney Metro. We also looked at the original business case and provided advice in the Government. That advice goes into Cabinet and it looks at progress against budget, against the original scope and, by virtue of going into those different Cabinet committees, the specifics of the advice is Cabinet in confidence, so I won't try to elaborate too much on that, other than that we go through regular assurance activities on that project and make sure that Cabinet is aware of the health of the project and how it's progressing.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Did you look at the possible extension of the Leppington line to Badgerys Creek and compare it to the metro running at 89 per cent emptiness, 11 per cent capacity?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** The assurance was on the project as defined, which is the St Marys through to the Bradfield alignment, with those six stations. There are options to extend public transport, be it metro or heavy rail from Bradfield through to Leppington as well as St Marys through to Tallawong. They're all subject to business cases which are currently on foot, so we haven't done formal assurance works on that activity.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Did you have an opinion about the metro from Badgerys Creek to St Marys and the paucity of people and suburbs in the vicinity that some of the stations will serve? For instance, wouldn't it have been better to have a metro station at the Luddenham town centre—we've heard that it's a planning black hole and there are plenty of complaints that they're going to be left behind—instead of at the Sydney Science Park, where there are horse and cow paddocks? There are actual people in the town centre that would use the metro as opposed to the progeny of Winx at the science park.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** The alignment of the airport metro line is largely a matter for Transport and Sydney Metro. They were involved in the design and planning for that. My view—you asked for an opinion. I don't like giving opinion so much; I would rather state facts.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That's good.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Assets like the Western Sydney airport, the M12, the M7 and the metro, they're city-building investments. To achieve the outcomes where you have an airport that operates effectively and provides services to industry as well as employment for people in Western Sydney, you have to invest in some serious infrastructure up-front. That's lumpy. It's expensive. Some roads can be built incrementally. It generally costs more over time, but railways are very difficult to build incrementally. I know that the metro, when it starts, will only have a short number of carriages with the option of expanding over time, but a lot of the key infrastructure, you can't stage it. It's a lumpy, expensive investment that will return benefits for 100 years and beyond.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In terms of city-building, we are building a residential city from Austral west through Bringelly, Kelvin Park and out to the so-called aerotropolis. Wouldn't it have been better to have a railway line that actually services those vast residential areas in planning plus those further south, like Oran Park, where people could drive to stations and actually catch a train that takes them to, say, where they might work in Liverpool, Campbelltown or even into the centre of Sydney, rather than this metro running to St Marys, which looks like a train to nowhere? Not that I'm against St Marys. I love St Marys, but I just don't think the data shows many people—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Well, there's the band club.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I love the band club. But not many people are going to use it compared to the alternative, which would have had a lot of use and met some urgent public transport needs in that growth corridor from Austral to Badgerys Creek and further south.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** If I may, I might rephrase your question and say that I agree 100 per cent that the provision of public transport and mass transit to residential areas is an absolute must over time. That's really what

brings prosperity and wellbeing to our communities: if they've got access to mass transit. Unfortunately, there is a limit on capital, and the ability to provide that mass transit in numerous locations at one time is restricted. Transport for NSW will be able to go into it in more detail, but connecting the airport metro line to the western line at St Marys does open up that mass transit to probably a much larger population than it would if it had extended to the south. They're emerging populations at Oran Park and Austral, the ones you mentioned before.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Have you been to Oran Park lately, to say it's emerging? It's probably the biggest residential suburb in Sydney.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** I am very familiar with Oran Park, both from when it was still a speedway to today. But it is still an emerging population relative to the established populations of, say, Penrith and Blacktown to the north. But there are plans to look at potential extensions to the north to Tallawong and to Leppington as well as further south through Oran Park. It's just a matter of getting those analyses done, determining how much things cost and if there is an order of future investments.

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask you about the fuel line? We were talking before with Transport for NSW about this strange situation where we're waiting for Western Sydney airport to work out if they're going to have a fuel pipeline or not but, in the meantime, it seems that we're continuing on with developing in areas that would otherwise have the pipeline provided for. From an overall planning perspective, how do you get comfortable that everything will be in place in terms of delivering fuel to the airport on the day it opens?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** My understanding is that when the airport opens on day one, yes, the fuel would be trucked in and then stored onsite.

**The CHAIR:** We were told, though, that we don't have the routes for that.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** My understanding is they're still being defined. We're not involved in that. I think the identification of which routes are appropriate go to the utilisation of those existing roads and ability to, in some cases, transport fuel in tunnels or not in tunnels and through certain areas. My understanding is Transport for NSW is looking at the particulars of the route. We're not involved. We're looking more at new infrastructure, especially to service areas like Mamre Road.

**The CHAIR:** But we've got two years until the airport is open for passengers. I'm not a planner, but I imagine that once they have worked out where the fuel is coming from there is then an audit done of the roads to make sure that they're appropriate for fuel to be carried on them. Then it gets worked out what sort of upgrades might be required et cetera, and then you have to do the upgrades. Do you think two years is long enough if we don't even know right now where the fuel is coming from?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** We know today that in two years—the Northern Road is already complete. That will be available. The M12, M7, Elizabeth Drive—those key roads, which are both going in east-west as well as north-south directions, would be available for consideration to transport fuel. The actual movement of that will still require Transport for NSW's review and support. There will be a number of roads that exist, but the decision as to which roads to use and how would be a matter for Transport for NSW, no doubt in consultation with the airport itself.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of all of the roads going from whatever likely fuel source to come straight into the airport, are you saying that every single one of those roads is already in place, that we have a clear route?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** No. The ones I mentioned are the ones that we're confident will be in place. Some exist already. Elizabeth Drive would become available. The M12 and the M7 will exist in an appropriate, upgraded format. If you look at a road like Badgerys Creek Road, whilst investment will be made to provide for safe access for buses, it's probably not a route that would be appropriate for fuel tankers because it will still have a relatively rural alignment, so I suspect that road wouldn't be available. Mamre Road stage one will be well and truly advanced in terms of construction, with stage two perhaps starting. Again, it's probably not practical to transport fuel on a road that's undergoing significant renewal. I wouldn't have thought that those roads would be available, but there are other roads—the ones I mentioned before—that would be available.

**SAID HIRSH:** In terms of your question, outside of the aerotropolis where trucks might be coming from another fuel source, that's a matter for Transport to work out. We're not involved outside of that boundary at the moment.

**The CHAIR:** I guess we'll have to wait and see what happens. In terms of the future planning for having a pipeline in place, are we working on the basis that that is going to happen and so we need to know what that pipeline route is, as Mr Primrose was asking the previous witnesses about?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** I think a permanent pipeline to an asset like the airport, which, arguably, will be there for 100-plus years—it's a little bit hard to look beyond that period—makes a lot of sense. As I understand it, the line will be identified through substantial analysis around safety, environment, land ownership and a whole range of other things. From a planning point of view, we're not involved with the establishment of that route.

**The CHAIR:** Is that a concern, though? It seems like there's a chunk of the project that is out of view. If you don't know where that pipeline is going to be, how can you possibly be preparing to make sure that you're not putting new assets over the top of something that will then need to be dug up?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** In the absence of a route, your observation is correct. We will be advancing infrastructure not knowing exactly where it is, so there may need to be an adjustment in the future if a pipeline was to cross a road. There are plenty of techniques to enable that to happen through underboring of roads. Depending on its elevation, in some cases that pipeline might be in the air—as in elevated. You can build bridging structures over roads to accommodate that. In other cases, if it's already in the ground, you can actually underbore through drilling under roads.

**The CHAIR:** What levers are in place, then, to require the airport to at least tell you where it may have a pipeline? Or is that not something that we have any visibility over?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** That's actually a really good question. It's probably one I'd prefer not to take on notice, because I think it would relate to operations of the airport and planning around the airport. I also suspect that, from a planning point of view, it might involve Commonwealth legislation and State legislation. I'm not in a position to answer it, but it's also probably best not to take it on notice because I'd probably have to undertake original research.

**The CHAIR:** When I asked the airport corporation about this, the answer was that we'll have to wait and see until it's commercially viable et cetera. Is it the case that we have this decision sitting with the airport corporation, which does not actually stand to gain particularly when it comes to having a dedicated pipeline as opposed to allowing fuel to continue to be trucked on our roads for decades to come?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** It's probably a difficult question for me to answer because I'm not privy to the commercial drivers of the airport in terms of decision-making around the pipeline.

**The CHAIR:** With the complicated overlay of the Federal and State responsibility for this aspect of the project, who has the power to actually say, "There has to be a pipeline here and you need to decide where it's going to go by X date"?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Those sorts of requirements are often part of the conditions of approval of proposals. If there was a proposal to build an airport and you condition it in terms of hours of operations and a range of different things, drainage—and I'm not aware if there was such a condition imposed on the airport's approval. There may be a condition there which either says they have to do something or at least do a study on it. I genuinely don't know, but there may be something in there.

**SAID HIRSH:** Perhaps as well, with the airport's growth over time, what would the demand be from, obviously, the users and how they will impact on the broader area beyond the airport boundary. This is what these conditions might come to force, if they exist, rather than what happens on day one of opening or even the first 10 years when the expectations around the demand on the airport are pretty modest by their standards over time.

**The CHAIR:** It sounds to me, then, like we're too late because, from my understanding, it has not been put as a condition in the airport approval.

**SAID HIRSH:** We don't know, I think, because we haven't—well, I haven't seen the conditions of the airport. The other thing, I think, in relation to the roads is that the majority of the roads we're talking about here are actually already in existence. They are roads that need to be—whether they are Elizabeth Drive or others—upgraded rather than roads to be built from scratch. Again, we're not across the deal of planning for the pipeline. The planners of the pipeline are not probably planning with expectations of significant roads, and most of the corridors that have been considered for new roads are already known as well because quite extensive studies have happened around that area. It won't be a case of building a whole lot of roads and suddenly having to dig them all up again for a pipeline. I think they would have planned with that in mind, already.

**The CHAIR:** Those roads are all toll roads, aren't they, the M7 and the M12? Are they all tolled?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** M7 is. I don't believe M12 is or will be. Certainly Elizabeth Drive and Badgerys Creek Road, they're lower order roads, and, as far as we know, they won't be tolled.

