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STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
AND TRANSPORT

**Reference: Investment of Commonwealth and state funds in public passenger
transport**

TUESDAY, 3 MARCH 2009

BRISBANE

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT**

Tuesday, 3 March 2009

Members: Senator Sterle (*Chair*), Senator Milne (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Farrell, Heffernan, Hutchins, McGauran, O'Brien and Williams

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Adams, Arbib, Barnett, Bernardi, Bilyk, Birmingham, Mark Bishop, Boswell, Boyce, Brandis, Bob Brown, Carol Brown, Bushby, Cameron, Cash, Colbeck, Jacinta Collins, Coonan, Cormann, Crossin, Eggleston, Feeney, Fielding, Fierravanti-Wells, Fifield, Fisher, Forshaw, Furner, Hanson-Young, Heffernan, Humphries, Hurley, Johnston, Joyce, Kroger, Ludlam, Lundy, Ian Macdonald, McEwen, McLucas, Marshall, Mason, Minchin, Moore, Parry, Payne, Polley, Pratt, Ronaldson, Ryan, Scullion, Siewert, Stephens, Troeth, Trood, Wortley and Xenophon

Senators in attendance: Senators Ludlam, O'Brien, Sterle and Williams

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services, with reference to the August 2005 report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage, Sustainable Cities, and the February 2007 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Australia's future oil supply and alternative transport fuels, including:

- a. an audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia;
- b. current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
- c. an assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives;
- d. measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
- e. the role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport; and
- g. best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

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Committee met at 9.01 am

CHAIR (Senator Sterle)—I declare open this public hearing of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport. The committee is inquiring into public transport. I welcome everyone here today. The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and rebroadcasting of these proceedings in accordance with the order of the Senate of 23 August 1990 concerning the broadcasting of committee proceedings. Committee witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to their submissions and evidence. Any act which may disadvantage a witness on account of their evidence is a breach of privilege. While the committee prefers to hear evidence in public, it may agree to take evidence confidentially. The committee may still publish or present confidential evidence to the Senate at a later date. We would consult the witness concerned before doing this. The Senate can also order publication of confidential evidence.

[9.02 am]

BROE, Mr Barry, Divisional Manager, Brisbane Infrastructure, Brisbane City Council

PRENTICE, Councillor Jane, Chairman, Public and Active Transport and Economic Development Committee, Brisbane City Council

SAVAGE, Mr Thomas Colin (Tom), Acting Principal, Public Transport, Brisbane City Council

WARREN, Mr Alan Kenneth, Divisional Manager, Brisbane Transport, Brisbane City Council

CHAIR—Welcome. I invite you to make a brief opening statement.

Councillor Prentice—I thank you and committee members for giving me the opportunity to present to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport. I speak on behalf of the Brisbane City Council. The Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman, hoped to be here but asks me to lodge his apologies. It is a council sitting day and he has prior commitments this morning.

As you would be aware, Brisbane City Council is in a unique position, in that it is the only council in Australia to significantly contribute to the funding of public transport services. For the benefit of some of the people from interstate, we are not like other capital city councils. We are actually one of the largest in the world. We have a land area of 1,367 square kilometres. In political terms we cover nine federal seats, and through transport we probably support another five federal seats on our boundaries whose residents travel through Brisbane to their work area.

We have over a million residents living in the Brisbane city council area and 375,000 private dwellings. That is put into significance when you understand the state government has recently brought down the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which dictates that we need to plan for 156,000 additional dwellings by 2030. So that is quite a large growth that we will see in this area. Of course, when you look at Brisbane, you realise that we are at the centre of the fastest growing region in Australia and indeed the second fastest growing region in the Western world. Brisbane City Council has 8,000 employees and a budget of \$2.2 billion.

With respect to public transport delivery, this year we estimate that we will carry 71 million passengers on our bus network alone. To put that into context, that is more passengers than the whole of the South-East Queensland city train network, so it really is taking a large share of the public transport burden. We have over 970 buses in our fleet at the moment; that is because the Lord Mayor has accelerated the growth of bus purchases, and I table a graph of the growth of bus purchases in recent years. In Brisbane Transport alone, we have 2,200 staff, including more than 1,750 bus operators. Our buses travel over 56 million kilometres per annum across 230 different bus routes. If you want to put that into perspective, it is the equivalent of driving a bus to the moon and back 69 times, so it is quite a long distance that we cover. We currently operate out of seven depots, but we are about to open a new, world-leading depot at Willawong next

month and we also have another two depots planned to cater for growth in the north and south of Brisbane. We are approximately double the size of the next biggest bus operator in Queensland, so we really are the main deliverer of public transport.

I mention these facts because they highlight the sheer size of our responsibilities and also our capacity to deliver transport outcomes. Brisbane City Council is at the forefront of transport policy development and implementation. We have a unique role in world terms as a planner and operator of transport, and not just a unique position in operating public transport but also in funding it. Brisbane City Council is the only council in Australia to commit serious funding to public transport. In this financial year alone, Brisbane City Council is investing more than \$230 million of ratepayer funds into the network, while all the fare revenue is collected by the Queensland state government. Council is currently paying not just to support its operator but also for important infrastructure such as the new bus depots I mentioned, CityCat ferries and ferry terminals—and I do hope while you are in Brisbane you will take the time to have a ride on one of our CityCats.

The Brisbane City Council has a vision to make Brisbane the most sustainable city in Australia, and this includes our transport operations. That is why we have aggressively purchased CNG buses since the year 2000, and they now represent over 50 per cent of the fleet. Council also pays to offset the annual emissions of its bus and ferry fleet. We are always investigating ways to improve our sustainability by complying with the latest European emission standards and investigating hybrid technology. We are also combining traditional modes of transport, like the buses and CityCats, with new, innovative and more sustainable forms of transport such as our new city cycle hire scheme, which will see 2,000 bicycles across 150 stations in the inner-city area. It is a bit like the Paris Velib system. It will be the first in Australia and the first outside Europe. This is in addition to the \$100 million being spent this council term on new bikeways and bicycle infrastructure.

Over the last four years we have seen unprecedented growth, with a 40 per cent patronage increase on our buses and 65 per cent on our CityCat and ferry network. On the BUZ routes—and I stress that is B-U-Z, meaning ‘bus upgrade zone’; it is not that we cannot spell the word ‘bus’—the rising patronage has been even more dramatic, ranging from 50 to 125 per cent. I table a graph of bus patronage history in Brisbane. You can see that at one stage it actually dipped, but in the last four years we have seen unprecedented growth.

With the world economic crisis and the price of fuel rising again, we must plan for this growth to continue. One in seven Australians lives in South-East Queensland and many use our public transport system for employment access. Population forecasts estimate that our population will grow by an additional 600,000 people and 500,000 jobs in the next 20 years. That is why the lord mayor, Campbell Newman, and the current council administration have set out an aggressive vision to grow our public transport facilities by 500 buses and six new CityCats this council term, which concludes in 2012. This will include additional supporting infrastructure—the two new bus depots, as I mentioned before, and two to three new CityCat terminals. While there are longer-term desires for additional rail capacity, in the medium term demand on Brisbane buses will increase by 120 per cent by 2018, and, as I mentioned before, almost 50 per cent of all public transport trips in South-East Queensland will be on Brisbane buses.

For Brisbane, the most critical success factor is delivering an action plan that provides more capacity. In a growing city with challenging mode share and climate change targets, a dramatic increase in infrastructure and services is needed across all modes. We have developed a 10-point action plan to fast track the delivery of necessary improvements over the next 10 years. The overall goal is to offer choice and to make public transport the most attractive option for as many trips as possible. Delivery of this plan is only possible with massive increases in funding, broadly estimated at an extra \$1 billion per year for the next 10 years. It is not a council's role to fund public transport but we believe Brisbane City Council is in the best position to plan and deliver the transport system needed for the future in this area.

Thank you, gentlemen. I will table for you the reports on our 10-point plan and where we see public transport going in Brisbane and South-East Queensland.

CHAIR—Thank you, Councillor. That was a very impressive opening statement. Before I go to Senator Ludlum, could you tell us a little more about the Paris Velib system?

Councillor Prentice—Certainly. As you would be aware, JCDecaux, who have been appointed as the successful tenderer for the Brisbane City Council system, already have 16 running throughout Europe—in Paris, Lyon and Barcelona, for example—so we know that we are dealing with a successful operator. There are bike stations; there is a picture of a sample one in here. They are no more than about 300 metres apart, and people have swipe cards. They swipe the card and take that bicycle, preferably on short trips around the CBD and inner city area. It is not for recreational cycling; it is for short trips, but will hopefully get people onto cycles instead of taking quick, short car trips.

JCDecaux say that you need to start with a minimum of 20,000 bicycles and 150 stations to be successful, so we would expect, for example, that if, when you finished here today, you wanted to go down to the Botanic Gardens, you could walk out the door, swipe a card, ride your bicycle down to the Botanic Gardens and click it into the next system. It will be free for the first 30 minutes and then there will be a minimal charge for time thereafter because we want to achieve this for commuter not recreational cycling. We believe it will also be very popular for students because we have the University of Queensland at St Lucia, QUT in the city and a lot of students around South Brisbane and New Farm. We see students perhaps using the cycles instead of motorcars to get to university.

CHAIR—That is commendable. I have seen it operating in Paris. Would there not be a great demand on improving the infrastructure—bike laneways and the like?

Councillor Prentice—Yes; and that is one of the reasons that the Lord Mayor has allocated \$100 million in this term for bikeways. One of my goals also is to connect some of our missing links. While Brisbane has been providing bikeways and off-road cycleways, there are some too hard missing links—a famous one for local residents is at Cutters Landing. We will be delivering those missing links over the next three years.

Mr Broe—We are currently looking at what are the key cycle roots through the city where we can get bike lanes and bike priority. There is a key bridge, called the Kurilpa Bridge, currently being built at Tank Street and we are trying to retrofit some bike lanes into that state government project because it was being designed without proper bike access from that bridge down to the

Bicentennial Bikeway. So finding bike lanes through the city is challenging. We are not trying to put bike lanes in every single street. We want to nominate specific routes that link to the key destinations, get the best possible priority for bikes in those roads and try to get the traffic out of those streets as well.

CHAIR—My last question is: are bicycle helmets compulsory in Queensland?

Councillor Prentice—Yes, they are.

CHAIR—So obviously it is a matter of bringing your own helmet or hiring one. What will you do?

Councillor Prentice—There will be both. We believe local residents will probably have their own, but we are going to provide a large quantity at a very reasonable price—we hope around \$20. We would hope that local residents would buy those. We will also have a hire system so that visitors and tourists will be able to hire them for about \$5. There will be a cleaning system when they have finished hiring them.

CHAIR—When will the new system be up and running?

Councillor Prentice—We hope by the end of this year or early next year.

Senator LUDLAM—I very much appreciated your opening statement and all the things you are up to. You name a figure of \$1 billion per year for 10 years to fund what you can see being necessary coming down the line. Can you give us an idea of what that system would look like if that kind of funding were allocated?

Councillor Prentice—Yes. We are itemising not just what council is currently responsible for but what council would like to see happen. For example, we currently have busways like the South East Busway. We would like to see the Eastern Busway, which is currently under construction, accelerated and the Northern Busway as well. We also need to identify a bus corridor to the western suburbs. So busways would be a critical part of that. Back at the end of 2007, the council also undertook an investigation into mass rapid transit. We had identified that the council was not capable of providing anything other than other than buses on that route—that while some people wanted light rail there was a differential of about \$345 million to \$33 million. Whilst council was not in a position to provide that, we are currently out at tender to provide stage 1 of that bus rapid transit corridor that we identified, which is from West End to Newstead through the CBD. There were another three bus rapid transit, or mass rapid transit, routes identified in that study, one in particular would be from Newstead out to the Australia TradeCoast, which has been identified as a major employment growth area for Brisbane over the next 20 years. We would love to be able to fund that and possibly look at more innovative ways of doing it—maybe monorail or something like that. There is some new technology in monorail which makes it a lot more cost-effective than it has been in the past.