**The CHAIR:** Can you give us any idea as to how many additional truck movements there will be, then, transporting fuel to the airport?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** That would be a function of the number of plane movements. I don't know the number, but I assume it's in the EIS—that would have a ramp-up of flight movements.

**The CHAIR:** If the M12 is coming into the M7, it sounds like—it's going to be constantly on a toll road, and there are going to be a number of these trucks. By the sounds of it, there's nothing in the future, by any means, that looks at all certain that we're going to end up with a dedicated pipeline. We're basically saying that this is going to be the only major airport in the world without a dedicated pipeline, where we have all of this dangerous fuel being trucked through major roads and through suburbs. Is that an unfair characterisation?

**SAID HIRSH:** I think we just simply haven't seen or don't know, to be saying that there are no plans to provide for the pipeline. We know that there was a lot of work happening to find options for where the pipeline was potentially going through. At the personal level, I haven't seen it for a couple of years, but we don't know.

**The CHAIR:** But how does no-one know? If you don't know—and Transport said before that it wasn't a condition. It was a condition to investigate but not to actually provide a pipeline. I think, from a realistic perspective, we should just be abandoning the idea that we're ever going to get a pipeline.

**SAID HIRSH:** Given Transport was the one working on the pipeline, if that's what they said, that there's no condition for it, then I think that's your answer, really.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** You did say that—I'll paraphrase; I can't remember, so correct me if I'm wrong. You were saying that therefore we could expect this just to go on forever.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** I think it's important to note that the use of roads is governed by regulation. You need to have registered vehicles. There are speed limits, and there are requirements for driving vehicles. What you actually transport is also regulated, so there are controls—interstate controls, State controls—and the transport of nuclear fuels and nuclear waste is regulated and controlled. It's prohibited pretty much everywhere. I think that's the same with the use—the movement of flammable material is also controlled. Transport for NSW could give you more information on the regulation of the movement of goods because there may be a regulation that says there's a tipping point, that there's only so much of a good you can move. There's also weights of axles and things like that. There are certain controls over what you can move on roads, for good reason, because it can damage the wearing surface and it can be dangerous.

**The CHAIR:** Let's look at the commercial reality here. If we have an airport of which the operator has no incentive to put in place a pipeline because it's getting all of its fuel by truck, and that's not its problem, and then there comes a point when Transport says, "Actually, there's too many. You're too successful. There is too much of this stuff coming," are we going to close down the airport while we then dig up a bunch of land to put in a pipeline? I don't see that as being particularly likely. Is the assumption that we're not going to end up with a pipeline ever for this airport?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** I certainly wouldn't want to speculate on that. I think it would be a matter for the regulators to talk to the operator of the airport and manage the issues as they arise.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Mr Morrison, we heard evidence before that, in terms of Transport for NSW, there's the view of still preserving corridors. With respect to Bradfield and any future extensions, it was a requirement before that that corridor would go underground. Is that still the case in terms of a metro corridor leading out of Bradfield, potentially to Leppington or the like? Is that still your understanding?

**KEN MORRISON:** The Bradfield station box is well advanced in construction. The boring is now complete. That is underground at Bradfield. I'm not aware whether there's a stub in place to the south of that station box.

**NATALIE CAMILLERI:** I can speak to that. The simple answer is that the decision has not yet been made as to whether the extension to Leppington will be above ground or below ground or, in fact, even the mode—whether it will be metro or heavy rail—because we have obviously two rail systems in Sydney. Through the approved master plan and that process, a 60-metre wide corridor through our site and beyond has been retained to enable—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** That's an above-ground corridor, is it?

**NATALIE CAMILLERI:** Correct. It is a corridor at surface to enable the optionality.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** What's the reduction in gross floor area that's available there, through that 60-metre corridor?

**NATALIE CAMILLERI:** I couldn't give you the number now but that's something that we could come back to you on.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If you could take it on notice, that would be appreciated. Ms Gibson, funnily enough, I noted that Orchard Hills was put on exhibition today in terms of that master plan, which will be welcome news for the residents there. I believe, casting my mind back to budget estimates, we had some discussions about some of the noise contour issues that were impeding that progression. Are all of the noise contour issues resolved now?

**MONICA GIBSON:** In relation to Orchard Hills?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** In relation to Orchard Hills but also across the aerotropolis area, so to speak.

**MONICA GIBSON:** Not across all of the aerotropolis. The planning controls that we have in place are taking into account what we currently understand from the Commonwealth about the noise contours. At this point in time it's about the noise contours associated with the first runway, and that's been exhibited in an EIS. We've been commenting on that and talking with the Commonwealth about our comments in relation to that. We understand from that conversation that they might be finalising those contours in 2025. When there is some more certainty about those contours, it will allow us to take some further land-use planning decisions. We're very interested in impact on existing residents and not creating impacts on new residents as a result of noise from a 24-hour operating airport.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Further to that, with respect to Luddenham and the Luddenham village centre, what is the status of any proposals in that area?

**MONICA GIBSON:** You'd be really familiar that there was an interim strategy released for the Luddenham village in 2022, and that interim strategy outlined that, when there was greater certainty about the noise impacts as well as some sewer servicing certainty, we would be able to take the next steps for more planning around Luddenham village. It is very close to the airport. It's impacted by a noise contour, and we talk about this noise contour in the current planning framework. That noise contour means that sensitive uses are not appropriate, not encouraged or not permitted to be intensified inside that contour. As I said before, when the EIS is settled from the Commonwealth and they do come out with the final noise contours, we'll be able to progress with some more planning for Luddenham village. I appreciate that that is a very difficult situation for the current residents and landowners there, with this uncertainty, and we've had some discussions with the Commonwealth to accelerate their time frame and accelerate their consideration on behalf of the community that's there.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Does that noise contour impact the Sydney Science Park site as well?

**MONICA GIBSON:** I don't have a map of where the noise contour goes to, but I could come back to you if you'd like to see a map of where that is.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** With respect to the Luddenham village, there have been some calls that we've received through the inquiry from landowners there about the north of that Luddenham village area, which they say is not subject to noise contours at this stage. I'm just interested in your perspective on that and any progression to the north of the Luddenham village precinct.

**MONICA GIBSON:** There are a couple of issues. I mentioned noise, but I also mentioned the sewer servicing matters relating to the village, and we need to understand the sewer servicing matters. That means we need to look at what the potential is for that area, including land that might sit outside of that noise contour. If there are particular sites or particular proposals, we're always happy to talk to a landowner about what the options might be within the current planning controls.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Mr Gellibrand—just slightly different to Mr Latham's assessment before—we heard from Professor Ryan earlier today, who was asked about what has improved. She outlined that Infrastructure NSW was the key improvement that she saw, in terms of activity in the aerotropolis, so well done on that front. Since Infrastructure NSW has come to have that coordinator-general role inside the aerotropolis and the Bradfield precinct, you outlined one particular example, which was in terms of Badgerys Creek Road and the role that you played with Transport for NSW, but I am interested in other changes that Infrastructure NSW has seen or made since you have taken on that coordinator-general role.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Badgerys Creek Road is a good example because it does need to be upgraded; everyone knows that. It's rural and not appropriate for running buses to the airport in 2026. Transport for NSW had a plan to upgrade it, which had a business case at the front end and a very rational sort of process which saw a lot of work happening in several years time, but it needs to be safe and accessible because buses need to use it to get to the airport when it opens in 2026. We spoke to them about what the options were, and we quickly got to

the point that it needs to be well maintained and it needs some refurbishment. We reimagined it just as maintenance. On the basis of maintenance, can't you re-sheet it? Can't you re-sign it? Can't you put line marking in and make it safe and accessible?

They have a program for making routes safe and accessible, so we said, "Why don't we put it in that bucket?" And they were going to do that, so that road will have some substantial improvements made to it in time for the airport opening, which is terrific. Then the procurement of Mamre Road was going to be front-ended with business cases that really wouldn't have been finished or enable government to be in a final decision for an investment until 2030. That's now come forward by at least three years, I think. Construction on the second stage is 2027; the first stage is around 2026.

Those plans are being brought forward. There has been a review in some of the front-end requirements for business cases on those existing roads. There have also been substantial investments made by the Commonwealth Government, which have also helped, and which we don't take credit for at all. But that funding, matched with the State funding, has meant that procurement can be advanced. We have worked pretty closely with the delivery part of Transport for NSW, just making them absolutely crystal clear that: This is a real focus for government. It's a priority. You need to advance the delivery as fast as practical—without breaking any rules, but just do it as quickly as possible. It's a priority.

Those key improvements to Mamre Road and Elizabeth Drive, and even investments in Fifteenth Avenue, are also really important to start improving the access that Mr Latham was referring to, for people in south-western Sydney, to look to improve the opportunities to access the airport. With Sydney Water, we have spent a lot of time talking to landowners, different associations and developers about the issues as they see it, in terms of developing in this area. Sydney Water is aware of that, but we have also sat down with Sydney Water and said, "We really need to hasten the delivery of key enabling infrastructure." So they've got the advanced water treatment plant, which is terrific. That's going to manage the wastewater. That's going well. That will be ready to support the airport and initial precincts.