I mentioned earlier the BUZ network, the bus upgrade zone. We believe we could provide more of those with additional funding. In particular, we are looking at higher capacity buses. We recently launched our new 14.5-metre rigid bus. We have been using articulated buses in the past. However, the new 14.5-metre bus has the same capacity as the articulated buses but,

because it has a third steerable axle at the back and because of the road rules, it can carry more passengers. We are rolling out eight of those this financial year, and we believe that we need to look at more of those in the future. Also, we would like better integration. The problem with that in Brisbane, unlike the wonderful example of Murdoch in Perth, is that we have retrofitting to do, and that will not be inexpensive. When you look at some of the principal and major centres that have been identified under the South East Queensland Regional Plan, we need to provide connectivity between our buses, our trains and ideally our cyclists as well. We are talking to Queensland Rail. We would ideally like to do what Murdoch have done and have bike ways down the rail corridor, which would be great. So we believe that there are some efficiencies to be had by doing all this under the one operator and the one deliverer, but we need to plan now and deliver now—over the next 10 years—if we are going to meet the growth demands by 2030.

Mr Broe—With regard to the 10-point plan and in terms of infrastructure, rail is obviously a key issue. This 10-point plan is a 10-year, medium-term action plan, so there are some aspirations for a metro in the longer term but we are not going to have that in the next 10 years. The first key part of the plan is to make better use of our existing rail capacity—more trains, better stations, more signalling—and to try to make use of that important infrastructure. The last point of the plan is that, apart from the infrastructure, there are a whole series of supporting facilities that are very important to go with an integrated public transport system, like depots—if we do not have depots, buses cannot be housed and maintained. The issue of park and ride is a very key one for all Australian cities, so we would like to see more of that, not in the inner city but in the outskirts so we can intercept commuters early and get them onto public transport. Then there is ticketing and pricing—and an arrangement to prepay is a key one. Customers currently spend a lot of time trying to get onto very crowded buses. If we have an arrangement where customers can prepay and buy all the tickets off the bus, that would allow us to get people onto the system more quickly and speed journey times for everybody.

Councillor Prentice—And our CityCat terminals, of course.

Mr Broe—And our CityCat terminals. There is safety and security. There is one thing about public transport around the world: there is an endless list of things that customers want. We can have a world's best system, but we have to work on them all. We cannot just focus on infrastructure, services or information. It is a balanced package of everything. That is why the funding that we need is significant.

Senator LUDLAM—Presumably the state operates the rail network and you have to interact with the councils in surrounding regions. How is that done? How do you coordinate transport services with the state government and the councils that are your neighbours?

Councillor Prentice—The state government created something called the TransLink Transit Authority, TTA. They now have integrated ticketing across all modes. Brisbane City Council, as I mentioned, is very large. We are the only council to actually provide services. So, while there are some limited services provided from the outer regions and the other councils funded by the state government—and, might I say, completely funded by the state government—the disadvantage to us is that people drive to the outskirts of Brisbane, to places like Browns Plains on the south side, and then catch the Brisbane City Council buses into the city. You may have read stories about our bus-full figures. Because the busways and the regularity of those services

are so popular, our buses are regularly full. People in the outlying councils drive to our services and then get on the buses.

I have an additional problem. Ideally we would like to be able to feed the buses into train stations. Indooroopilly is a major centre in the western suburbs. It is not far from Queensland university, which is one of the main attractors for people, particularly at this time of year with students. The problem we have is that, by the time the train gets to Indooroopilly, it is full. So I have to run the buses into the city. We cannot put them into the trains. Then there are another five stations before it gets to the CBD. Unfortunately we also need to see the state government invest very seriously in rolling stock and increase the services on the rail.

Mr Broe—The planning mechanism by which coordination occurs is that TransLink produce a TransLink Network plan. That is a four-year plan. They set out in that plan what broadly the network should look like, and they set out where buses should feed into rail, where the major interchanges should be and which mode of transport is best in each corridor. Then operators like Brisbane Transport, Gold Coast, Surfside and others fit in with that plan and have a contract with TransLink to deliver services in accordance with that plan. They set specific performance standards for coordination and how long buses should wait for trains and vice versa. It is all set out in TransLink's plan, which we actually help them deliver.

Senator LUDLAM—How much of what you are planning for is about commuters and getting people in and out of the CBD at regular work hours as opposed to moving people around the city or to other centres?

Councillor Prentice—Brisbane unfortunately has the problem that 'all roads lead to Rome'. Even if you want to go to the south side of Brisbane from the west, you tend to go through the CBD. That is why the Lord Mayor—with his other hat on—is also investing in a project called TransApex, which is delivering a ring-road of tunnels around the city. You have probably heard of the North South Bypass Tunnel or CLEM7. The state government have taken on the Airport Link one. We have got Northern Link in its early stages at the moment and Hale Street.

We are trying to provide that ring-road for people so they do not come into the CBD. However, a lot of the generators, particularly for work, are in the city or close to the CBD. You have got the University of Queensland, QUT and Griffith University—who are here today—the CBD workplaces, Royal Brisbane Hospital and the other hospitals. One thing I mentioned before is that one of the predicted growth areas for employment is Australia TradeCoast, which is out near the airport. That is why we are looking at planning now for public transport infrastructure to go to that route so we are not retrofitting in 10 years time, because that is where the growth is going to occur. So our planning is not just catering for the current demand; we want to provide now for future demand.

Mr Broe—Cities are very much radially focused, and Brisbane is, but one thing we are doing is looking at a series of cross-town routes. On page 53 of our report, you will see some existing and some proposed cross-town routes, where the bus is the most flexible mode to try to get between some of the centres, to try to keep buses out of the CBD. We have set specific mode-share targets across Greenline so we can set what the public transport mode share should be, both for trips into the city and trips around the city.

As Councillor Prentice says, buses do compete with cars for some of those cross-town orbital trips, but for some of the centres where employment is growing or is about to grow we are increasing patronage quite dramatically. There is a plan in here that, if funded, would also dramatically increase cross-town public transport services and therefore patronage.

Senator WILLIAMS—Councillor Prentice, you put \$230 million a year into your transport system, yet the state government collects the fares—is that correct?

Councillor Prentice—That is right.

Senator WILLIAMS—How much per year does the state government spend to subsidise your transport system?

Councillor Prentice—We do have those figures. I think it is about \$170 million a year. They do pay the services for the buses.

Senator WILLIAMS—When you say ‘the services’, you mean maintenance?

Councillor Prentice—The operating costs, but they do not pay the full operating costs. Yes, we are out of pocket significantly. It is an issue up here.

Senator WILLIAMS—I find it amazing that local government puts \$230 million and only gets \$170 million back. Obviously there is a shortfall. What do you put the 40 per cent increase in the usage of your buses over the last four years or so down to—the price of fuel, parking problems?

Councillor Prentice—No. One of the early ones was that the Lord Mayor went on an aggressive campaign of air-conditioning the buses, so comfort has had an impact. There was the accelerated purchase of new buses. There is your purchase chart. By the end of this term, the lord mayor will have doubled the fleet that he inherited. We believe that the most important factor, though, is these BUZ routes—bus upgrade zone routes—on the busways. People know that every five minutes there will be a bus. So it is timetable. It is a bit like some of the European systems: people just know that if they miss one bus there will be another in another five minutes. That has given people more confidence in the public transport system. We believe that is one of the main contributing factors. There is also the integration of the tickets—integrated ticketing between train and bus. But if you study the figures here compared to other cities that have done that, it probably accounts for only two to three per cent of growth. We believe that the main factors are better buses, more of them and more regular services.

Senator WILLIAMS—You expect a 120 per cent increase by 2018 on your bus network?

Mr Broe—They are actually TransLink projections. Rail’s modal share in Brisbane will actually drop, because we will not get services on rail quickly enough. Brisbane’s transport modal share will actually increase and Brisbane transport bus demand will increase by 120 per cent over the next 10 years.

Senator WILLIAMS—What was needed—\$1 billion for 10 years?

Councillor Prentice—We believe that \$1 billion for 10 years will make us a world-class city in public transport. Of course, that makes us more sustainable as well. We want to be proactive in getting people onto public transport. At the moment we are still playing catch-up. We want to have it there as the population grows—and, as you know, the time to capture people is at the beginning. If they try it and they do not like it, you don't get them back. But if we can put in the infrastructure and services now, we believe that we will easily see that growth, if not more.

Senator WILLIAMS—Is that \$1 billion a year required going to come out of council revenue? Obviously not—you are going to need huge assistance from either state or federal government or both.

Councillor Prentice—That is why we are here today. We believe that it is in the interests of federal and state governments to fund it, but we believe Brisbane City Council is ideally placed to deliver it.

Senator WILLIAMS—Of course, the more people on the buses, the less traffic congestion, fewer parking problems, less pollution et cetera. It is a win-win situation.

Councillor Prentice—It is a win-win situation, yes.

Senator WILLIAMS—Thank you, Councillor Prentice.

Mr Warren—On the BUZ routes and also on the congestion, the South East Busway carries 18,000 to 20,000 people per hour in the morning peak into the city. If they were not on the buses it would require about seven to eight extra lanes on the Captain Cook Bridge. There is a great illustration of the value of the BUZs on page 34 of the document you have. In every one of the nine BUZ routes we have had running for some time now, when we introduced them, all our surveys of customers have highlighted what the average commuter wants out there is frequency and reliability. This provides that every five to 10 minutes. Every one of them increased patronage in three months by 50 per cent to 70 per cent. In those nine BUZ routes, the 230 services that we run carry about 27 per cent of our total patronage. They work and they need investment in them.

Mr Broe—With regard to the funding perspective, a billion dollars might sound a lot but, to provide quality public transport, it needs to be compared with how much is put into roads right across Australia. To give an example: in London, for Crossrail, which is a new public transport tunnel going through London, one line will cost \$25 billion. So that is the sort of capacity needed to really move people and provide services to attract the amount of carriers.

CHAIR—How far is Crossrail?

Mr Broe—Crossrail is an underground road tunnel of about 20 kilometres, from the west to the east of London—going under the city.

Senator O'BRIEN—Councillor, you talked about tabling the document that you have in front of you. We actually have not seen it yet.

Councillor Prentice—You have it in front of you.

Senator O'BRIEN—No, the charts.

Councillor Prentice—You can have these.

Senator O'BRIEN—Thank you very much. On the bus patronage history, there was a major decline in 1994-95 and a small one in 2000-01. Obviously it was fairly static in the period leading up to 2004-05. Is that a fuel-driven spike or a service-driven spike?

Councillor Prentice—That is service. We had a change of lord mayor and Campbell Newman took over in 2004 and invested record amounts in public transport—in the bus fleet, in air-conditioning the fleet. That is about the time the BUZ routes came into play.

Senator O'BRIEN—So the BUZ routes started then and that chart essentially shows the growth substantially in those routes rather than across the system? Is that right?

Councillor Prentice—Yes. A lot of those buses were on those regular routes—the bus upgrade zone. You would appreciate that, prior to 2004, the previous administration had purchased only 60 buses in five years. The new lord mayor delivered 337 in his first four years and he is delivering another 500 this year. So the accelerated growth has provided accelerated capacity. Hand in hand with that is the air-conditioning. More importantly, we believe to reflect the figures of patronage growth are these bus upgrade zone routes, which started in about March 2004. We did not have the capacity to take them until we got the extra buses.

Senator O'BRIEN—How was the purchase of the buses funded?

Councillor Prentice—That was funded by council.

Senator O'BRIEN—By debt? By additional rates? By borrowings?

Councillor Prentice—By borrowings. In 2007, the lord mayor and then Premier Peter Beattie came to an arrangement where we would sell them to Queensland Treasury Corporation and lease them back. That has assisted us in purchasing increased numbers; otherwise, it would have been more of a burden on the ratepayers.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is that a cost to the state, or does the state make money on that or is it neutral?

Councillor Prentice—Queensland Treasury Corporation is acting as a bank.

Senator O'BRIEN—Sometimes governments make loans but do not charge interest or whatever. Is that a commercial transaction?

Councillor Prentice—It is a standard loan where, at the end of the day, they pay the operating costs, and that is reflected in here in the financials as the contribution from Translink.