Stormwater is the one that stood out. There was a chorus of people saying, "It's running too late", "It's too expensive", "It's taking up too much land", and, "It impacts the feasibility of development." The stormwater strategy is going through an IPART process of review, and there is an interim report out. We've spent a lot of time with Sydney Water, and they have been quite responsive. They're looking at reducing the amount of land they need to capture and hold the water in and around the aerotropolis precincts. That will reduce their property acquisition and some of their costs. I think the developer charges that were originally foreshadowed are likely to be reduced as well, which is great. That will support development out there.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** On that, though, I imagine that Sydney Water did identify that stormwater corridor on the basis of need. How were they then able to change that need equation, so to speak, to have a smaller corridor and less impact? Is it a new technology that's being used, or the like?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Yes, your observation is 100 per cent correct. The actual demand hasn't changed a lot, because we are still going to have the same factories with hardstand areas, not impervious areas. It might sound a little bit simplistic, but they are looking at making the basins that they operate to collect and store the water a lot deeper. So they're just increasing the volume of those; therefore, that limits the spatial area and, in some cases, it might actually reduce the number as well.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** If I could pick up your reference to Fifteenth Avenue, I wonder whether there may be anything further you might be able to elaborate there in terms of timing? What was established in the earlier session was the commitment of money and the planning work currently underway. I wonder whether there might be anything else that you might be able to elaborate on?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Fifteenth Avenue—again, another rural road. In some cases, it's got some kerb and guttering, but it's pretty ordinary.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** In many cases, there's none.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Yes, largely none, and it ends up just petering into a paddock as well. There was a commitment to provide I think \$50 million—

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Correct. That was established, yes.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** —which was to undertake more analysis, business cases and designs. Transport is still undertaking more work to come up with a final configuration and advancing business case work, but they're using that \$50 million to actually undertake work—so to deliver improvements to, I think, intersections and some of the road itself. To fix up Fifteenth Avenue properly is quite a substantial task and does require a lot of analysis because there are powerlines that go alongside it that would need to be relocated. There's a lot of assessment that

needs to go into how and where you would do that, and how much it would cost. It will be progressively updated. But, again, the Government priority was to at least do some work and start to improve that road for people in that part of Sydney so that it improves the opportunities for them to get to the airport. They're not going to get a final solution at the day of opening, but the objective is to try to improve their access to the airport.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** Further to that, has the ground been broken and has any upgrade commenced on Fifteenth Avenue? We've established the funding commitment and the planning, but have there been any works?

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** I'd have to take that on notice. I was out there not so long ago and I'd describe it as the work hadn't commenced, but there might be some sort of adjustment work or utility work that might be underway. But I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON:** And maybe, further to that, whether we might be able to get some timing in terms of the date or the month or when we can actually see some activity on that road.

**TOM GELLIBRAND:** Okay. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** That is all we have time for. Thank you very much for making yourselves available. Thank you again for the onsite briefing that we had as well. It was incredibly useful and informative for us. To the extent there are questions taken on notice or supplementary questions, the Committee secretariat will be in touch. That concludes this session.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**The Hon. ROB STOKES**, Professor, Macquarie Law School, Macquarie University, and Former Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, New South Wales Government, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** We now welcome our next witness. No doubt you've read the terms of reference. Is there anything that you wanted to open with, or should we just get into questions?

**ROB STOKES:** No, give me the questions. I've been summoned back from the great big Parliament in the sky. I'm happy to be here.

**The CHAIR:** Now that you're looking from the outside in, you were heavily involved in the aerotropolis planning and everything that happened when you were the former Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Have things gone how you expected them to? Are there any surprises that you've seen from your perspective?

**ROB STOKES:** One thing in planning processes is nothing goes to plan. That's the first thing. Dwight Eisenhower said, "Plans are nothing; planning is everything." You do the process well, recognising that things are going to change along the route—a change of personnel. Obviously I didn't expect the Greater Cities Commission to be abolished, I didn't expect the authority to be—but these are things that new governments can do. But other than that, I always thought that this was very much a long-term play. I think there might have been perhaps a little overexcitement that things would happen more quickly than they will.

Remembering the scale of what's proposed here is vast, it will take 20 years and more to start to see some of the land use outcomes envisaged today come to reality. It's still a long way away, but progress toward it, I think, has been as anticipated. I think the timelines have been kept in relation to the main infrastructure commitments. In terms of what the private sector does, that will depend on what land values do, that depends on the market—that depends on a whole lot of things which are outside of government's control.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to shed any light on the lack of a dedicated fuel line?

**ROB STOKES:** Yes. Again, the challenge at a State level is that the airport and the airport land is a matter for the Commonwealth, and we're responding to what they ask for in terms of infrastructure, in terms of utilities and in terms of transport connections. It's a matter of what the Commonwealth seeks from the State in terms of corridor planning. There was corridor planning done in relation to it. I certainly don't have any recollection—and I didn't have any direct conversations with Commonwealth officials—about what sorts of utilities they wanted for their airport.

**The CHAIR:** There has been some disappointment around the lack of a 24-hour metro connection, and we had a great chat with Transport just now about the difference with other airports that also had heavy rail or had other options other than buses. Was that a consideration, do you remember, sort of during the planning process as to whether it was always going to be not quite 24-hour in terms of connection?

**ROB STOKES:** There was a big gap in terms of my involvement between when I was planning Minister up until the beginning of 2017 and then I became planning Minister again sort of April 2019. A lot of those big decisions were made in that gap. I can't really speak to that other than as a member of Cabinet during that time in relation to the operation, and also I wasn't the transport Minister. It was a frustration actually that sometimes I felt Transport was leading land use planning when I was always seeking to try and assert the planning role over Transport. But often it was the case—and this might be one of the learnings out of this process—that Planning needs to get in ahead of these processes and not follow in afterward once Transport has already made decisions. Because, ultimately, we know that planning and land use and land values follow transport decisions, and so a lot of those decisions were made before Planning even really got involved, which was a frustration to me.

I remember the work that was done, and I haven't read up on this so my memory is a bit frail on these things because it was a while ago, but there was an options analysis done about different rail routes. I remember having a conversation with Mr Latham about this, and I know that he was very keen on that link from Leppington into the city by that way. I actually agree. I think that was a preferable route, and I think the cost-benefit analysis will demonstrate that the route was chosen for its utility in 20 years time and not its utility today because not very many people are going to use the train. Nevertheless, a decision had to be made. I was a bit surprised when the particular route that was chosen was chosen. But, nevertheless, there were only two options. You could connect from the south-west or you could connect from the north. They were the two places you could come from.

**The CHAIR:** The Sydney Science Park, when you look at what was originally proposed versus what we have now and what the prospects look like for that where we have a metro station now in the middle of, as Mr Latham keeps saying, cows and paddocks and things—does that surprise you that that hasn't come to fruition? Did you have much to do with that?

**ROB STOKES:** I think the big learning I got out of that was there was one big thing that changed, which was the creation, which I didn't anticipate—and this was when I was education Minister, so I came back and this occurred—of the Western Sydney Aerotropolis authority, I think it was called at the time, and then it became the Western Sydney parkland authority, which sort of carved out a role for the planning of the Western Parkland City. When I'd been planning Minister, we did the Greater Sydney Commission. We sort of set up the context to plan for the Metropolis of Three Cities. Then I went and had some great fun in Education and Robbo came into the portfolio and, at that time, part of the portfolio was taken into this new authority.

From what I could observe, I think that the authority—flattery is the best compliment—saw what had been done at Sydney Science Park and said, "Let's do that at Bradfield." I think in many ways a lot of what was planned at Sydney Science Park is ending up being delivered at Bradfield. Is there enough potential over time for those uses to emerge in both those spots? Absolutely, but you can't do it all at once because, again, there is only limited population and only limited investment. It will take time. I would imagine that the Sydney Science Park people would have been frustrated, in one sense, that a lot of the planning they had done was being replicated by the authority down at Bradfield. Is that a good or a bad thing? Well, it's a thing. Those uses—it was inevitable that someone was going to come up with the idea of a great mixed-use development with education, science, resi and commercial all in the one spot. It's sort of, in many ways, a harbinger of what's now being delivered in terms of the TOD precincts. It's that sort of thinking.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I have two questions. Obviously, you've worn your T-shirt for a reason. I'm wondering if you've left out the word "consequences" at the beginning, before "not my problem"? As a former Minister, do you believe you bear any responsibility for the consequences of your decisions during your time as a Minister?

**ROB STOKES:** Of course I do, Peter.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** So what's the point of the T-shirt?

**ROB STOKES:** Well, why are you wearing a checked shirt that's strobing and causing me a headache? Honestly—I think we live in an age where you shouldn't attack people on the basis of their clothing or their appearance. Frankly, I'm a little bit insulted.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I'll leave it at that. You chose to wear that. I give you more intelligence to understand exactly what message it's giving out to people who are watching this. In relation to the pipeline, is it your evidence that the reason for there being no designated alternative locations for the proposed pipeline is that the Morrison Government didn't request a pipeline?

**ROB STOKES:** No.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** You mentioned the Federal Government had that responsibility and they didn't ask for it. Can you please elaborate on your evidence then?

**ROB STOKES:** I think you're verballing me a little bit, Peter.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** No, I'm asking you for your—

**ROB STOKES:** My evidence is what it is. My evidence is that obviously we would listen to what the Federal Government wanted in terms of land-use corridors for the infrastructure that they were delivering. Remember, as a planning Minister, I wasn't building an airport. We were leading the land-use planning of the areas surrounding the Commonwealth land which was being developed under Commonwealth legislation.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** When you were asked a question by the Chair in relation to who made the decisions and what was the reason that Planning did not look at possible sites for a pipeline, you indicated that decisions about the airport itself were being made by the Federal Government and they hadn't requested that. I don't wish to verbal you. I'm just trying to understand why that planning didn't take place.

**ROB STOKES:** I understand. Sorry, if I said that they didn't request it; I have no idea whether they did or they didn't. I certainly didn't have any conversations with Commonwealth officials where they asked for it. But then again, it would be unusual if they'd approached me directly. In relation to planning officials, the discussions that were made at that level, I'm not aware of those discussions. My suggestion would be to ask the relevant officials on the ground. To my memory, in terms of the briefings I received, it didn't go into fuel line planning or the fuel requirements of the new airport, no.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Not your problem. I'll hand back to the Chair, thank you.

**ROB STOKES:** Actually, if I can just provide further on that. Again, Peter, I'm not casting any aspersions on what you're wearing or on your appearance. Frankly, if you're trying to draw some sort of suggestion that I'm

suggesting I'm not responsible—if I wasn't responsible, I wouldn't turn up. I take my responsibilities quite seriously, which is why I'm here.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** Again, I'll hand back to the Chair. I'll leave it to those watching this to make their own decisions about what you're implying.

**ROB STOKES:** I'm not implying anything, Peter. I'm telling you.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Thank you, Professor Stokes, for being here today. With respect to that question, in terms of the airport itself, what was the role of the State Government at the time or the department of planning at the time in terms of any assessment of that airport?

**ROB STOKES:** Again, this is from memory, but the Commonwealth Government made a decision—I think it was in 2013 or 2014—about the site of the new airport. They then prepared legislation to guide how they would make those decisions. From memory, there was an airport Act a year or so after that. Then the State responded in terms of the metropolitan plan, which was being written at that time, to recognise the transformative opportunities that a new airport would provide to get jobs and investment and more opportunities for the people of Western Sydney. We were particularly excited about pivoting opportunity for jobs in Western Sydney. For too long it was our belief that Western Sydney was just seen as dormitory suburbs for the jobs that were in the east. We saw this as a really exciting opportunity to develop and to incubate more jobs in the west, closer to where people lived. So that was the macro picture.

The Metropolis of Three Cities was the idea of a polycentric city of three big cities that just happened to have the advantage of being next to one another in the existing harbour city, the river city around a centre at Parramatta and in the Western Parkland City, which, by the nature of it, was more diffuse. It had more centres. It was obviously Penrith and Liverpool and Campbelltown, with Bradfield in the middle, with some other significant areas like Blacktown and others. It was a polycentric network of cities. Chief Commissioner Geoff Roberts of the Greater Sydney Commission called it the "string of pearls"—these significant centres all with quite different culture and identity and opportunities and histories. We saw the opportunity of the new airport to attract more economic activity and more jobs in Western Sydney. A lot of the grand plan of government was to do what we could to build the infrastructure to unlock those employment opportunities.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** To that point, the New South Wales Government didn't make the decision about the airport; it was a Federal Government determination. I take it that in terms of any pipeline, that would be in response to an application that was made from the Federal Government over land that was outside of their control. Is that correct, if you were to receive any proposal?

**ROB STOKES:** Yes. Again—as I hopefully got across to Peter—it wasn't, as I was saying, that they didn't ask. I just don't know; they didn't ask me. There could well have been those discussions about the infrastructure needs of the airport. But, in one sense, they are the developer of the airport, so the assessments about what the infrastructure needs are would be done in reference to talking to the Commonwealth about what they required. Certainly, a lot of the planning had to be done in calibration, waiting in some cases for what the Federal authorities told us.

A big part of that was the noise contours. Planning obviously had to respond to what the noise contours were. Until that work was finished, it was very difficult to do some of the more granular identification of where the residential areas could go. You could figure out broad scope—north-south runway. You could figure out more or less where the noise was going, but one of the conflicts along the way were some of the consequences of those contours when they were released. But that's just one example of how, in most circumstances, the State will lead planning in a hierarchy, nesting down to local councils. This one was a bit different because the Federal Government had a particular role that they obviously had a responsibility in relation to and we had to service their needs as well.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** As you indicated, you had two stints as planning Minister, of course: 2015 to 2017 and then from 2019 onwards until Premier Perrottet swore in his new Cabinet. During that period as well there was a global pandemic. I am interested in your observations in the portfolio on two occasions: prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic. What were some of the impacts of the pandemic in terms of planning for Western Sydney airport or even looking at some of the international opportunities that were potentially coming to New South Wales?

**ROB STOKES:** Well, it changed everything, and I think many people in the community are still dealing with the consequences. In fact, sometimes I look at the housing crisis we find ourselves in now and we seem to have forgotten the impact of closing the borders, and then the impact on immigration rates and on interest rates—and on everything else—and supply chains. It was a massive shock to the system, and it's going to take some time

for that shock to abate. But, certainly, in terms of planning for an airport, yes, it struck me as deeply ironic that we were planning for an airport at a time when the country was locked down and there were no planes.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** No planes were coming in.

**ROB STOKES:** It does say something interesting about the future of airports. I wonder whether, in 50 years' time, they're going to have such a dominant role. John Kasarda, in his work about the "aeropolis", as he called them—by the way, there's no such word as aerotropolis, it's aeropolis. But, anyway, I lost that debate.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I've that conversation with Gladys, actually.

**ROB STOKES:** The idea he had was that the nineteenth century was the century of ports; twentieth century is the century of railway hubs, twenty-first century is the century of airports. I wonder if the ways in which we're going to get around in the future will change again just because already we are seeing—the Qantas Club arrangements are very topical at the moment. But I do think increasingly in the world I now inhabit, in the commercial world and academia, there's a lot of questioning about unnecessary plane travel and the impacts of that. For an exporting nation like ours there are big implications there.

Nevertheless, we have to plan for what's in front of us. At the time, I guess the one bright side of the pandemic for a planning system was it did allow us to do a catch-up on infrastructure failures of the past because the population was stable, because there was no-one coming into the country. There was a bit of a chance to take a collective breath and keep building things to keep people in jobs during that period of time for the infrastructure that we knew we'd need when population increases resumed. But they were two very different times.

Also, community attitudes toward climate change changed dramatically during that time—the impact of the bushfires. If I look at my first stint in planning, people thought that economic growth was inevitable and climate change was a distant possibility. I think when I came back during the pandemic, economic growth seemed like a distant possibility and climate change seemed like a present reality, so it was quite different. I remember the first time the big fights were on coalmines and those sorts of things. When I came back, they weren't the fights that we were having because public sentiment had changed.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Just one last question from me with respect to the Sydney Science Park. You've outlined some of the history that this was—and it accords with what Celestino said today as well—an idea that was effectively lifted by the Bradfield authority, in a sense, and said, "That's a good idea. We'll move it over here." Do you remember much of that proposal prior to the announcement of the Bradfield town centre? That would have been circa 2018 in terms of the announcement of Bradfield town centre. Was there any work in planning being done to support or realise the Sydney Science Park and its development?

**ROB STOKES:** Again, I don't have a strong memory, but I did meet with the Celestino people on a couple of occasions. I went out there on a couple of occasions to see what they were proposing. I thought they were doing an incredible planning exercise. I thought it was exciting in that one of the challenges, particularly further down around Rossmore and those areas, or Leppington, was lots of small blocks. Fragmentation meant it was very hard to aggregate the sites to master plan, whereas with Sydney Science Park they had a big block so they could master plan it. The nature of development is there's a lot of risk and they took on a lot of risk because they were counting on a lot of things going their way. I'm assuming they were, but I could see it. From memory, the route of the railway hadn't been determined yet, so they figured out that it had to go somewhere through their land if it was going north-south. My own view was I thought it made more sense for it to link in from the south-west rather than from St Marys. I thought that was a big risk.

The other risk, of course, was, yes, it was a really good idea so it could have been done anywhere along that route. I assume they must have thought, "Oh, gosh, what if government decides to do this in the city centre?" Maybe that didn't occur to them, and it didn't occur to me at the time, but it was a pretty logical thing to have happened. Nonetheless, I still think theirs is a good idea whose time will come, but because the development of Bradfield's just got in in front of it, I think it'll take a lot more time.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Thanks, Professor, for coming in. On "T-shirt-gate"—

**ROB STOKES:** I'm not a real professor, by the way. I'm happy to be called it, but just "Rob" is fine.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Righto, but that's how you introduced yourself. Not many people leave Parliament fitter than when they got in, so not many Ministers can actually wear a T-shirt. Regardless of the slogan on it, well done.

**ROB STOKES:** My secretary was Jim Betts, and he always wore T-shirts.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I'm sure he did. Let's move on. Earlier on, did you hear the evidence of the Celestino representatives about the frustrations they had with progressing their development?

**ROB STOKES:** No.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They kind of blamed you and the department of planning—

**ROB STOKES:** I'm used to that.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** —over a four-year period in changing the development controls and reviewing the arrangements for the aerotropolis land use. They said that's the reason why they haven't delivered any of the 12,000 promised knowledge-based jobs, or even the national headquarters of their organisation and the chicken research laboratory that they promised in the first instance. That wouldn't be right, would it, given that they got their zoning through in 2016 and they've had ample opportunities to lodge applications and have them approved for the developments that they promised?

**ROB STOKES:** Just as an aside, the idea of a chicken research laboratory sounds terrifying.

**The CHAIR:** It is Halloween.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Well, they're Steggles and Lilydale.

**ROB STOKES:** No, I shouldn't be flippant.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Steggles and Lilydale—that's where the money has come from initially, supplemented now by pretty significant land development. But they did promise their national headquarters and the laboratory there. How do you respond to the fact that they're blaming you?

**ROB STOKES:** I didn't hear them blame me, so I'll put that to one side. But the role of government, as I always saw it, was not to give a commercial benefit or to have that in mind when you're making any rezoning decisions. What you should do is look at the public interest, balance the submissions that come in, in terms of your responsibilities under the Act, and provide opportunities based on public need. Whether people take up those opportunities, whether the market changes or interest rates change, or whether capital requirements change, that's completely outside of your control. As planning Minister, you provide the context for people to hopefully make the highest and best economic use of their land, in line with the principles of sustainable development. If they do or not is really out of your control.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But the exhibition of stage one of the LUIIP and the development controls for the aerotropolis wouldn't have been a barrier, would they, to lodging applications on the rezoned land to establish the different facilities that Celestino promised?

**ROB STOKES:** I can't really speak to that. Obviously there were infrastructure requirements in terms of utilities to get the power, get the roads, get the rail and all those sorts of things. You can't necessarily develop in advance of the utilities that are there to support the land use. But, provided that infrastructure is in place or there's a pathway to do that, then it's open to an applicant to go and do what they want to do.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Yes, that's what I thought and put to them. They also seemingly denied various applications to you and your department to release the development triggers and also to increase the housing densities from 3,400 dwellings—which were designed for student and professional accommodation for the advanced manufacturing, science and technology—to 30,000 dwellings. But that consistently happened in your time as Minister, didn't it, and to your credit you consistently rejected that application.

**ROB STOKES:** Thank you. My memory is a bit foggy here. When decisions about rail were made, that obviously had implications on land use. But the first stage of planning was done before we had knowledge of where the railway was going to go. That's why a planning process starts at a high level and then becomes more granular with the more details that emerge. But, certainly, whatever applications they put in would have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the legislation, the submissions that came in and the capacity of the land. I can't remember the outcomes. I didn't have much personal contact with them other than the meetings that would have been disclosed in my ministerial diary.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What can government do to undo poor planning decisions like this? I don't want to be too harsh on Celestino, but one interpretation might be that they never had any intention of delivering a science park, because nothing has happened over a long period of time. By proper or improper means, they have now got the metro there, and they would look well placed in the future to convince some government to go down the path of a housing estate, otherwise that metro built at public expense goes to waste. What should we be doing in the recommendations of this Committee about a development that looks disingenuous against the public interest?