Senator O'BRIEN—So they purchase the buses, you lease them and pay a service fee and they pay part of the cost.

Councillor Prentice—Translink pay the operating costs but that does not cover all of the costs.

Senator O'BRIEN—So, effectively, they are covering the capital and you money goes into the operations and they assist with the operation?

Councillor Prentice—That is right.

Senator O'BRIEN—How long has that been going on?

Mr Warren—About five years now.

Councillor Prentice—Since 2007.

Mr Warren—Can I stress, too, that the BUZs are not our only high-frequency services. They are the ones—some of them—that go from five in the morning until 11.30 at night seven days a week. We have plenty of other high-frequency services, particularly in the peak, and services to UQ. I believe we probably have the best service to a university in Australia. We used to carry 3,600 per day to uni and we now have up to about 10,000 utilising both the route here along Coro Drive and the Eleanor Schonell Bridge. One interesting fact I love saying about the BUZ is that all nine of those BUZ networks now carry more people on a Sunday than they used to on a weekday, prior to them being a BUZ. We have full buses on Sundays. It is astonishing.

Senator O'BRIEN—Astonishing or a welcome change?

Mr Warren—Yes, astonishingly great—the fact that we can provide that frequency and reliability over an extended period.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am not sure how many buses and trains are running where you are based, Senator Williams.

Mr Broe—The key thrust of the 10-point plan is capacity. Every time we put a bus on, it is full. We still have some crowded buses. There seems to be an almost unlimited latent demand out there for public transport. It is just a case of getting the actual services and capacity out there and the growing city meeting it.

Senator O'BRIEN—How much would you attribute the growth to parking and transport costs for the commuter? Is there a shift based on the cost experience of public transport versus private motoring?

Mr Broe—Personally, I do not think it is the cost factor. There is congestion in Brisbane. We do have significant congestion, which is driving the need for the ring road network. Parking costs in Brisbane are increasing, but it is more for the short stay parking. It is really about capacity. London was the same between 2002 and 2007. There was no parking or congestion charge in the centre of London. There was no serious demand management. There was simply a massive investment in buses by Ken Livingstone that drove a huge increase. It really is about capacity, frequency, integration and information. There are so many people out there who want

to use the system that you do not have to really force them out of their cars. They will use public transport if the service meets their needs for as many trips as possible.

Senator O'BRIEN—You talked in part about integrated ticketing. How much is that available and how are commuters using it? I am thinking, for example, of my experience in New York recently, where you could buy one pass to cover you for a month. You could use the buses, the subway and some of the ferries.

Mr Broe—I think you are right. It is a huge untapped potential. I was in New York myself. I introduced the Oyster card in London. I think that we have a long way to go here before we get to a stage where you can buy one ticket or one card, a prepay card across all modes, or get a season ticket for a month. It is still in its infancy here. There is still a long way to go to get products that allow people to just get their card and use it regularly.

Senator O'BRIEN—What is the difficulty here?

Councillor Prentice—The problem is that there have been some major technical problems with the introduction. The state government, or TransLink, provided the boxes to Brisbane City Council. There have been problems with the cards being read. There is basically an IT glitch with them. If they do not work and people have go cards then they cannot swipe them, so the state government is regularly missing out on fares there. We have asked for additional machines so that when we identify problems we can replace them, but there have also been problems, I understand, with reading the tickets in tunnels.

The other problem is that they had a commercial arrangement where the cards are only available from 7-Eleven stores, where we believe more widespread access would perhaps increase use. We also believe we could have done a bit better with the early marketing, maybe giving out go cards with a couple of dollars on them in the early stages just to encourage people to use them. There was also a problem that, as we phased out our system, where we had things like 10-trip saver, there was not as good a deal to be had on the go card in the early days, and so people were reluctant to take it up. We have now completely phased out our system and the state government have also introduced some incentives and concessions, so we believe that the take-up will increase greatly in the future.

Senator O'BRIEN—And that would aid efficiency with access to buses and trains.

Councillor Prentice—Indeed, and both the state minister and I are strongly promoting prepaid buses only. So on the BUZ routes, on the busways, where you have a bus every five minutes, we are trying to make every second one prepaid only so that there are no people trying to either hand over a \$50 note or count the coins in their purse. As you would appreciate, with buses the biggest time problem is people getting on.

Mr Broe—You are absolutely spot on about New York. We want people to be regular public transport users. We want them to get a product for a month that they can use across all modes so that they do not have to worry about a ticket. The more people you have like that, the better. London's Travelcard is 50 per cent of all travel. That is your standard customer who buys a ticket every month. Some of them buy a yearly ticket.

Senator O'BRIEN—While you are reminding me of new York, what is the disabled access situation?

Councillor Prentice—We are ahead of the DDA compliance requests, so we have more buses with DDA facilities than are required. We are also rolling out DDA compliant bus stops across the city as well. If they are regular users, people can ring and we make sure that there is a DDA compliant bus on that route for them. We can get you the actual figures.

Mr Warren—I think it is up around 70 per cent.

Senator O'BRIEN—Mr Broe, you would have seen the sort of situation that the Metropolitan Transport Authority in New York has. It is slow.

Mr Broe—It is slow but it is accessible. Some cities, such as Hong Kong, with the MTR, and Singapore have fantastic accessible systems. They have newish infrastructure. Where you have old infrastructure, like rail networks, it is very hard to retrofit. But, with buses in particular, any vehicles that you are buying new should be fully accessible. Make sure your street furniture and curbs are linked in with the buses too. Some cities do it very well. Some cities are retrofitting at huge cost. On the London Underground, the tube—I do not know if you have been there—some of those stations are almost impossible to get into. We have a lot more to do here, and it is a cost, particularly on the rail system.

Councillor Prentice—We found that the statutory requirement was 50 per cent by December 2007. We have 64 per cent. As Barry pointed out, all our new buses are DDA compliant, so we will increase that, obviously, by attrition.

Senator LUDLAM—I guess it is a bit of an advantage having the council running the transport system in that you are involved in planning as well. Can you tell us to what degree, particularly in outer metropolitan areas, you are using planning policies to plan for public transport?

Councillor Prentice—We also have a particular system that we have developed called HASTAS which helps as well. Alan, I might throw to you on that.

Mr Warren—HASTAS is a rostering and scheduling system where we can optimise the network, run services, work out where we need them and where is the best place to start them, finish them and so forth.

Senator LUDLAM—I meant land use planning rather than timetabling.

Councillor Prentice—We are working, for example, with the South East Queensland Regional Plan which has been put out. We put in submissions regularly to the state government to allow for bus priority lanes, busways. There is an issue here at the moment to do with the Kenmore bypass, where we would like to see public transport have priority lanes. There is also a need for bikeways. We have a growing population who are commuting cyclists. We have provided the first end-of-bike-ride facility in Australia, down at King George Square. If you have time, I encourage you to look at it. That provides showers, lockers, laundry services and hair dryers so that you do not have to have helmet hair, which is a big issue. What amazes us are the

thousands of people who go out in the morning from five to six to get their cycling exercise then go home, have a shower and get in the car and come in to work. What we are trying to do is encourage them to commute to work, so bikeways are a critical planning input that we make into the city planning and the state government regional plan. Part of our road network planning does include our busways, bus rapid transit routes and bikeways. Is that more along the lines of what you are asking?

Senator LUDLAM—Yes. Is there any thinking around more compact urban form transit oriented development and that sort of thing or are we still essentially building fairly car dependent outer fringe areas?

Councillor Prentice—Not at all. Four years ago we looked at how we wanted the city to develop and, at that stage, it was a scattergun approach. Over a couple of years, through our planning department, we did an extensive number of what are called neighbourhood fairs and neighbourhood planning fairs. We identified that the community wanted development to be in centres. They wanted centre growth. We gave them four options. We gave them centre growth; corridor development; CBD development, so all the density was in the CBD; and the current scattergun approach.

The community strongly wanted centre growth and second to that was corridor development. So we went away and developed a preliminary plan, identifying 10 major centres across the city. We then applied the requirements of the South-East Queensland regional growth, which were those extra 145,000 dwellings, as required by the state government, and found that we could not actually manage to fit all the requirements into that sort of plan. So our planners went away and the state government refused to allow us to reduce the number of residences we believed was optimal. We have gone back and we have now developed a plan with six principal centres—places like Indooroopilly, Chermside, Carindale, Mount Gravatt, as well as corridor development. Through that, we have identified some TODs, transport oriented developments, and we have identified where the growth should happen. That is currently being rolled out through what are called localised neighbourhood plans. From our input in traffic and transport we are identifying where we want to see corridors such as the bus rapid transport corridors. As recently as yesterday I was in a planning meeting for developments at Newstead, and we identified the fact that we need to take road space back from the development for bikeways and future bus transit areas.

Mr Broe—You are absolutely right. Land use is the most fundamental constraint on efficient public transport. It is no coincidence that cities like Hong Kong, Singapore, London and Paris have the most efficient high-density public transport. We would like to see more efficient land uses, high-density mixed use and we try for them, but governments can only move as fast as communities want them to move. Density is a big community issue. We are trying all we can, but I think it is a community response issue.

CHAIR—Senator Ludlam, Councillor and the staff, I thank you very much for your cooperation. As I say, we could probably sit here and ask you questions for the next, at least, half an hour. Unfortunately, our other witnesses would probably get a bit grumpy. Thank you very much.

Councillor Prentice—Thank you. We are happy to provide additional information on anything you want.

[9.48 am]

BURKE, Dr Matthew, Member, Pedestrian and Bicycle Transport Institute of Australasia

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Dr Burke—I am appearing as a member of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transport Institute of Australasia, affectionately known as PedBikeTrans!

CHAIR—Do you wish to make a brief opening statement?

Dr Burke—Yes, I do, and, if you would bear with me, I would like to read parts of it, if that is okay.

CHAIR—That is fine.

Dr Burke—I would like to start by telling you a little bit about our institute. We are a networking and educational association for professionals involved in pedestrian and bicycle planning in Australia and New Zealand, seeking to improve outcomes on the ground for cyclists and pedestrians. We do most of that work through education and training, networking and equipping professionals. We do not do much direct advocacy, but we do get involved in activities like this, providing submissions to government.

Our members include transport planners, engineers, land-use planners, urban designers, sport and recreation professionals, health professionals, people across state and local government, private consultancy and the occasional academic. I would suggest that our members are fitter and better looking than many of the members of related transport professional associations, such as the IEOS transport chapter or the planning institute transport chapter, although we often come cross members and we have a very good working relationship with them.

CHAIR—I know some pretty good looking truck drivers there, Dr Burke, so I take offence at that!

Dr Burke—It was said tongue and cheek. Let me talk walking and cycling and public transport first of all—just a couple of principal statements. Firstly, we see walking and cycling as complementary to public transport—perhaps even as co-conspirators against the motor car. Walking and cycling presently provide about one-sixth—that is, around 17 per cent—of all trip stages, or the legs of a journey, in Australian cities. Certainly that is the case for the Brisbane data. Every mode of transport apart from the motor car is dependent on walking and almost every public transport journey begins and, particularly, ends on foot, and I will talk about that in a minute. Walking and cycling are particularly important for that first and last kilometre of public transport journeys, and not generating environments that are conducive to that first and last kilometre is a significant barrier to public transport use.

In the late 20th century, land use planning and transport investment decisions, not least by federal government, have ensured that motor vehicles are now used for the majority—around three-quarters—of all trips in Australia, and the goods and services that households fundamentally require are often, unfortunately, only available via motor vehicle transportation. There are equity concerns and industry specific concerns about this. For instance, people in outer suburbia trying to get to industrial employment these days are pretty much reliant on the motor car.

Research by Queensland Transport and in WA has shown that even in car orientated Australian cities like Perth and Brisbane around one-third of all motor vehicle trips could very easily be made by public transport, walking or cycling, with only subjective choice factors standing in the way of a decision to use the car. So there is a section of the travel market that would be very easily attainable. We could increase that share, and that would be without changes to our public transport system.