**ROB STOKES:** I can't comment as to motives. I genuinely can't. As I've said, when you've had an opportunity to master plan a site, and when there was an applicant that had some ideas, of course government will

work with them to look at their ideas and try to help them in an appropriate way to bring those ideas to fruition. If they choose another path or if things happen in other areas that undermine the potential to deliver those plans, these things happen. That's the nature of planning. That's why you have to keep it flexible, and that's why you have to have a system that allows things to change over time. That's particularly the case in a greenfield area, where a decision over a utility could have dramatic consequences on the development capacity of different sites. My encouragement to Celestino would be to look at what's approved. They worked very hard to get that approval. My encouragement is to see, of what has been approved, what they can deliver.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Isn't this an ongoing problem in planning in Western Sydney—the number of developers who say they'll produce employment land and a large number of jobs and then walk it back over time to another housing estate?

**ROB STOKES:** Yes. It's a paradox of planning.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You were planning Minister in 2016, when these final rezonings went through. Why would you have thought that they were going to build Silicon Valley at Luddenham? There's no association with a higher education institution, no research base and no transport links at that time. Why would anyone think that's going to happen in preference to Macquarie Park or around Kensington or Sydney university?

**ROB STOKES:** I strongly commend the virtues of Macquarie Park for investment.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I love Luddenham, but why were we going to build Silicon Valley there?

**ROB STOKES:** Again, I think the answer here is that governments should work with communities and landholders to see if they can help make it possible for them to deliver investment and jobs. Public services like public schools and hospitals are a matter for government in terms of providing those services directly. In relation to private investment and private development, that's a matter for those private landholders. We helped to shape opportunities for them. As it turned out, for whatever reason, they haven't been able to realise those opportunities. I suspect some of that will take many years. When you talk about Silicon Valley at Luddenham, of course that's not going to happen straight away. If you'd said the same thing about Macquarie Park back in 1965, no-one would have dreamed that it would have a world-class university and world-class innovation district there. That has happened over time. I think there is an exciting opportunity for that corridor through the airport. I think that those things will happen over time. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** On the airport link, the rail link that you mentioned earlier on, is it your recollection that there was a higher benefit-cost ratio for extending Leppington? Certainly, the scoping study in 2018 said that Leppington was less expensive—\$6 billion versus \$11 billion—and was the simplest way to provide a train service to the proposed Western Sydney airport and extend the heavy rail. No-one had to change trains, as they will now have to do at St Marys, to come into the centre of Sydney.

**ROB STOKES:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Yes, yes and yes? So your recollection was that there was a higher benefit-cost ratio for the Leppington extension?

**ROB STOKES:** Yes.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I've been told by a Federal representative that because it brought in the Liverpool and Campbelltown industrial estates, it had those economic benefits. Did you appoint Sam Sangster to be the inaugural head of the aerotropolis?

**ROB STOKES:** No.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Would you agree with his assessment that unless you've got a fast rail link from a second airport to the major centre, where we are now, it runs the risk of being a white elephant?

**ROB STOKES:** I have high regard for Sam. I don't know the context of his comments, but he's very experienced.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** He did an international study tour of second airport viability. He might not have had as many upgrades as Albo, but I'm sure he got around and looked at a lot of airports. He said that Badgerys Creek airport runs the risk of being a white elephant if it does not have a fast, direct train link to the Sydney CBD. Inevitably, most people—tourists—visiting Sydney want to come here, don't they? I mean, there are plenty of good things to see in Western Sydney, but—

**ROB STOKES:** As I said, I've got high regard for Sam. If he's saying something, I don't know the context of what he's talking about—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That was the conclusion from his study tour.

**ROB STOKES:** —but he's very experienced.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If I could ask a question on that, though. Government is, of course, limited by money and what it's able to invest. A direct rail link to the CBD would be an incredibly costly proposition, wouldn't it?

**ROB STOKES:** Yes, hugely expensive. But we showed, when we were in government, that we did have an appetite to do big public infrastructure projects. Of course, we had to generate the funding to be able to do that, and that was where wages policy and asset recycling—that was the engine that generated the money to pay for the infrastructure pipeline. I suspect the challenge for the current Government is they don't have an engine to generate that funding anymore.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** But when you were making assessments—or when others in government were making the assessment—in terms of whether it went north or south, effectively, there was never a direct link to the CBD, or the Sydney CBD, on the table, was there?

**ROB STOKES:** No, that's true. But I think—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** That's what the Leppington extension is. It's Badgerys Creek, Kelvin Park, Bringelly, Leppington, Glenfield, East Hills and into the city. I caught that line here today.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** It's not a high-speed rail link. It would take you an hour-plus on the train.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You can have as many stops as you like. You could run a train once an hour that came in here in 35 minutes, if you wanted to.

**ROB STOKES:** It goes through Glenfield, and then you had the choice of whether you did metro or heavy rail. In one sense, I think—well, we are where we are now. I agree with the proposition about the cost-benefit analysis. But it had to come in one direction or the other, and, ultimately, the whole thing has got to be built. Ultimately, you do have to link through from Bradfield through to Glenfield.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, Leppington to Badgerys Creek.

**ROB STOKES:** Ultimately, you have to start somewhere and finish somewhere. The choice of the government of the day—and, again, I wasn't involved in that decision. Remember, the Federal Government had a big role in this because they paid for half of it. Their view as to whether it connected in from the north or the south was pretty significant, given their funding commitment toward it.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** And it still has a metro link. Tullamarine airport in Melbourne still has no public transport link whatsoever.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, they've got nothing.

**ROB STOKES:** Ultimately, there's a train going to the airport. That's the big headline: There's a train going to the airport.

**The CHAIR:** Anything else you wanted to say?

**ROB STOKES:** I would have worn my Che Guevara T-shirt, but it was in the wash. Thank you all.

**The CHAIR:** Fabulous. Thank you so much. We do appreciate you coming. We know you weren't required to, so it's very kind of you to come.

**ROB STOKES:** It's lovely to see you all again. I wish you all the best. I actually would be interested to read the report, because there can be incredible lessons for how to plan the future of Western Sydney, which would be really exciting to see. Good luck.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**The Hon. STUART AYRES**, Chief Executive Officer, Urban Development Institute of Australia (NSW), and Former Minister for Western Sydney, New South Wales Government, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** I now welcome our next and final witness for the day. Do you want to start with a statement of any kind?

**STUART AYRES:** I'm happy to take questions.

**The CHAIR:** Very good. Thank you very much for making yourself available. You were with Gladys Berejiklian, I believe, in 2019 in London when the memorandum of understanding with BAE Systems was entered into in relation to the western aerotropolis.

**STUART AYRES:** That's correct.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to tell us anything about that memorandum of understanding?

**STUART AYRES:** It was in line with many of the other MOUs that we were signing at the time, which was about encouraging global businesses to make a commitment to be an ongoing partner in the development of the aerotropolis, particularly over a long period of time. BAE has been a business that's been heavily invested in Australia for many years across various iterations. I think there's been a number of acquisitions that've been taking place over time that've made that business in Australia larger than what has been in the past. They were one of many international companies that we were looking to encourage, as they were looking to increase their footprint and make further investments into knowledge jobs, that would be well-placed to be closely located to an airport, so it seemed pretty obvious that we would target them.

**The CHAIR:** To be honest, I've never seen a trade MOU. I've seen lots of MOUs, but not one entered into by States with companies. Presumably they're two way. What sort of inducements did New South Wales offer for someone like BAE to—

**STUART AYRES:** I think the attractiveness for the aerotropolis or a place like Bradfield, being so proximate to an airport, was about being invested in a community over a long period of time as infrastructure evolved and as access to workforce improved. If you're looking to expand either in Australia or across the Asia-Pacific, being able to access those preconditions for success we thought would be attractive to a company like BAE, the same as it was for a number of other organisations as well. Having them engaged right from the beginning there'd be the ability to share knowledge and provide advice and guidance; then potentially, over time, if they wanted to take either land acquisition, they'd have to do so through a normal market process. They're the types of partners that you want to have in very early to make sure that you're getting strong market soundings.

**The CHAIR:** Was the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility part of the pitch to them? Was that a feature of the aerotropolis at that time?

**STUART AYRES:** Yes, the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility probably has its genesis in a very similar-named facility that's in Sheffield, in the north of England, called the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre. It's a facility that's in a site that's not too dissimilar to what the aerotropolis looks like, and is envisaged to continue to evolve—think more business park-type locations. BAE was invested in that facility and engaged in the development of that facility. As far as I'm aware, they're still heavily engaged in the work that takes place in Sheffield now, and it's been a core part of their business for many years.

**The CHAIR:** You mentioned that there were other organisations and companies that those discussions were had with as well. What other large defence companies were involved at that stage?

**STUART AYRES:** We had engagement with Northrop Grumman.

**The CHAIR:** They were one of the first ones, weren't they? Because they've already got an anchor tenant or an anchor—

**STUART AYRES:** Northrop Grumman made some investments in Western Sydney for which the capital was deployed into the Richmond Air Force Base. They were able to upgrade facilities that existed there that allowed for them to undertake a mechanical procedure of replacing a wing box on a C-130 Hercules aircraft, which is a heavy airlift aircraft. In fact, most people's identification of that plane would be through emergency relief. It's a movement and heavy-lift aircraft, and it's quite heavily used around the world. The older versions of that need the centre of the wing replaced. The process for doing that is efficiently done at Richmond and so they made investments to allow that to happen. Because that aircraft is used around many air forces, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, it was a good place for them to make that investment. That secured that investment into New South Wales and allowed Northrop Grumman to be part of the ongoing process on how Bradfield and the aerotropolis developed.

**The CHAIR:** Northrop, BAE, and what were the other companies?

**STUART AYRES:** I can't recall immediately, off the top of my head, any other specific defence companies.

**The CHAIR:** Was Elbit part of it? I feel like they're part of it now.

**STUART AYRES:** Sorry?

**The CHAIR:** Elbit Systems?

**STUART AYRES:** I don't recall Elbit Systems, but there are other companies like Sumitomo Mitsui, which is a banking corporation, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, which does lots of different things. In fact, I think they do a little bit of defence in Japan.