The availability of walking and cycling is also high. All but the most seriously disabled are able to walk; 50 per cent of Australians have a bicycle in good working order in their household, according to the ABS; and bicycle sales outstripped motor vehicle sales again last year—we hit 1.2 million and we are showing no sign of slowing down, according to figures from the Retail Cycle Traders Australia.

Talking about funding, we recognise that investment at the federal level has pretty much been prioritised towards the national highway program, black spot funding and other programs for roads and away from public transport, walking and cycling. We are pleased with the emergence of Infrastructure Australia and the presence of this inquiry. But we do note that, as I stated, in Australia walking and cycling represent one-sixth of all trips, yet we gain about two per cent of funding at the state level and even less at the federal level. We note that we are one of the last few countries to actually have a national bicycle network plan. New Zealand have just announced theirs. So there are obvious places where we could look.

I will talk quickly about the benefits—and I will not bore you with this too much—of walking and cycling and public transport. I would like to add to what has been said earlier. Yes, there is a safety net group that walking and cycling and public transport meet the needs of accessibility for and, yes, there are choice travellers whom we are trying to attract away from the car. But there are also pressing economic reasons to be investing in these modes. We cannot squeeze more people into our central business districts and our key activity centres and we cannot have a viable commercial property sector in these locations unless we are bringing people to them on high-occupancy modes. As we heard, with the busway, it is the equivalent in Brisbane of about seven lanes of freeway, but we have about one lane of freeway that is also not having to be provided due to the cyclists coming in from the south of Brisbane, particularly on the Goodwill Bridge, due to the very large numbers that the infrastructure we have built is generating. For cycling and walking, the truism of ‘Build it and they will come’ is proving to be the case. Where we are investing in our cities—not just in Brisbane but also in Adelaide and elsewhere, particularly in Melbourne—we are seeing very large uptakes in ridership.

The other key benefit for walking and cycling, and which relates to public transport journeys that include these modes, is ‘active transport’. By that, we mean transport that produces significant physical activity benefits. It is known that Australians engage in too little physical

activity. It is one of the most common and most preventable lifestyle risks to public health, and is second only to tobacco as the most important health risk in Australia today. The issue is not just of obesity and sedentarism. There are now also known impacts from physical activity on mental health. We are also seeing benefits from walking and cycling in social capital development which, in turn, has impacts on mental health in the community. I wrote a cycle node fact sheet for the Bicycle Federation of Australia on cycling and social connectedness that brought forth much of that research.

In terms of public transport users and their active transport, I undertook some research, with Professor Lex Brown at Griffith University in 2007, published in *Road and Transport Research*, which indicates that people who are using public transport in Brisbane each weekday—that is over 200,000 persons or about 13 per cent of the population—are on average walking more than 2.3 kilometres or 28 minutes to and from public transport each day. I note that that meets almost exactly the 30 minute minimum Australian daily physical activity recommendation put together in the National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians. So these are average figures but they suggest that, should we move people to public transport in significant numbers, we will actually be giving them a significant dose of physical activity, embedded in their daily life, so they will not need a gym membership necessarily to maintain that minimum physical activity requirement.

CHAIR—And they will get better looking.

Dr Burke—And fitter and so on, yes; shall we use the word ‘sexier’? And it would not be bad if Australian models were making their way on the stage overseas. I will give you some best practice examples if I can. I would like to run through a few quick things. It is beyond the scope of this short submission, and I am happy to talk later in greater depth about these issues, but here is a really quick potted group of best practice examples and some places on which I think we should be placing attention.

The first—and this picks up Senator Ludlam’s comments earlier—is improved urban design policies and guidelines. Most Australian metropolitan strategies are focusing on issues of transit oriented development and urban restructuring, but we are often losing out in attention to detail in the provision of important facilities around public transport nodes. And we have public transport operators building public transport infrastructure, such as our busways in Brisbane, and building walking and cycling structure, only within the precincts and the bounds of their land—that is, not building the necessary links to get people to their public transport infrastructure.

A second is way-finding strategies. That may sound silly and puerile and minuscule, but it is not. International research is suggesting that it is one of the best bangs for your buck, in terms of stimulating walking within inner urban environments. London is currently ripping up most of its finger-pointing signage and introducing third-generation way-finding strategies. I can talk about that a bit later. It is relatively cheap. It is particularly useful for infrequent visitors to city centres such as business travellers and others, and for tourists.

CHAIR—Dr Burke, I am sorry to interrupt, but if your opening statement does go on a bit longer, I will get you to table it, because I am sure Senator Ludlam and others have a host of questions for you.

Dr Burke—Okay. I would like to quickly run through and mention end-of-trip facilities at public transport stops. Brisbane City Council did not mention it today, but they should be commended for trialling new forms of racks, sheds, secured access precincts and bike lockers on their busway network and other parts of the network. With Queensland Rail, similarly, we have about 1,400 bicycle lockers across the network that are running at close to 100 per cent occupancy. I note that a bike locker can cost one-twentieth of what a car space can for a similar ridership gain. When we are talking park and ride, some of our membership fear that park and ride for cars is a bit of a zero-sum game and could actually cannibalise walking, cycling and feeder public transport.

The mass public bicycle hire scheme was spoken about a lot by Councillor Prentice earlier, so I am not going to talk about it. Let me just say that we view this as a very important last-kilometre part of a public transport network, and that is how it is being used in many European cities: to get people from a site like Central Station to or from the CBD for that last kilometre.

Beyond that, there are travel behaviour change programs such as the TravelSmart programs. We are looking to the federal government to continue and hopefully increase support for such activities that were previously supported by the Australian Greenhouse Office. Finally, there are best practice guides and land use planning instruments. Notably, the Commonwealth is engaged. The Department of Health and Ageing is working with the Planning Institute of Australia on a document called *Healthy spaces and places* as we speak. That is seeking to help local governments and urban developers build better places that will support, at the neighbourhood level, access to and provision of public transport and also walking and cycling in and around those precincts. There are other activities: Western Australia's Liveable Neighbourhoods and a Queensland government document that will shortly be coming out and that I recommend to you; it is currently titled *Supportive environments for physical activity and healthy eating*.

I will end there, but there are a couple of things that we are suggesting you should look at beyond the scope of just looking at public transport per se. A number of federal levers are pushed away from supporting public transport. I note the Commonwealth fringe benefits tax concessions available for company cars and especially the distorted regulations encouraging profligate and unnecessary use of motor vehicles to meet a certain kilometre quota to bump you up into the next category. We are hopeful that you would be looking at removing some of these deleterious concessions and considering such concessions for public transport, walking and cycling instead. I mentioned TravelSmart. Also, I would like to prioritise again that idea of a national bicycle plan prioritising key links of national importance in Australian cities and also looking at things like the UK cycle demonstration towns, which have really been supporting local governments and local communities to invest in superior walking and cycling initiatives to support sustainable transport throughout the UK. You could be looking at activities similar to that. I will end the statement there. Thanks for your beneficence.

Senator WILLIAMS—Obviously, with the progress of all levels of government in instigating bike lanes et cetera, in your opinion they could do a lot more. Have they made good progress? Have they been far too slow? What is your attitude towards the combination of three governments in their infrastructure building, especially in relation to safety, of course—where you get out of the road of the traffic, the trucks, et cetera?

Dr Burke—We had many cycle cities in Australia in the 1950s. In fact, our mode shares for cycling were quite often the same as those of many of the European cities that now have 20 per cent mode shares. They went one direction; we went another. The reason was investment and neighbourhood design. We have chosen to build—let us say—US-style low-density outer suburban environments, but without much attention to humane street environments or segregated off-road bicycle and walking facilities. That has turned around in recent years and we are now seeing significant investment, but it is very expensive to retrofit. You see some of the investments, particularly in inner city areas—in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. We are also seeing new investments in some of the master-plan communities.

Just to put the figures in place, we are now with the Americans in terms of cycle mode share. We are down at about one per cent of trips being made. We are the world champions in the worst mode share for cycling. Even worse, we have possibly the lowest mode share for women cyclists. The percentage of cyclists who are women is about 27 per cent to 29 per cent in Australian cities, which is about the lowest ratio in the world, and we have less senior cycling.

That indicates that we have a different cycle market. The people we are attracting to cycling with investments like the King George Square cycle centre here are often the road warrior, lycra-clad cycle market. We are not seeing many grandmas and schoolkids cycling. In Europe, seniors are overrepresented; grandmas are overrepresented as cyclists. That is because it is local, utilitarian cycling in normal clothes over very short distances on sit-up and beg bicycles. That is the kind of cycle market. I think that if we are going to deliver ourselves from evil with sustainable transport it is that kind of walking and cycling—that utilitarian, local destination cycling—that is going to be a very significant part of it.

Senator WILLIAMS—In a place like Brisbane you have subtropical weather. You know what the thunderstorms are like in summertime—they roll in in the afternoon. Does that risk of a heavy storm in the afternoon—a ‘gully breaker’, as we call them in the bush—deter people from riding to work? They might fear going home in the pouring rain in their good suit or good clothes.

Dr Burke—It is hard to get data on cycling, but at Griffith University we looked at this in a separate study of walking and walking trip rates on days of really extreme precipitation or on days that were really hot and humid. We found an index to rate heat and humidity—the wet bulb index. We looked at whether trip rates differed in the household travel survey data. We found that they did not. Temperature did not seem to play a big part. What seemed to happen was that people simply shifted their trips to other parts of the day or they amended their travel in slightly different ways. Most of the time of our travel is at the start and the end of the day. It is not in that peak period, between 11 and three sit under a tree part of the day. So it did not seem that that was a great impact.

What we find with cycling worldwide is that people tend not to cycle in the 10 per cent most extreme weather conditions of hot and cold. In Iceland people cycle in conditions that no-one in Australia would ever think of and they only do not cycle when there is six foot of snow and they literally cannot get out their door. At other times they are willing to go do it. We find that quite strange, but it is what they have set their compass to.

CHAIR—Take a look at Canberrans, mate; they are not that far behind.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks for coming in. That was a great opening statement. I only have a couple of questions. I take it that your research extends much more broadly than Queensland.

Dr Burke—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—Can you tell us who in Australia is doing it the best at the moment—what is the high-water mark?

Dr Burke—We have a few different studies happening. There has also been some work within PedBikeTrans—we have been doing some work on some of these things. Shall we talk of local government's first of all. There has been a range of activities looking at different local governments and who has been doing well. In terms of the big metropolitan city councils, Brisbane City Council is a leader, and I commend them for their activities. They actually were not blowing their own trumpet enough this morning. They have been superlative. Their active transport team deserves immeasurable commendations for what they have achieved in the last five years. Adelaide is doing quite well. It has all the planning together but it is not really seeing the investment in infrastructure that some of the others are. Perth is doing particularly well and we are seeing investment. Sydney is doing not so well. Melbourne has been quite good. The activities of VicRoads and the advocacy there has been very good from Bicycle Victoria in leading things forward.

Some of the best examples are small, regional local towns. Hervey Bay in Queensland is an excellent example of a place that has really been working on public transport—walking and cycling—and they have invested heavily in an active transport network. Also, centres like Cairns and elsewhere here I think have been getting their policy right, and leading forward to investment. They have been doing particularly well.

We have some operators in rail who have been very open to including walking and cycling along their corridors. In Perth we have very good examples. In Brisbane we have not been able to get Queensland Rail to really open the envelope to create those sorts of access routes for walking and cycling along their corridors that would not only help them as operators but also facilitate walking and cycling across the cities. There are some leaders and some laggards there, I guess.

Senator LUDLAM—Can you talk about the costs of cycling and pedestrianisation relative to the costs of road and even rail infrastructure?

Dr Burke—Sure. I think many people think cycling is small bickies, and it often is, but there are some big ticket items we often need to get key links in the networks together. Just to put it plainly, we now have a plan for a bicycle network in South-East Queensland. It is called the principal cycle network for South-East Queensland. It links up key activity centres, public transport nodes and the CBD in a lattice of key networks that would provide the trunk network that you would want for a city. On current expenditures, it is going to take about 40 years to get even near to completing.

Senator LUDLAM—What are current expenditures?