**The CHAIR:** They do.

**STUART AYRES:** Hitachi is not known as a defence company, but I'd place a fairly short bet that it probably has some defence contracts in Japan, if not globally. But they're a multidimensional business. DB Schenker is a freight logistics company. There is an Australian company called Vitex Pharmaceuticals, which is a great New South Wales-based business that's got facilities already in Western Sydney but thought that the aerotropolis would be a good place where they would look to expand over time.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Thanks, Stuart, for coming in and wearing two hats. Did you hear the earlier evidence of Celestino before this Committee?

**STUART AYRES:** No.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** John Camilleri said that, in his various meetings with you, he had not discussed the location of the train station at the Sydney Science Park, Luddenham. Is that right?

**STUART AYRES:** Yes. I don't recall ever having a conversation with John Camilleri about train station locations.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But you did give evidence at budget estimates on 10 March 2021 that Celestino lobbied you several times for a train station on their site. Who was that through?

**STUART AYRES:** Celestino was a member of what I think was called the Western Sydney Rail Alliance—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** They funded you.

**STUART AYRES:** —which included a number of organisations, universities and local governments. Celestino was part of that. Through that Western Sydney Rail Alliance—John Vassallo was the CEO, I think, at the time of a lot of this work. He definitely engaged with a lot of members of Parliament around the need for a rail line to track the north-south corridor, which later became a big part of the future rail needs study. Definitely through that, representatives like John Vassallo engaged with me around train lines but not train station sites.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But you accepted their argument on the train line.

**STUART AYRES:** There is no doubting I strongly advocated for a north-south train link. I still think it will be one of the best decisions that's ever been made in New South Wales' history. I think Western Sydney will benefit immensely from it. The future rail needs study, which had six options—in fact, there was quite a strong campaign in lots of communities for option six, which created a long-term commitment to a rail corridor between Macarthur and Tallawong, with the airport in the middle.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Back at those budget estimates in March 2021, you said you had met a number of times with John Camilleri and discussed the development interests at Sydney Science Park. He didn't seem to recall that this morning either. Do you stand by that evidence and recollection?

**STUART AYRES:** I think you may have asked me if I was recalling the estimates, Mr Latham. Whether I'd met John Camilleri at locations—definitely. I've been in lots of locations with John. Did we ever have a formal meeting about train station locations? No.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, but development interests and approval of the science park, when you were an MP, and other issues related to it—you did declare 10 meetings, in your ministerial diary, with Celestino over a five-year period. At the estimates you said you met with him a number of times and discussed his development interests at the science park.

**STUART AYRES:** I have no doubt I met with him a number of times, but not always about the science park and not always in a formal setting. My only recollection of meeting with John was him attending what you might describe as a briefing, where representatives from Celestino spoke about what their future plans were for the Sydney Science Park.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Who selected the location for the Luddenham metro station?

**STUART AYRES:** Transport for NSW.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** And what involvement did you have in that?

**STUART AYRES:** I didn't play any formal involvement in the selection of train station locations. I received briefings, as a Minister, from Transport for NSW, over the process. I engaged and offered opinions around corridor alignment. I was an outspoken advocate for the North South Rail Line corridor. I gave a number of very public speeches about why I thought Western Sydney needed a transport connection that allowed Western Sydney to be connected to Western Sydney. The idea of building a multibillion-dollar airport and then exporting every dollar back to the east of Sydney seemed like a pretty silly thing to do, and it was about time that people in Western Sydney had some infrastructure spend in their communities.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Do you agree with the evidence that Rob Stokes just gave us that the benefit-cost ratio for the Leppington extension was a lot higher than this north-south St Marys line?

**STUART AYRES:** I'm pretty certain, and it's well known, that the benefit-cost ratio for the shorter line was a higher number. But I think there were many other factors that were determined in the decision around where to start what is the first stage of a long-term commitment around rail in Western Sydney.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What would those factors be, given that the Leppington extension was half the cost and the metro business case for the St Marys line says it'll have a peak loading of just 11 per cent capacity in one direction—so 89 per cent of the metro will be empty—and a very low 18 per cent benefit to public transport usage off a cost-benefit ratio of 0.75? If you visit the Luddenham station, which is nearing completion today, you must feel a sense of embarrassment that there's nothing there other than horse and cow paddocks. We've wasted a huge amount of money on supporting a development at the science park that clearly is never, ever going to happen.

**STUART AYRES:** I don't agree with that statement at all. I think if I had a dollar for every time someone stopped me over my 13 years in Parliament and said, "Why can't we put the infrastructure in before the houses?" I would be a pretty wealthy person—much wealthier than being a member of Parliament for over a decade.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But it's not supposed to be houses; it's supposed to be 12,000 knowledge-based jobs that you advocated for. Where are they?

**STUART AYRES:** I think the whole rail line goes much further than the Sydney Science Park, Mr Latham. I'd also say that the decision to build the rail line from St Marys through Orchard Hills, through Luddenham, on to the airport site and on to Bradfield really sets up future governments to be able to make further investments to extend that rail corridor. There is an obvious opportunity to extend that corridor between Bradfield and Leppington. I'd strongly advocate for the conversion of the south-west line to a metro service to make for a more efficient use of that rail service. There is an opportunity to extend that from Bradfield South to Macarthur. You can pick up suburbs like Oran Park when you do that, and that creates great opportunities in the deeper south-west, in the Wollondilly communities, to be able to access better transport. I think everyone has seen the raging success of Metro North West, so the ability to connect St Marys through to Tallawong would be a completion of that. That's pretty much what the future rail needs study identified as the best pathway forward.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But why would any government, at double the cost, build a metro line that nobody is going to use out of an airport facility? Why would you do that, other than preference for a company?

**STUART AYRES:** Let's unpack a couple of those options, or what you've just suggested there. It was an \$11 billion line, and half of that money was paid for by the Commonwealth. We just saved the New South Wales taxpayers \$5.5 billion. If we applied your approach here and we split the shorter amount of money in half with the Commonwealth and we had to fill this longer section of the line in today's dollars, then the bill for the New South Wales taxpayer between Bradfield and St Marys would be substantially higher. I think you've just made a really great argument for how we saved the New South Wales taxpayers and the new Government billions and billions of dollars of infrastructure money that can be redeployed into other important public uses. It's a really good argument. Thanks for making it. I should have thought of that myself.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But Infrastructure Australia have said that the St Marys line—they agree with the business case that it's a lemon. They much preferred the Leppington line extension out of Infrastructure

Australia. They probably would have funded half of that, and the overall cost to the New South Wales taxpayer is \$3 billion instead of the \$6 billion that we are paying for the St Marys line that nobody is going to use.

**STUART AYRES:** For one line that makes no future north-south connections—I think that would be a terrible public policy decision. I genuinely believe that if we do not create north-south rail connections that allow communities in the south-west to benefit from the airport and the aerotropolis investment, and existing suburbs to connect through the airport into the Penrith greater area and on to the north-west, while leveraging existing infrastructure—surely we get to a point in time where the idea of travelling east-west as this mechanism for public transport in Western Sydney has to stop. Then you allow communities in Western Sydney to grow in their own spaces and create places people can call home and jobs closer to where they live. That's what that rail line was able to do. Do you really suggest that we should have just built a rail line from Leppington to Bradfield and then stopped?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I'm suggesting you should build rail lines where people live. Given the scale of the development at Austral and heading further west through Bringelly and Kelvin Park, and the un-serviced suburbs like Oran Park and Harrington Park that have got absolutely no public transport and rail, it's criminal for you to have advocated for something that has 11 per cent usage in the peak; to build a rail station at Luddenham—which, embarrassingly, is surrounded by horse and cow paddocks—while there are people living in suburbs and communities are being built that have no public transport. They go without. That's solely because of your association with Celestino and support for the Sydney Science Park, which has been a con on Western Sydney, with none of the jobs ever to be developed and the traditional pattern of trying to roll it back, as they are trying to do, into 30,000 dwellings—a housing estate. That's what I'm saying. If you asked me the question, that's my answer and that's why we're here today.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Point of order: As Mr Latham just said, that's effectively his statement. He should put a question to this witness and not go on a rant.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Well, the witness asked me a question, and I answered him.

**The CHAIR:** For procedural fairness, I will now ask Mr Ayres if there's anything he wants to say in response to the commentary.

**STUART AYRES:** The first thing I will do is reject any suggestion that the rail line or train station locations were designed by relationships between myself or any other member of the Government that I was a part of. I think that's a fairly significant bite and attack on a whole lot of people's reputations that I think is unwarranted. I think it's absolutely critical that we have strong north-south rail connections across Western Sydney. This payment of precious taxpayer funds is a down payment to ensure that there is, for future generations, an opportunity to continue to expand that rail network over a north-south corridor, which is going to have to house many, many hundreds of thousands—millions—of people.

We should continue to make investments in public transport infrastructure that allows people to be well located relative to those train lines. The whole principle of transport oriented development is that places like Luddenham and Orchard Hills can emerge as places that people call home. Suburbs should be built around those train stations in the same way I expect they'll be built around a future train station at Rossmore, which is currently paddocks, and in the same way they'll be built around future train stations in paddocks to the north of St Marys.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Just on that, in the town planning around the aerotropolis, the Luddenham town centre has become a bit of a black hole where the residents and the businesses are complaining there's no forward plan for them because they think the Government wants most of the retail and commercial development to go to the so-called Bradfield City. If you were going to have a north-south rail link, as you've advocated, why wasn't it run through the Luddenham town centre, where people actually live, instead of the horse-and-cow paddocks of Celestino at the science park?

**STUART AYRES:** Where would you want the train line to go after it went to the Luddenham town centre—on the western?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You said at estimates in March 2021, and I'll quote you, that "two eminently logical locations" for rail stations north of the airport site were the two population centres—servicing people, not cows and horses, if I can add that—of Luddenham and Orchard Hills. They're your own words. Why wasn't it put through the Luddenham town centre if that was an eminently logical location?

**STUART AYRES:** I'm pretty certain I'm referring to Luddenham north of the airport because Luddenham north of the airport is still Luddenham. Even though the town centre—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, you said population centres. We discussed the township, which has obviously got problems now.

**STUART AYRES:** I remember that statement very clearly. I think you were sitting on that side of the table when I made it. It does make eminent sense to allow for population centres to evolve along that north-south corridor. In fact, I think the Government just released the Orchard Hills master plan—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Today.