Dr Burke—City councils have come to the party. They are now spending about \$25 million a year over a four-year period through a very significant increase in expenditure. I think that is the correct figure. We commend them for it. But at state government level it is drip-feeding and in other local authorities very insignificant funds are being put towards completing that network. Yet where we have completed parts of that network in the central city area of Brisbane, we have seen unexpected exponential growth in cycle numbers. Even in parts of the network where we have created a link going east-west and away from the city, we are finding increases in use on other links that you may not expect. That is because we are unlocking what we would call the network effect. This is an important principle in public transport and walking and cycling network planning, and particularly important for public transport.

In terms of costs, some of our links have been expensive. The Goodwill Bridge was, I think, about \$25 million when it was finally built. But we have thousands and thousands of pedestrians and cyclists using it per day. I enjoy sitting at a little pub that my university happens to own and watching the vast numbers of users that some people in state government told us would not use it. I quite enjoy sitting there watching all those non-users go past because there are so many.

CHAIR—Is that the one with the mobile coffee shop on it?

Dr Burke—Yes. It is so unused it is now able to support a coffee shop on it seven days a week. It just shows its success.

Senator LUDLAM—What do you see as the key roles for the Commonwealth government, which has not traditionally had a major role in public transport or the sort of work that you are talking about? What are the key strategic roles for the Commonwealth?

Dr Burke—I think there are some aspects of sustainable transport infrastructure that are beyond the scope of local government and state government to invest in. I have a good example on the public transport front at the moment. It is unfortunate you are not hearing from TransLink or Queensland Transport—I understand because of the caretaker period—but if I could speak to that. We have major crunch points in our network on the rail that will not be resolved without a major infrastructure spend on something that will give us a second rail crossing and the capacity to get past where the western and northern lines link, and the Merivale Bridge, which is a major squeeze point in the network. We cannot get to the 15-minute or 10-minute frequencies that we would like, and that Councillor Prentice was requesting of the rail operator, on those lines until we can create more slots and we cannot create more slots without having that infrastructure. That means a second crossing and the kinds of things that I understand are part of the Infrastructure Australia bid. It will be a \$4 billion to \$5 billion project. In this current circumstance, I think that is beyond what this rapidly in-deficit state government is probably going to be able to cope with on its own. So there is a role for the state to invest in some of that infrastructure, and we have not seen that for 10 years, to be honest

Similarly, in relation to local government building these cycle networks, there are rare local governments, like Hervey Bay and Brisbane City, that are willing to put their hands up and that have a rate base where they are able to do it, but most are underfunded. They have all the problems but none of the money to build some of those key links that they need. It is the more expensive links—for example ones that get past a river, like the Maroochy River bridge on the Sunshine Coast which is part of a very expensive cycle network project—that can be key. It is

those kinds of projects—projects that get a key link in the network sorted—which can help local governments build the rest of their networks pretty efficiently. So I think there is a role for those sorts of activities, hence I say that a national network plan or a national cycle initiatives program would be a very, very useful activity.

Senator O'BRIEN—So you are talking about a 40-year period of expenditure required? You mean by that, 'at current levels of expenditure', do you?

Dr Burke—Yes. However, if the state government were to match city councils' expenditures over the next four years, we would go close to building most of that network in the next four to five years.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is land acquisition a factor?

Dr Burke—Not usually.

Senator O'BRIEN—It is simply a cost that varies—is that right?

Dr Burke—Yes. But we continue to make silly decisions—and this is true of federally funded road projects and public transport projects as well as large state government ones. For instance, we built an inner-city bypass as part of the ring road network on the northern side of Brisbane and we spent what might have been less than \$1 million to put in a cycle link through a key part of that network. We are now spending something like \$4 million to \$5 million to insert a route after the fact. There were good people who recommended putting it in in the first place and who said that it was a necessary part of the network. But, because it was not on a line on a map and there was not the planning in place, it did not get in place. We now have that planning in place and we are starting to see state governments do the right thing. That planning is not in place in other cities. Sydney does not have a network plan with the same regulatory structures as that the principal cycle network plan for SEQ delivers or that the planning does in South Australia, where they have got that planning together. There is some genius behind what the principal cycle network planning will do here. I hope that somewhat answers your question.

Senator O'BRIEN—In terms of recommendations the inquiry might make, I am taking your submission to be suggesting that we would recommend that this future planning concept be built into future transport infrastructure for cities?

Dr Burke—Can I suggest that it may be as little as a minor amendment to the tagline that is usually appended to such projects that says that they will provide for walking and cycling in some capacity. Federally funded road projects, therefore, on occasion, will have a link over the top of a freeway or something. But for large—particularly inner-city—areas, or where there are key priority parts of a walking and cycling network, I think we need more than that. We need enhancements to the network. I think it would be a seminal move forward to shift that rhetoric from—at a measly level—providing some minimal level of service to enhancing, especially if it were really to roll out in projects.

Senator O'BRIEN—In terms of the liveability of our cities and the way we have developed them, it is fair to say that we are not going to have the same use of the bicycle for our shopping forays that might exist in parts of Europe?

Dr Burke—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—The fact that we are behind is a factor of the way we have developed, not necessarily because of a personal choice.

Dr Burke—Just to respond to that, in Cairns we had a mode share for cycling to work in the 1996 census, I think it was, of eight per cent, in a city of 100,000, which is quite comparable to many of the European cities that are targeted as sustainable cities with high bicycle mode shares. So I would suggest we actually have many centres in Australia that could have similar mode shares. For the inner-city areas of our cities, we are now up to a four to eight per cent mode share for cycling from a base of next to nothing 10 years ago, and it is rapidly increasing—and I think you will find there will be parts of the cities that will replicate those mode shares. Will we have the whole of Brisbane doing 20 per cent of its trips by bike? No; you are correct, Senator. But I think it can be a very significant part of the mix.

Senator O'BRIEN—And the hillier the city the less likely it is.

Dr Burke—We looked at that in the same study with topography as well as temperature. We looked at whether the hilliest parts of Brisbane had lower mode shares for walking and cycling compared to the flatter parts of Brisbane—we have many flat parts of the city, although you may not believe it. Again, the rates did not seem to differ, but we think that is because of who was cycling. But for walking it certainly was not a factor. So there might be a bit there and there might be a bit not there. But, yes, the Dutch are blessed with their very flat landscapes.

Senator O'BRIEN—In terms of cycling to work, how much of that depends on having facilities at work for showering, changing et cetera?

Dr Burke—Most Europeans do not cycle to work over large distances, but we have a large, growing community of cyclists who are cycling over very large distances, and it is important—it is very important—to have somewhere to safely store your bike, first of all, or you are unlikely to travel, and in climates such as ours it is very important to have locker and shower facilities.

Brisbane City Council built a shed. Instead of putting in car parking, they took some out—I do not know what it would be in car parks; 20 car parks maybe—and put in a bicycle shed with girls' and guys' lockers, parking for 100 bikes and shower facilities et cetera. They now have a waiting list of about 100 people for that facility, and it has 100 per cent occupancy. It is so successful that other occupants of that building and from elsewhere are visiting to see how they did it and why it is so good. And we now have the commercially successful King George Square Cycle Centre. That is a private operator providing those end-of-trip facilities for workplaces that do not have that, that were built prior to that. It is very important in our land use planning that city-centre commercial office developments have that infrastructure in place.

Senator O'BRIEN—So it is commercially viable, is it? Is it commercially viable for someone to set that up for businesses that have not provided it, by charging businesses or individuals?

Dr Burke—It has been open for six months. They now have just under 200 users. The facility was built by the state government and Brisbane City Council. Because they felt that the ongoing operations would be a commercially viable concern, they paid the capital costs, and a

commercial operator called fit2work won the tender to operate the centre. I am sure Andrew and John, the operators, would be happy to give you a quick look around the centre. It is state of the art, clean, hygienic—beautiful, in many respects—and borrows the best of European design. We believe that a similar model probably would work in other Australian cities where there is a density of those sorts of commercial office buildings that do not have those facilities, and that is most of our CBDs across the Australian capitals.

Senator O'BRIEN—Okay. Thanks.

CHAIR—I am very mindful of what is happening down at King George Square. It is absolutely brilliant, and I was just saying to the secretariat that we should stick our heads in there, time permitting, and have a look. Perth, for example, has problem similar to Brisbane in that not everybody travelling through the city is going to work in the city; they are crossing to get to the other side. I note Brisbane is the same. I do note that in Perth there are a lot of people who may come from the northern suburbs who cycle to the train, jump on the train with their pushbike, get to the southern suburbs, and vice versa, and then pedal out to work. You were saying that the Brisbane City Council should be commended because they are providing space for bikes on the trains and buses; is that what you were saying?

Dr Burke—You are talking about by onboard carriage, and I have not—

CHAIR—It is not for the lycra-clad road warriors; you see the other group of cyclists—

Dr Burke—I live in a mixed suburb and a number of my friends are tradies and work in industry. They travel with their bikes on the first service in the morning to get to industrial jobs, and they ride to and from the station to get to and from their places of work. It is very useful for such individuals to have policies that allow bikes to be carried on public transport vehicles in the off-peak periods and on the contraflow services—those empty services that travel away from the city at peak hour.

Brisbane City Council also trialled bike racks on buses. They did not talk about that today. That trial ceased. It was not the greatest of successes here, although I understand Canberra as a city are now trialling them and have had some greater success. It was not brilliantly marketed in Brisbane, and there were problems with it, but the system worked. I used it once or twice, but it was only on very few routes.

CHAIR—So there is room for improvement there.

Dr Burke—Yes.

CHAIR—So there are 500 new buses coming and that should be a topic—

Dr Burke—What you see in Europe, particularly on trams and trains, is spaces designed for onboard carriage of bikes, so bikes can be stored very conveniently out of the way of other passengers. Most of the Swiss, German and Dutch railway systems and some of the German light rail systems have onboard spaces to hang your bike up so it will not fall over on someone and its chains will not get in the way of neatly dressed business passengers. There are ride-on, ride-off possibilities built into the system. We would support the investigation of those,

particularly for peri-urban landscapes—for instance, the Sunshine Coast hinterland and Toowoomba—places where people make a journey to a suburban location in Brisbane on the rail network. Having a bike cage at the back of the train or having onboard storage would really work for some of those peri-urban landscapes. That is often what they are used for in Switzerland—to allow people in the sort of fringe settlements to use public transport efficiently.

CHAIR—It was a lengthy opening statement but you did provide us with a lot of information. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Proceedings suspended from 10.27 am to 10.52 am

IRVINE, Ms Darlene, Executive Officer, Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils

HOFFMAN, Mr Gregory T, Director, Policy and Representation, Local Government Association of Queensland

PIORKOWSKI, Mr Mark, Manager, Roads, Transport and Infrastructure, Local Government Association of Queensland

CHAIR—Welcome. Before we go to questions from the committee, does anyone wish to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Hoffman—My colleague, Mr Piorkowski, will make some opening remarks on our behalf.

Mr Piorkowski—From the perspective of the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Commonwealth's re-engagement in urban transport infrastructure investment and services is welcomed. It is something that has had a good history in terms of the Better Cities program and something we again welcome back into the fold. Cities, we recognise, are economic engines, and urban transport in our cities plays a key role in how people get to work and generate national wealth.

One of the things that we would like to make a point of is that, while urban transport is a critical component of the transport task, equal attention must be given to other aspects of that transport task, which include freight, cycling, pedestrian, roads and travel demand management. We would stress that we would like the federal government to continue to work directly with Queensland local government in this matter and collaboratively with the state government within the current regional and local planning frameworks, including the local integrated transport planning frameworks which have been established at many regional and local levels. We would like to ask the Commonwealth to consider when working with councils and state governments on urban transport that they look at those existing plans for projects that have been identified collaboratively with the state and local governments. We would like to see that those projects, if any, that are being considered through this process or down the track are ones which have been identified as joint priorities between the local governments and the state governments.

We would like any urban transport initiatives that come out of Commonwealth interests to have demonstrated that they are part of an overall strategy or an overall set of strategies which are supporting any of the urban transport initiatives, so that investment in urban transport, whatever that might be, is supported across a broad number of strategies. There is no silver bullet with urban transport. There have to be a suite of projects that support that, which include, as I said, travel demand management, road and cycle and pedestrian. That concludes my statement.

CHAIR—Thank you. Ms Irvine, do you wish to make a brief opening statement?

Ms Irvine—I do not have a brief opening statement, but I have written down some notes with regard to point (e) on your terms of reference. I do not know if you want me to address those now or later.

CHAIR—You can do it now.

Ms Irvine—There are a couple of linkages there with federal government that I see, primarily from the Far North Queensland region. Those are in relation to climate change, housing affordability in fringe areas, and an example from our Mount Peter designated master planning area. In relation to climate change, obviously that is a national interest, and increasing public transport usage would contribute to meeting the Commonwealth targets. Transportation generates the most CO₂ emissions from our community. Our region is over 182,000 square kilometres, has approximately 240,000 people and provides significant economic benefits in the form of tourism, agriculture and mining in these areas. Our region is currently under taking a baseline energy audit. One of the components is transport in local government and transport within our community. Basically, in the old Cairns City Council boundaries transportation generated the most CO₂ emissions from the community—over 415,000 tonnes. This was calculated using ABS data. Public transport will go a long way to reducing these CO₂ emissions, particularly in areas outside major cities.

In relation to housing affordability in fringe areas, more and more you see the disadvantaged move to the outer fringe areas of urban footprints. This is where the land effectively is cheaper and there is less access to services. They also face longer drives to work and subsequent cost. QT does not service these areas until there is a critical mass, and then the process starts again. So these people are pushed out as prices, for rent or purchase, increase. The federal government, I feel, plays a role in supporting these people. They often also have older vehicles, which use more fuel. This situation creates a catch 22. QT will not put transport in until there is a critical mass, but the cheaper land does not have that critical mass—and it is generally a long way off—until there is public transport.

A recent example, which I found out about this morning and which is absolutely terrifying to us, is that Mount Peter in the Cairns Regional Council area is the first designated master plan area that is facing state infrastructures charges. The state government is seriously considering the inclusion of state infrastructure charges in areas—for public transport, state roads with a local government function, police, courthouses, ambulance and schools, excluding TAFE. It is not just for land; it is for buildings as well. The current estimate of these costs per block of land is approximately \$80,000.

Local government will be required to collect these charges, and how to administer them is unknown. QT at this stage cannot advise if the service will be provided early or when the charges have been collected to fund it. So there is a twofold argument and frustration with this thinking. The state government collects taxes, receives funding from the federal government, particularly a cut from GST, and people living in these areas are being asked to contribute again for these services. It will kind of feel like double-dipping. These people pay taxes and have applied across the state for state services but are being asked to contribute again for their own services.

This will also have a huge effect on housing affordability and where people can afford to live on a day-to-day basis and how they can contribute to society without limiting services to support them. Areas that are less populated, like Atherton, Mareeba and Tully, QT will not touch because they are not viable. But it is needed—even the support of one or two services in the CBD. It is true what LGAQ said in their submission just recently and in their written submission—that it plays an influencing role through legislation, subsidy and taxation. With regard to the Mount Peter scenario, the state using federal money, state money and then ratepayers' money for public transport is not seen as fair, and the federal government can support with conditions being placed on these funds provided by the state.

CHAIR—Thank you, Ms Irvine. Of your 182,000 square kilometres, I think you said, I take it Cairns is the centre?

Ms Irvine—Yes, it is.

CHAIR—Are there any other major regional centres?

Ms Irvine—In comparison to Cairns, no.

CHAIR—What is your southern boundary, just for the benefit of the committee?

Ms Irvine—The southern boundary is Ingham and the northern boundary is Cooktown.

Senator LUDLAM—Ms Irvine, while we have you on the line, can you sketch for us the extent of public transport services in your region at the moment?

Ms Irvine—Cairns has what you could call decent public transport within the immediate CBD area. In the outskirts it is pretty bad. In Atherton, Mareeba, Port Douglas and Innisfail there is little to none.

Senator LUDLAM—What about linking centres together?

Ms Irvine—The only one is Atherton to Cairns, and that goes three times a day.

Senator LUDLAM—So there is really not a great deal. Have you been involved in putting submissions to Infrastructure Australia around public transport?

Ms Irvine—No.

Senator LUDLAM—You have seen it traditionally as a state government responsibility, so, just to spell it out, do you see there is a role for the Commonwealth government to be funding public transport services?

Ms Irvine—Absolutely, particularly when you relate it to climate change and housing affordability.

Senator LUDLAM—I wonder whether we could come to the Local Government Association. Do you have any thoughts on the points that Ms Irvine raises about the links between public

transport and housing affordability? I think some of the later witnesses today will bring this up as well. Can you give us your perspective on those issues?

Mr Hoffman—They are real issues in that they relate to how you want to approach the provision of housing. The further you travel into greenfield developments, the greater the public transport issues that arise. I acknowledge the point made by Ms Irvine as to the approach of Queensland Transport. Thresholds have to be met before public transport is provided, so it is really a debate about the chicken and the egg as to when you provide the transport. In any event, you need networks that will convey people, whether it is in private transport or in public transport. That is a debate in itself.

The other question, and a major issue for this part of South-East Queensland and other developing areas, is the debate about what form of development we pursue. There is certainly increased action to provide for development around transport oriented facilities to try to limit the pressure, but there will always be a need for a combination of increased density combined with the development of open or new greenfields, which raises the question of when you provide the public transport to service those greenfield outer developments.

Senator LUDLAM—Could I put this to both of you—maybe, Ms Irvine, if you are still on the line you could give us your thoughts on this as well. To what degree is planning being undertaken at a local government level for peak oil, or steeply rising oil prices that do not come back down again?

Ms Irvine—That has been a major component of our recently released statutory regional plan, the FNQ 2031. Those strategies and initiatives will be delivered through our planning schemes. So it is actually quite high at the moment.

Senator LUDLAM—Could you explain what you mean by that—'quite high'?

Ms Irvine—There is a strong focus on it in our planning, particularly for public transport and particularly in the Mount Peter area.

Mr Piorkowski—Planning for peak oil tends to be wrapped in a number of things around climate change and around getting a more sustainable level of transport within your community. So for councils—and you will probably hear from them today, or you may have heard from Brisbane today—it is part of a package of things that they are looking at, including increasing cycling and increasing walking. This is about giving the community a choice in the matter and making sure that those choices they have are equal to or better than the opportunities they have with their vehicles, which is usually the challenge. The public transport does not link up, it is late, the services are infrequent or the cycle networks do not connect up. There are a lot of missing links within the alternatives, so when you talk about planning for peak oil you are planning to provide people with alternatives to what they have in terms of their private vehicles, and that comes through in those transport plans that you are probably talking about today.

Senator LUDLAM—How prepared are councils now in your part of the world for steeply rising oil prices if they continue to go up this year, for example? What is the degree of readiness?

Mr Hoffman—I do not know that you could say that there is comprehensive planning for that across the 73 councils in Queensland. It is an awareness that is emerging. It is probably occurring as the councils themselves confront their energy costs, their fuel costs, and look to how they might respond to that. But, as indicated by Ms Irvine, across the state there is a regional planning process under way. Because of that growing awareness, incorporated into that process is an increasing consideration of how we need to plan and provide our transport networks or, more particularly, what our settlement patterns are that are serviced by our transport networks, considering costs broadly—whether driven solely by peak oil issues or, more particularly, from the costs of longer distance travelled, whether it is commuter travel to outer suburbs or not.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks. I will leave it there, Chair. I might come back at the end if there is time.

CHAIR—Of course.

Ms Irvine—Can I provide some comment on that? Up here, we are acutely aware of the issues of peak oil and the impact that it is going to have on us. The problem we have is that, when you are looking, say, outside the Cairns area, there is no real alternative other than to bear the costs and to bear the brunt at this stage. We recently did a study on freight transport within the FNQ area, and we are really limited on alternatives to road.

Senator O'BRIEN—You will be looking forward to the electric cars when they come out in a couple of years time as a solution, I imagine. My question is more to you, Mr Piorkowski and arises from evidence given this morning by Brisbane City Council when they talked about their contribution to the public transport system and differentiated themselves from other councils in that regard. They said that they experienced commuters from other local government areas driving to meet the public transport that Brisbane provided and using that to get into Brisbane. They did not use this term, but I know there has been a lot of talk from the local government sector about cost-shifting from federal and state government to local government. Is this a case of cost-shifting between local governments?

Mr Piorkowski—The notion that people travel in from the outer suburbs and other council areas into Brisbane centre is true. They do do that. I think the cost borne by the city of Brisbane is more along the road network rather than the public transport network. They subsidise the public transport network—they subsidise the buses, by way of the bus subsidy, the fares, as well as the ferry service. They do not have a role in the rail system, and QT provides the other half of the subsidy for the buses and the ferries. It is a joint-funding issue for them.

Senator O'BRIEN—Are you talking about their BUZ network? That is being impacted as well.

Mr Piorkowski—That is true; they have topped it up. We are providing a service. These people are coming to work in the city centre, so there is some benefit that the council gets from that as well. You need to look at this as a regional network. I think you are going to find that some of the growing centres on the outside, like Chermside, Capalaba—some of the other major centres that are not necessarily in the Brisbane city centre—are going to continue to grow. You are going to get places in Ipswich that continue to grow, so you will find that the travel pattern

that you have now may change somewhat so you have more cross-town movement, interregional movement, between them. At the moment, Brisbane City Council does bear a significant amount of volume on their networks, both public transport and road, that may shift suddenly down the track.

Senator O'BRIEN—Rather than Brisbane City Council running it, do you think there should be some sort of larger metropolitan transport authority for Brisbane?

Mr Piorkowski—They have TransLink at the moment.

Senator O'BRIEN—But that does not bring it all together under one head, manage it financially and share the costs, does it?

Mr Piorkowski—TransLink would argue they do.

Senator O'BRIEN—How do they do that?

Mr Piorkowski—TransLink organise the services. They pay directly to the operators as well as organise the timetables and everything else. That is meant to be the way the public transport network operates in the SEQ region. The integrated ticketing and the like is still being worked through. So I think you will find that down the track you may have that system, with council continuing to take a stake in the public transport arena because they feel it is an important part of the service that they offer their community. You will hear from Gold Coast today. It is worth noting they also provide subsidy to their public transport services, and to a lesser extent the former council of Noosa also provided services. When you look at the regional areas, many councils provide subsidy or fund things called 'community based transport'. That is not the mass transport that you get with urban transport, but they perform critical links between the community centres and between medical centres and things like that.

Senator O'BRIEN—A community car type set-up and buses.

Mr Piorkowski—Yes, and things like that. When you get outside of the urban areas and you have less of a structured environment around your services and around your timetables you just have to be a bit more creative—and that is what you start to find in some of the regional areas. Sometimes you lose those communities, and whether that is an interest of the federal government or not is up to you. I did not see it in your terms of reference, but that is what happens outside the urban areas. Within the urban areas it is more around the structured urban transport scheduling and the like.

Mr Hoffman—Those community based transport systems seek to link into the other transport networks, and that is providing an access at the extremities of the network more so than it is significant capacity to move large numbers.

Senator, I would add, in response to your question about outer areas, that there are a number of private bus operators that service outer local government areas through the TransLink authorised processes that do travel into the city as well. I do not know the numbers that those services provide, but that is a means by which direct access to the CBD from those outlying areas provided through a private provider in a way supplements anything that is done by

Brisbane city—acknowledging it is by far the most significant provider of public bus transport services into and out of the city.

CHAIR—And who pay those contractors? Is it local government or the state government?

Mr Hoffman—It is a combination of fare paying and state government subsidies.

CHAIR—Stakeholders.

Senator O'BRIEN—You are talking about the private operators?

Mr Hoffman—State government provides a subsidy to Brisbane city for the services that it provides as well.

Senator O'BRIEN—And is there scope to extend that? Perhaps I should rephrase that and say: are there other councils bordering Brisbane city which would consider being part of an entity that would manage the whole of greater Brisbane public transport system?