**STUART AYRES:** —somewhat finally today. I'm sure those—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Where's the population centre at Luddenham?

**STUART AYRES:** The population centre will evolve around the train station.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Evolve! Okay. Well, you were talking about the current one. Why wasn't it sent through the Luddenham town centre?

**STUART AYRES:** I don't think that would have been an efficient transport corridor to be able to access the airport or access future links. I would encourage the Government, however, to approve option 3.5—I think it's called these days—on the town centre plan. The residents of Luddenham would really like that to happen.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Okay, but you're talking about supporting housing—

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Just as a quick clarification, though, with respect to the orientation of that train line, your evidence to this Committee was that you had no say over where particular stations or the like went—that was not a matter that you determined.

**STUART AYRES:** No, Transport for NSW made all of those decisions.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** When did you first learn of the science park's expectation that they'd get a rail station?

**STUART AYRES:** I don't know that I ever learnt of their expectation to get a rail station. I'm sure, like many landowners, they would have loved to have had a rail station, but if they had an expectation then that was their expectation. I don't think there was anything I ever had.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** In the site-ing of the metro—through which you're obviously involved through the cities deal—metro commissioned some planning consultancy studies. They concluded preliminary discussion between the proponent Celestino and the New South Wales Government about the rail line and station appear to have occurred prior to December 2013, seemingly as early as 2011. You're saying you're unaware of those discussions or that expectation of Celestino?

**STUART AYRES:** There definitely weren't any discussions inside of government about a north-south rail line before the airport commitment was made by Prime Minister Abbott, and the airport rail line actually was subsequent to the airport announcements being made; it was a core part of the city deal. So any discussions that landowners are having around future rail corridors were entirely speculative. Given people had been speculating around whether a future government would ever invest in a Western Sydney airport for the better part of 40 years, I'd say that that's a pretty big speculation.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** How do you explain the comment of Andrew Miller in response to this startling claim that the early O'Farrell Government, of which you were a part, has given Celestino encouragement that they would one day get a rail station? In response to that consultancy report, he replied on 1 December 2020, "After a discussion with the corridors team, it is apparent there was a continued dialogue between the landowner, Celestino, and Transport for NSW from 2013 to the current date regarding the Sydney Science Park. It is considered there was a high expectation from the landowner that a station would be delivered to the Sydney Science Park." They were in on the fix early on, weren't they?

**STUART AYRES:** In on the fix—what do you mean by that, Mr Latham?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Somehow, before the second airport was even announced by the Abbott Government, officials from Sydney Metro and Transport for NSW were saying that Celestino expected a rail station exactly where they got it under your Government, under your guidance. It's amazing, isn't it?

**STUART AYRES:** Well, I cannot see how any discussion about a rail line that didn't exist could have taken place before 2013.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** No, a rail station in that exact spot. They produced plans to Penrith council to put the rail station exactly where it's now being built, in horse and cow paddocks.

**STUART AYRES:** Sorry, I—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You're unaware of that?

**STUART AYRES:** No, I can't be any clearer. I can't see how a conversation around a rail line or a train station could have taken place before there was even a commitment to do a rail line. I spent a lot of time in this building arguing for this, both with members of the Opposition and probably with members of my own Government, to ensure Western Sydney finally got long-term infrastructure investments.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I have no doubt you did that, but this is what the document shows. So you've got no explanation as to why the consultant and the Transport official would say these things?

**STUART AYRES:** Not around expectation. I've got no doubt that Transport for NSW and representatives of the corridor team would have been engaging with landowners all over Western Sydney. At one stage I took almost 200 kilometres of corridor reservations, which is not an easy exercise to do when you're engaging with communities around infrastructure that's not going to arrive for 20 or 30 years, but you're making policy decisions today to ensure that future populations don't have to pay as much money. Representatives of the public service engage in consultation with landowners in those corridors all the time.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You were talking about housing development. Do you support Celestino's multiple submissions to government over the years to move to 30,000 dwellings at the science park to turn it into a housing estate?

**STUART AYRES:** My predisposition, in the middle of a housing crisis, is that where we can create more homes in well-located places, we should do that.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** So that's a yes?

**STUART AYRES:** I don't know. I'm not familiar with their proposals around 30,000. That does sound like something they may have put out in response to the Land Use and Infrastructure Implementation Plan, or the LUIIP, but I think that volume at the time was probably rejected. I think they had a cap of about 3½ thousand or 3,400 on the site. But, like any other landowner, they're free to make proposals and submissions to government around changes and updates to whatever their future plans are.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But now they've got a metro and there are no knowledge-based jobs—not a single one, not even their own headquarters to be relocated there. If it's a UDIA position, you'd support the 30,000 housing dwellings to make better use of the metro, which otherwise has no-one to service other than cows and horses.

**STUART AYRES:** I'd support housing. I'm not sure I'm going to say on behalf of the UDIA that I'd support a specific number without seeing a plan, and I don't think any normal planner would either.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Celestino has got a plan.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** If I can just pick up on that point, are Celestino members of the UDIA?

**STUART AYRES:** Yes.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Thank you, just for disclosure purposes. Mr Ayres, thanks for being here today. With respect to the options on the north-south link, you, of course, were the member for Penrith at the time. It really shouldn't surprise anyone that you would be a strong proponent of a rail link that serviced your community, as the member for Penrith at the time, should it?

**STUART AYRES:** It didn't actually service my electorate, if you want to be really clear about that.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Indeed, but your community, in a sense.

**STUART AYRES:** That would make me Prue Car's strongest infrastructure advocate. I'm sure, given the recent announcements by Penrith City Council and the St Marys master plan, the planning Minister kindly allowed for a stay of proceedings on a TOD to allow that council to be able to do their own planning work, consult with local communities and probably deliver a stronger uplift in residential opportunity there than what the TOD policy would achieve.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I think 1,100 potentially additional.

**STUART AYRES:** That's not, to be clear, a criticism of the TOD policy. I think it's just a good example of where a Minister has been very sensible and allowed engagement with local communities to deliver a better result. Yes, St Marys is located in the Penrith LGA but it wasn't located in my electorate, and I was always much more confident, particularly given the long-term commitments of the Government to the western metro—which would free up substantial capacity on the T1 western line—that the fastest mechanism of being able to get from the outer west to the city would have been through a capacity-relieved T1 western line in the future.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** That would be, to Mr Latham's point before about connectivity to the city, effectively changing at St Marys and then being able to catch an express service that would have gone from St Marys—let's say St Marys, Blacktown, Parramatta, Strathfield, CBD.

**STUART AYRES:** Maybe in an environment where there is more capacity or more demand on those lines because of a future airport, particularly with substantially freed-up capacity on T1 western line, you might even run trains from St Marys directly to Central. Even on today's transport network with its aged constraints, you could probably do that in 35 minutes.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Also to your point previously, you indicated, of course, there are other aspirations in terms of connections to the metro. One of those being, of course, from St Marys to Tallawong. That can only happen to another metro location, and there was no metro location located in the south-west, was there?

**STUART AYRES:** No. I don't actually agree with the view that it can only go to another metro. I think other extensions can take place. The lines that are built don't have to be exactly the same. Metros allow for interchanges like they do globally, and so it is not a contiguous travel time. My expectation is that as metros expand, the idea of interchanging at stations will become more like the global practice that it is in metro networks around the world where you might take two or three lines and because of the frequency of the train service, you get to one station, you get off the train, you walk to the other side of the platform and within a few minutes that train turns up and you move.

This idea of us being on an old radial network where we need to go from Hornsby all the way around to Penrith is a pretty old way of thinking about rail. Connecting to the north-west, that's where the major infrastructure was already in place but you could choose to build whatever style of metro line between St Marys and Tallawong. As I said earlier, my strong view is that the best opportunity for metro and continuation of rail would be to make the probably more expensive decision—but I think a better long-term transport solution decision—to extend metro from Bradfield to Leppington and then convert the Leppington south-west rail line to a metro line and create a metro interchange at Glenfield, which I still think is one of the most important train stations in Sydney. But no-one spends a lot of time thinking about that.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** With respect to some of the opportunities that are there as well for the future to Glenfield, for instance, we've heard that there is the reservation which now needs to be kept in place through Bradfield. The evidence we had before from the Bradfield Delivery Authority was that it's now a 60-metre parcel above land that they have to keep as a reservation.

**STUART AYRES:** Did they really say that?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes. A 60-metre-wide reservation they need to keep for that corridor into the future.

**STUART AYRES:** What, in the middle of Bradfield City?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** In the middle of Bradfield City; that was the evidence we had previously. In your current role at the UDIA, what is your perspective in terms of the impact of that on creating what should be a town centre or, in fact, a third city effectively in Sydney.

**STUART AYRES:** Sorry, I'm actually a bit flabbergasted that that evidence is even—is that a change by the current Government to not keep the rail line through Bradfield City underground?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** What's your understanding previously when you were in government as to what the planning arrangements were?

**STUART AYRES:** I made the announcement with Gladys Berejiklian myself. I remember very clearly the very profound discussion we would have because it would have an impact on cost, and we also made a very clear decision that we were not going to have an above-ground rail line cutting what we wanted to be a future CBD and a jobs and housing location in the south-west of Sydney. That's a bit like saying we should ask John Bradfield to put the City Circle above ground in the middle of Sydney city. I actually can't believe that. They must lose—I don't know, I'm just speculating—thousands of square metres of potential commercial and residential development, and it must go right through the park. There is a big central park in the middle of Bradfield.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** There is nothing in Bradfield other than street signs that say "Bradfield". Nothing is happening there.

**STUART AYRES:** Mr Latham, I think we all accept that planning for future cities requires us to create master plans—define where streets go; put places for trees, parks and public amenity; and define what land uses can happen in those locations. That's exactly what the Bradfield master plan is. But what you've just told me, Mr Farlow—I'm just going to say it. I think that's disturbing. If we've made such a significant commitment to

Bradfield, and we're not prepared to say right now that we won't have the rail that runs through—the station box is under construction. It's underground now.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Yes.

**STUART AYRES:** So is this about leaving an above-ground solution to come from Leppington through—or even worse, a future connection to Parramatta to be on the surface?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** That was the evidence we received: From the Bradfield master plan, there is the requirement that they keep a 60-metre reservation corridor for future rail links. That wasn't something that was in place when you were in government and you formulated these plans along with Premier Berejiklian?