Mr Hoffman—I could not say. I am not aware of discussions as to whether there is a position that would support that or not. This afternoon you will hear from the Council of Mayors Southeast Queensland. That question could more appropriately be put to them.

Senator WILLIAMS—I live in regional New South Wales. One of the problems we have there—and this might be a bit different to what we have been talking about today—is maintaining a regional airline. We have just lost one in the town I live in of 12,000 people. On 12 March it will cease its little 19-seater Jetstream. I see this as essential for a lot of these large outlying areas, especially where they have to seek professional health services in places like Sydney. Do you face the same problem in much of regional Queensland?

Mr Hoffman—Most definitely. Queensland has suffered a similar fate with the recent closure of MacAir, which serviced regional and remote areas of the state. It is an issue for those communities and particularly for those local governments who, in a number of ways, have been significant supporters of those airlines through the provision and maintenance of their airport facilities. We have worked with many of those smaller local governments on the issues of the infrastructure that they need to provide—namely, the airport and related facilities—and standards are increasing there. Regulatory requirements are increasing, so that brings an extra cost to them in that respect. There are very few long-haul passenger bus transport services into the remote areas. They obviously run along the coastal strip and some through regional areas, but mainly on the highway trunk networks and not into the smaller centres.

Senator WILLIAMS—I suppose these smaller centres that need a regional airline would have situations where they might have to fly in specialists—doctors, dentists or whatever—to service those regions, and this would prove a problem if they did not have these airlines. Queensland had the situation where the state government was subsidising the regional airlines—

Mr Hoffman—That is correct.

Senator WILLIAMS—whereas in New South Wales, once the deregulation occurred back in 1985 or whenever, we lost a lot of those regional airlines. Do you see it as essential that the Commonwealth government look at assisting in providing some of these services to these regional outlying areas?

Mr Hoffman—I do; but, in making that statement, I am not suggesting that it would be an alternative to what the state government is doing. The state provides a significant subsidy, but the economies of scale—or the lack of them—in the operation of small airlines through those regional areas mean that the costs are significantly higher for the availability of those services. Looking at those needs and what is being done to meet those needs, a study of the costs might find a place for Commonwealth support. As is evident, the high-volume routes will attract the competition, and hence the lower prices, from amongst the airlines; but in the remote parts of our state—and I dare say in other parts of the nation—you are not likely to have competition on those low-volume but important routes providing access for social and medical reasons, and hence the cost. So the ability of the Commonwealth to support arrangements to enable those costs to be ameliorated in some way would be very welcome in those parts of the states.

Senator WILLIAMS—Senator Ludlam raised the issue of how local governments prepare for the peak oil price. This would obviously be a huge problem for you because you rely on fuel for your graders, excavators, trucks, loaders et cetera and we have yet to see so-called experts design any other system of powering these machines. I suppose you are jammed into a situation where you stick with the diesel powered vehicles and machinery until innovation designs something else.

Mr Hoffman—Yes. There are not those ready or obvious alternatives. I guess it suggests that, where the alternatives are not available, we should ensure that supplies are secured, but where there are opportunities for other means of transportation, they should be encouraged and supported, not only with a variety of financial subsidy schemes but also with cost penalties if those alternatives are not explored where they are able to be used—for example, a greater use of public transport.

Ms Irvine—I want to make two points, the first in relation to air transport. There is a cultural preference not to use air transport, but the reason they have air transport is that the road network is poor and they are cut off from that road network four to six months of the year. The second point I want to make is in relation to peak oil. We are investigating the introduction of biodiesel in this region.

Senator WILLIAMS—I am going to take you to a different issue. I ran a small business prior to entering the Senate last July. In that small business we sold electric powered scooters that had pedals on them. They were a terrific machine—used no fuel et cetera—but the New South Wales police ruled them illegal. Do you have things like that in Queensland? They look just like a Vespa—with panels et cetera on them. They are a great way of transport. They do about 30 kilometres an hour and the regulations were that you did not require a licence, the same as for pushbikes, and did not have to be registered. They have been outlawed in New South Wales. I think they have a great potential for people travelling 15 or 20 kilometres to work, especially older people who may not be as fit as the younger ones. Have you seen this type of transport at all?

Mr Hoffman—I have certainly seen some of them in my own neighbourhood, which would suggest that they are not illegal in this state.

Senator WILLIAMS—I believe Queensland has allowed them but in New South Wales the police said that they had to be registered. Of course, they did not reach the registerable standards to be registered with the RTA. We tried through Staysafe et cetera to have them allowed to stay on the road. We sold some 3,000 in New South Wales in the Newcastle area. Do you see electric pedal-assisted scooters as a good way forward as far as not using fuel and in assisting in pollution levels or whatever?

Ms Irvine—Here in Far North Queensland we are doing the Principal Cycle Network Plan and one of the issues raised was these electronic scooters and what the legislation and requirements are. There is a CC requirement needing you to have a drivers licence and that has an impact, particularly on the elderly. There is also an issue with regard to whether they are ridden on the road or the footpath. I will try to find QT's response to that.

Senator WILLIAMS—They do up to 30 kilometres an hour and you could not have them on the footpath. The law in Australia says that if the motor does not exceed 200 watts of power they do not have to be registered. I think it is something that perhaps local governments could push in the way of an environmentally friendly form of transport that does not require fuel. These things are all over the world now. Most countries have endorsed them yet New South Wales will not have a bar of them because of safety reasons. Perhaps it is something that your local government association will consider looking at or supporting when you have a clear indication of what they are about.

Ms Irvine—QT's response is, 'A motorised bicycle is a bicycle to which an electronic motor is attached. The motor must not be capable generating more than 200 watts of power. It is illegal to ride a bicycle on roads or road related areas such as paths if the bike has an internal combustion engine.'

Senator WILLIAMS—Exactly. These are electric bikes and do not exceed that 200 watts. Anyway, that is just food for thought.

Mr Piorkowski—The issue is probably around the conflict with pedestrians and cyclists on cycle networks, particularly ones that are used frequently. You have those bikes going at a higher speed and require a little more control. Those sorts of issues need to be worked through. So if you have a cycle network the councils will need to be quite clear about that. Miss Irvine is quite right, it does come down to the QT and what they designate is or is not a vehicle. Beyond that, I think councils do encourage any alternative form of transport. Brisbane City Council is introducing a rent-a-bike scheme and more and more parking is being made available for those sorts of vehicles within the city because they are more efficient. So they are doing things like that. I do not know that it is concerted; I do not know that it is necessarily a regional approach but it is happening.

CHAIR—Just to clarify for the purposes of *Hansard*, Senator Williams, you have since sold that business and have no links to it?

Senator WILLIAMS—That is right. I have sold that business and I have no links to it.

CHAIR—I was quite comfortable with your questioning, Senator Williams, but that has made it nice and clear.

Senator LUDLAM—I am interested to get your feedback on this: a couple of the submissions reference that the last time the Commonwealth government was involved in urban transport was through the Better Cities Program. Can you talk briefly about what that program was and how it worked from your point of view? What impacts did it have?

Mr Piorkowski—The Better Cities Program did not get bedded in as well as we would have liked it to but it did signal a very strong commitment from the federal government to cities and to identifying options and alternatives for urban transport—not just road. The example you have in our submission is the Gold Coast line. There was some investment in that Gold Coast-Robina rail line, which is heavily used now—so much so that people are standing on top of each other to get into the city. We call it the ‘Bombay express’ because it is so packed. The councils remember the Better Cities Program quite fondly because it is something that they see as having three tiers. There are three spheres of government committed to what they see as an important part of the urban landscape, their cities. As an economic engine that is something they feel is a critical part of getting people to and from work and to and from home.

Under the Better Cities Program I think you will find there were some examples in Western Australia. You might find that there are a number of examples that have in time born quite significant fruit. The unfortunate thing is that if that commitment had been maintained there may have been a number of projects that might have seen the light of day, that have not yet, that would have contributed to housing affordability and improved mode split—getting more bums on seats and the like. That might have born fruit; we do not know because that program was knocked off quite early in its life. The one or two projects that did get up have demonstrated quite a significant cost benefit value to those regions. Does that answer your question?

Senator LUDLAM—Essentially. Can you recall for us how council interacted with that program? Were bids or requests put to that funding source?

Mr Piorkowski—That might be a good question to put to the Gold Coast council that is coming in this afternoon. Rod Grose has been here in Queensland a lot longer than I have. He has been part and parcel of that council for quite some time. He will probably be able to help you with the detail on that.

Mr Hoffman—As best as I recall, there was an opportunity for councils to apply direct to the program and it was fairly broadly based in the issues that would be considered appropriate to fund under the program. I draw the committee’s attention to the success of the Roads to Recovery Program—a direct relationship between the Commonwealth and local government as a demonstration of how opportunities are available for funding support to respond to the many and varied needs that exist across our communities and that local governments are able to support. The recently introduced Community Infrastructure Program is of a similar nature. To the extent that the committee might contemplate appropriately targeted programs then a direct relationship with local government in line with those current programs is something that I would encourage you to consider.

CHAIR—In summing up, Ms Irvine, in about 2006 this committee did do an inquiry into Australia's future oil supplies. I take on Senator Williams's comments about peak oil and diesel guzzling motors but the previous Western Australian government was trialling hydrogen buses. Of course there are alternative fuels and gas and the like, so we should not walk away from here thinking that nothing has happened. There has certainly been some advances around the country. Let us hope that takes the next step to the next level. On that, Mr Hoffman and Mr Piorkowski, and Ms Irvine up in Far North Queensland, I thank you very much for your assistance to the committee. I now call the next witnesses.

[11.29 am]

DODSON, Dr Jago, Senior Research Fellow, Urban Research Program, School of Environment, Griffith University

SIPE, Associate Professor Neil, Discipline Leader, Urban and Environmental Planning, School of Environment, Griffith University

CHAIR—Before we go to questions, I invite either or both of you to make a brief opening statement.

Dr Dodson—The line we would like to present to you today is focused on the social dimensions of public transport in Australian cities and their intersection with issues of household vulnerability and exposure to risks, including higher fuel prices. We have produced a large body of research over the last five years examining the issue of household vulnerability and exposure and its links to public transport. We did have a PowerPoint presentation prepared, but I have been informed that it is not possible to present that to you.

CHAIR—You can table it, if you wish to.

Dr Dodson—Certainly. We do not have a printout of it, unfortunately. The gist of our argument is that public transport use and access in Australian cities is highly differentiated within the cities on a geographic basis. Public transport use tends to be high in the inner and central parts of Australian cities and tends to decline with increasing distance from central business districts. This is in part due to the diminishing quality of public transport service that is apparent or observable as one travels further and further away from the central business district, the central part of the city.

In the centre of Australian cities, or in the inner suburbs, we see mode share for public transport up around 50 per cent of trips, which is a very good level by international standards. The further you get out into the suburbs, the more you see a decline, so that, for example, in areas of outer Western Sydney we see public transport use down at around 10 per cent or less and car use up around 80 per cent of trips. This is really critical, because households in outer suburban zones tend to travel further when they do make trips, they tend to make more trips and they tend to rely on their cars far more in terms of the level of car ownership that they exhibit. This means that, in terms of travel distance and travel costs, households in outer suburban areas are typically paying more for their daily travel needs than those in the inner cities.

That structure of transport use and transport service provision intersects with the social structure of Australian cities. In general in Australian cities the wealthier households tend to be located in the inner and immediate middle suburban areas of our cities. Places like the inner east of Melbourne, the North Shore of Sydney and the eastern suburbs of Sydney are examples of that. The further you go out from the CBD into the outer and fringe suburbs, the more household wealth and household income tends to decline, on average. It is necessarily fairly differentiated at the local scale, but on average socioeconomic status is related to social structure. This means that households of lower socioeconomic status tend to intersect with travel patterns which

impose on them quite high transport costs. So we see this conjunction of relatively modest incomes with high transport costs for private motor vehicle use, in part due to the fact that the alternatives, in the form of public transport but also walking and cycling facilities, are not as well developed in outer suburban areas.