**STUART AYRES:** Definitely not. We made a very conscious decision when this rail line was being co-funded by the State and Commonwealth that when we came into Bradfield we would not create the other side of the tracks. This would be underground and you would not have a train line being an impediment to the best possible urban outcome in a future location where we always aspire to have jobs and greater densities. The idea that you'd put a surface rail line through the middle of Bradfield City is extraordinary.

**The CHAIR:** For those of us who aren't town planners, is it possible that that sort of reservation is to avoid having to tunnel under properties or is it possible that it's an underground line still?

**STUART AYRES:** I don't know why you would need to have a surface reservation if that's what was provided as evidence earlier.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** You've got a station box there already, effectively.

**STUART AYRES:** If you're going to have—did you say 60 metres? Did I hear that correctly?

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Sixty metres is what I wrote down at the time.

**STUART AYRES:** That means that 60 metres can't be built on, so you're going to have—it's like a Hoddle grid, right? There are squares that get sold off and people build buildings. You're going to have a 60-metre-wide line on either side of all the development spaces. That's going to look very weird on a map. I might go back and have a look at the Bradfield master plan if it's online.

**The CHAIR:** We might have to ask some supplementary questions as well to clarify.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** I can't remember whether it was evidence before this Committee or discussions that we had on our site inspection day, but I think there was also some suggestion that potentially both options were on the table in terms of whether you have the metro continue on or whether you have the heavy rail continue on from Leppington. With your current hat on, do you have a view on which would be preferable?

**STUART AYRES:** I have no doubt that the Government will have to explore an extension of heavy rail, which undoubtedly will be a cheaper option, but it would deliver a lower quality service. My standing disposition is that Western Sydney shouldn't get second best. You should make the investment in the long term—spend a little bit more money up-front and extend the metro around to Leppington. It may take a little bit of time if you have to create an interchange at Leppington, but long term it would be much better if there was a contiguous metro service from Glenfield through to St Marys. I'm sure that's a decision that the current Premier, Treasurer, transport Minister and infrastructure Minister are probably grappling with right now with the recommendations that came from Mr Mrdak's rail report.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** My last question is with respect to the rail corridor around Bradfield and the servicing of the airport via a rail corridor. That wasn't necessarily always a given, was it, that the new airport would be serviced by a rail corridor? When it was first announced, was there money or commitment on the table from the Federal Government for a rail corridor connecting the airport?

**STUART AYRES:** No. The announcement for the airport didn't include rail announcements. There was a substantial joint-funded road package that went alongside the announcement of the airport that residents across Western Sydney now enjoy every single day. The widening of the Northern Road—which has completely changed travel times between Penrith, Camden and Campbelltown—Bringelly Road and Camden Valley Way were all roads that were upgraded, often well in advance of the developments in areas that Mr Latham talked about earlier, that were benefits of the catalytic decision of the airport. The decision on rail came later and it came after the establishment of the city deal between the New South Wales Government, the Federal Government and eight Western Sydney councils. The signature infrastructure piece in that city deal was the \$11 billion rail line. I don't shy away from the fact that I would love to have been able to secure more funding to get it around to, at the very least, Leppington and close off that loop. I expect that the current New South Wales Government will fund that gap. I can't see why you wouldn't.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, I was getting lost in looking at the map from the master plan. It does look like a bit of a—do you have any more questions, Mr Latham?

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Mr Ayres, how many MOUs did you sign for Bradfield aerotropolis? We heard earlier on that there were 48, which one is being acted on.

**STUART AYRES:** I can't remember the exact number. I think it was low 20s, from memory, that I was probably directly engaged in, or participated in, signing or spoke with people. So I think there have been others.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What economic forecasting did you have for a high take-up rate of private sector investment at Bradfield, given that I think common sense would say that most of the warehousing, manufacturing, freight movements and facilities will be located on the Federal Government land to the north of the airport site—a large business park? Any investor would want to go there because it's cheek by jowl to the airport rather than the science park or Mamre Road or the aerotropolis at Kelvin Park.

**STUART AYRES:** I don't think it's one over the other, Mr Latham. I think that there are plenty of opportunities across the 11,000 hectares—

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What forecasting did you have to say that Bradfield would ever be financially viable in terms of private sector investment?

**STUART AYRES:** I think Bradfield will be very financially viable. It will—like all other developments—take time. It takes time to service that land. It takes time to build the transport infrastructure. It takes time to ensure that water servicing is set up. Once all of those preconditions for private sector investment are in place, I expect that you'll see a lot more private sector investment. In fact, almost right on schedule, the Bradfield delivery authority has gone out to market on the first super lots. That's the direct engagement of the private sector straight into Bradfield. The Government is in market right now talking to the private sector about investing in Bradfield. The first building was funded by the New South Wales Government.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** And the second building too.

**STUART AYRES:** Yes. And this site is entirely owned by the New South Wales Government. The acquisition of that land came from the Commonwealth as part of the city deal. It's a great deal for the citizens of New South Wales.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Do you think there's a problem in perception about Bradfield, that there are better investment opportunities near the airport for the private sector? The landowners there complain that no-one is knocking on their door to purchase their properties. It was basically a publicity opportunity to sign MOUs that aren't acted on, talking about an aerotropolis for five years where nothing has happened. Why wouldn't you put the rail line above ground for a facility that looks, realistically, like it won't be delivered in our lifetime?

**STUART AYRES:** Seven years ago there was no widened Northern Road, no widened Bringelly Road and no widened Camden Valley Way. There was no airport. There was no rail line. There was no Kemps Creek water recycling facility. And 11,000 hectares of rural land was zoned rural land. So the idea that nothing has happened, I think, is quite farcical. More happened in seven years than what normally happens in four or five decades in this State. It set the preconditions for future investments by government in enabling infrastructure and stormwater facilities, which is probably the single biggest impediment right now for a number of developers in industrial states. All of those things will keep flowing through the system because of the long-term investments we made. I took risks as a member of Parliament. In my view, I put the long-term planning ahead of the short-term impact of trying to win an election, and I think Western Sydney will benefit from that for many years.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Yes, but that's all housing. Camden Valley Way has been widened and it's just housing estates on either side and no jobs. Northern Road has been widened, housing estates on either side—no jobs. Where is the investment to make Bradfield viable when, clearly, if you're an investor, you would rather be right there at the airport site in the Federal Government business park?

**STUART AYRES:** It's not a very big business park, Mr Latham.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Haven't we over-hyped and exaggerated the potential of a one-runway airport to have Bradfield, the science park, Mamre Road and the Federal Government business park, when only the latter is truly viable?

**STUART AYRES:** The long-term plan for Western Sydney airport has a higher patronage pax capacity than Sydney airport. Surely we don't build infrastructure for just what we think will happen on the first day it opens. We build infrastructure for its capacity to economically enable our citizens to create better social and economic opportunities. The value of that infrastructure is delivered over decades. We're not making decisions around what happens right now just so that someone can go and cut a ribbon.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I'll take that down to Oran Park and see what they say.

**STUART AYRES:** Well, you can't get to Oran Park if you go to Leppington. You'd have to go south to Oran Park and then you'd get to Narellan where there is no rail corridor.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You built vast housing estates with no public transport—none whatsoever—while you're building a metro in a cow paddock. Go figure.

**STUART AYRES:** The train line is about ensuring that those communities that were denied for decades access to public transport got access to public transport in the future. They got it as that community continues to build. There is nothing stopping, other than willingness and probably financial capacity depending on decisions that you make, for the current Government to make an announcement, potentially with the Commonwealth, to continue to fund the extension of that rail line around to Leppington, which would just deliver all of the things that you're talking about but at the same time because we did St Marys to Bradfield first, you'd have Glenfield to St Marys. You'd open up an entirely new development front. You can extend that rail line further south to Oran Park where there is currently a space available for that.

But once you get to Oran Park, because no governments before the previous Government decided to reserve corridors when they were releasing housing estates, you'll have to go underground. That increases the cost. Now everyone loves infrastructure like WestConnex. It's a little bit harder to sell when you're the person out the front when you've got buy homes, cover the cost of these things, but now no-one blinks an eyelid at WestConnex. It cost a lot more money because a previous Government, before I was born, sold off a corridor through Mr Farlow's sort of representative area.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** Pretty much my backyard in Strathfield.

**STUART AYRES:** Yes, your backyard. So our generation has to pay a higher price for that. Between St Marys and Orchard Hills, we do not have that problem. Between Bradfield and Leppington, we do not have that problem because we reserved the corridors and we started to build the infrastructure.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** I know you and other Liberal Ministers have convinced yourself of this, but if you live in south-west Sydney, I can 100 per cent assure you, as sure as I'm sitting here—

**STUART AYRES:** I'm sure I live closer to this community than anyone else in this room.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** —and as sure as my backside points to the ground, south-west Sydney is far less liveable than it was in 2011 because of the failure to provide basic transport infrastructure. It's all gone where you had your marginal seat.

**STUART AYRES:** None of the infrastructure we've spoken about today is in my seat, the seat that I was privileged enough to represent—not one metre of rail line, not one metre of road; none of it.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** It's gone because of your north-south preference against benefit-cost ratio. I'm just saying to you that south-west Sydney, with hundreds of thousands of people, is less liveable than it was in 2011.

**STUART AYRES:** I don't agree with that, and I think if I spoke to lots of people in Oran Park, I think they would really love where they choose to live.

**The CHAIR:** For the record, I blink a lot of times when it comes to WestConnex. You say no-one blinks.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You ought to come out to Narellan Road and sit in a four-kilometre traffic jam.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** You're more of a NorthConnex fan, aren't you?

**The CHAIR:** I am not a fan of NorthConnex, either.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW:** You've taken it.

**The CHAIR:** I have to take it every day. It costs me a fortune. We have got distracted. Are there any other questions? Is there anything else you'd like to contribute?

**STUART AYRES:** No. I'm happy to have helped the Committee in its deliberations.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. It has been very helpful. We know that you don't have to come and share your expertise with us, so we are very grateful for it. To the extent there are questions taken on notice or supplementary questions, the Committee secretariat will be in touch. That concludes our hearing for today.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

**The Committee adjourned at 16:25.**