We have argued in the various research that we have done that this is a highly inequitable urban structure. Households on modest incomes tend to be allocated by housing markets to outer suburban zones, because house prices tend to be cheaper in the outer suburbs. That is where most first home buyers end up, for example. So we have this urban structure and urban transport system that imposes high costs on those households, and it also generates what we have identified as vulnerability amongst those households, especially in the last five years with the high petrol prices we saw up until pretty much the end of last year. It was those households in the outer suburban zones which were most impacted by those high fuel prices, partly because they rely on their cars far more but also because they have limited opportunities to choose alternative modes because public transport is underdeveloped in those outer suburban areas.

We see this as a pretty crucial issue, and it intersects with a whole range of government policy areas or general policy areas, including, for example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles and protecting households from higher fuel prices. Although I did not hear the full conversation, I heard Senator Williams mention peak oil. The peak oil question has not gone away and there is a widespread expectation that peak oil will hit sometime in the next couple of decades.

There are broader questions of social equity in terms of access to opportunity throughout the urban landscape—access to employment, access to services such as health and education. Public transport is a really crucial public service or public infrastructure that can enable households to be resilient in the face of external shocks and threats. We would argue that fixing suburban public transport should be a key priority for future government investment in transport and, in a sense, it is especially the suburbs that require treatment and redress. Those are the areas where infrastructure is least developed, where services and timetables are most weakly integrated and they are also the areas where households face the greatest stress. So we would see expansion of civilian public transport as a very important issue and a challenge for Australian cities, given the challenges that are coming up over the next couple of decades.

In terms of what is required to provide that improved service and infrastructure of public transport in the suburbs, we would argue that some infrastructure investment is necessary, including for example heavy rail lines into some areas that are poorly serviced by those kinds of modes. But we believe there is an enormous amount that can be done through improved network planning in the outer suburban zones of Australian cities. There is a tendency for public transport in the outer suburbs to be provided by the private sector with fairly limited coordination by a central authority that can rigorously plan, for example, bus services to hook up with rail services.

That kind of modal integration is probably one of the key challenges in improving suburban public transport and the evidence from the literature appears to show that it is best undertaken by some form of centralised public transport planning authority. Examples in Australian cities that are relevant in this context are Transperth in Perth and TransLink in South-East Queensland. TransLink has been quite successful in taking what was a relatively poorly integrated set of subregional public transport operators and integrating them into a far more comprehensive

public transport network that has seen rather remarkable growth in patronage over the last few years. That concludes my opening remarks. I ask my colleague, Professor Sipe, to make any further clarification on what I have said.

Prof. Sipe—I have a couple of points with respect to infrastructure spending. If we look at all of these stimulus plans and all this money being rolled out, there is clearly very little discussion of expanding service frequencies. It is all about building tunnels, busways and heavy rail links, but it is not about increasing frequencies which, we think, can do a whole lot in the suburban areas that have pretty poor service. Just as an illustration, Peter Newman, who has been working in this area for quite a while, has put together this millennium cities database which measures all these transport related things in cities all over the world. It is interesting that Brisbane, in terms of its suburban rail length, has more per capita than any city in the world. Yet, given that extensive rail network, off-peak services only run twice an hour. It has only been in the last 10 or 11 years that it has increased it to two services an hour. It used to be one service an hour. As an illustration, we have this infrastructure here now. We just need to actually use it. There is not much discussion about those issues.

The last point is capacity issues. During the last several years with the high price of petrol we saw people flocking onto buses and rail, and the previous folks were talking about the so-called Bombay Express line between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The issue here is that all Australian service providers were strapped. They could not build buses or rail carriages fast enough. We are still seeing lots of buses leave bus stops with passengers left behind because there is no capacity. Again, it is a service frequency issue and it is something that should be addressed. It is not one of those giant big-ticket issues, but it is an issue that the people who are being left standing at the bus stops would like to see some discussion about.

CHAIR—Thank you, Professor, and thank you, Dr Dodson. I would like to open up with a couple of questions. You talk about Transperth. I am familiar with Transperth and the new railway line that has been put down to Mandurah. The link is superb. You can get a bus running along the main arteries every seven or eight minutes. You get straight off the bus and there is a train waiting. There is no hanging around and off you go. But one of the biggest ticket items of the whole network has been park-and-ride. What is your view on park-and-ride?

Dr Dodson—My view on park-and-ride is that it demonstrates that your local bus network is not operating effectively enough to provide people with that access to the station. The best comparison that has been done is by Paul Mees, looking at park-and-ride in Toronto versus Melbourne. He has shown that Toronto has a much higher overall level of public transport use across its public transport network, yet the use of park-and-ride is almost minimal compared to Melbourne. The reason for that is that the local suburban bus network is so good and operates at such high frequency that people do not even think about getting into their car to drive down to the railway station. They just hop on a bus and then they can connect with the train. My view is that when you see extensive park-and-ride in cities and being planned for cities as a solution it is an indicator of an underdeveloped suburban bus network.

CHAIR—It is interesting to hear that. I will talk about the Transperth line once again. The railway line is probably—I am guessing now—15 to 18 kilometres from the coastline. The suburbs are expanding at a million miles an hour, as you would appreciate, all down that coastal strip. But it is not as easy to say—or I do not think it is; I hope you can prove me wrong—that

the bus system is just not frequent enough. How many buses are you talking about, how many drivers and how many stops to cover the greater distance of a 36-kilometre round trip?

Dr Dodson—If you have them operating in a network sense, where the timetable is coordinated, if you get on a bus at one point you can transfer easily because it is coordinated with another service and that is coordinated with the train network. It is largely a question of timetable coordination rather than necessarily very high frequencies. However, to achieve timetable coordination you need to make sure that your buses are able to run on time and they do not get stuck in traffic, so you need to provide some kind of bus priority on your arterial roads, some kind of sequencing of traffic lights. There are a whole range of interventions that flow from the principle that we want to get an integrated network and then working back on how to achieve that.

CHAIR—Dr Dodson, I take it that we recognise that it could not just be—say, for schoolchildren or the elderly—a case of walking out the front door, walking a couple of hundred metres and having one bus ride to the train station. You have highlighted that. When you start linking and integrating it could be two or three movements in one hit. I know from talking to a lot of Western Australians that that is what turns them off public transport, sadly.

Dr Dodson—In Australian cities it is generally the case that one of the biggest costs for public transport users, in the economic sense of the term, is waiting time because it is effectively dead time. If you look at the most effective public transport systems around the world, they encourage users to transfer between services. It is impossible to plan a bus route to meet every possible trip destination and type that an individual or a household may choose. In places like Zurich, Toronto and Vancouver they operate a grid of services so that you can get to any point in your city by taking a route in one direction and then transferring in the other direction. To do that and to make it attractive to transfer between services it is essential that the timetables are absolutely rigorously coordinated so that you are never waiting more than a couple of minutes between services. As I mentioned, to do that you need an extraordinarily rigorous planning capacity. In the case of places like Vancouver, Toronto and Zurich they have a good centralised authority whose main task is to ensure that coordination. People use public transport in far higher numbers when it is provided in that way.

CHAIR—For the purposes of this inquiry and the benefit of the committee, this is certainly not happening in outer Brisbane.

Dr Dodson—It is beginning to happen in outer Brisbane, TransLink are making a strong effort to improve their coordination but they have only been around for a few years and there is a bit of a deficit in network wide issues that they are struggling to deal with. They are getting established as an organisation and starting to look at how the rail system is operating. I do not think we are quite at the point of highly integrated network development in outer Brisbane.

Prof. Sipe—I would also suggest that I think they underestimate the level of effort that is actually required to do some of this network planning. Most network plans that we have seen over the years done by TransLink tend to be incremental changes. Jago and I have worked on a better transport plan for Griffith Uni because we find it woefully inadequate. Four of us spent quite a bit of time coming up with a network plan that did not require lots of new infrastructure just rejigging some of the routes.

CHAIR—Where is your plan now? Is it stuck in a tray somewhere or is it out there?

Dr Dodson—It is under consideration.

CHAIR—I'll leave it at that.

Prof. Sipe—The point is that just doing that one small area, granted it is a fairly large traffic generator, took a lot of time and we are suggesting that that needs to be done in lots of these other areas. It is not just a matter of adding additional services. One view is that Brisbane and a lot of capital cities in Australia tend to still have a system which takes people from suburbs into the CBD. Maybe for some people that works, but what we have found is that in the outer suburban areas a lot of those folks are not going to the CBD to work. They do not go there to shop. In fact they do not come to the CBD at all. They are going across suburbs. We do not really have a very good handle on that at all. Network planning tries to make it better for people to get to the CBD. I do not think we have started to consider some of those other issues. Those are really tough ones. I do not want to underestimate what it would take to do a rethink on some of those issues.

Dr Dodson—I would add that it is probably cheaper than infrastructure provision. You can put in for example a massive busway and that is a piece of fixed infrastructure that serves only a particular route. If you reconfigure your network, you can possibly throw up a whole bunch of efficiencies or improvements in the way you reorganise your services and you have saved a lot of money on infrastructure yet you are providing a comparable level of service.

CHAIR—It looks like rubber wheels are the go, not steel wheels.

Dr Dodson—I would still say that the integration between rubber and steel is absolutely crucial because rail networks are the ones that are able to provide the high-volume regional kind of capacity. Buses best serve, in my view, the local scale and rail serves the regional trips.

CHAIR—There is room for both. We just have to get it right.

Prof. Sipe—I have two quick points back on the issue of park and ride. I am not familiar with how many zones they run in Perth—but the issue with park and ride in Brisbane is not necessarily that the bus services are provided. It is that people will drive to the next zone to get a cheaper fare. So how you delineate those zone boundaries is pretty important. That is one issue. The second issue is that some transport providers—and this is probably the case more in the US than actually providing park and ride—do multilevel park and ride, but they do it with parking decks that can easily be dismantled and then converted to office, residential or commercial as the demand increases. They use it up to a point but then transition it into other uses other than the service park.

CHAIR—From the experience in Perth if you had that system, everyone would be screaming for another couple of levels to be whacked on top so that more could park there.

Senator WILLIAMS—Dr Dodson, you said in your opening address that we have the CBD, the outer city centre and then the growth of the metropolitan outer further and that is where the problems are. If you proceed to fix those problems in the outer and people continue to move to

the cities, isn't it going to be an ongoing problem with outer getting bigger and bigger? I say that because Councillor Prentice said that they expect 156,000 new dwellings around Brisbane by 2020. If we are going to keep shifting people into the cities, isn't the problem going to be ongoing? Should we not look for a long-term solution and better regional development that would encourage people to live out in areas where there is plenty of room?

Dr Dodson—That is perhaps another debate.

Senator WILLIAMS—It probably is, but my point is that this is going to be an ongoing problem, as it has been for the last 30, 40 or 50 years.

Dr Dodson—If I could take you back over a little of the history of suburban development in Australia. Most suburban development in Australia up until about World War II or shortly after was based around public transport networks—rail systems and tram systems. What happened after World War II is that we decided to solve our housing problems by providing improved access to cheap land through the use of the automobile. Once we started investing enormously with the majority of our funds put into providing for the automobile, the amount that was left over for public transport was relatively small. Therefore, we did not expand the infrastructure.

In terms of continuing to expand our cities, I think here is a case for far better coordinated development and linking it to new forms of infrastructure, especially public transport—for example, heavy rail. However, part of the task is to stop making things worse in terms of continuing to encourage the forms of development that are almost entirely dominated by car travel, and the way we have been doing that is by building major roads throughout our suburbs. Because of the expense of those roads, there has not been enough money available to fund good quality suburban transport. I think we need to put less emphasis on roads—we almost totally support car based travel and almost put nothing for public transport—and shift our budget priorities a little so that we provide public transport as an alternative mode of transport. That also ties in with the way we do our land use planning and making sure that we coordinate public transport with particular land use arrangements—perhaps neighbourhood centres or town centre type developments.

There has been a lot of discussion in Australian cities about using urban consolidation and what is termed 'transit oriented development', TOD. You have probably heard a bit about that through the inquiry process to date. Unfortunately, in Australian cities most of our transit oriented development tends to be located in the centre of the cities where the housing markets justify multistorey development. We have seen very little transit oriented development in the suburbs where house prices tend to be much lower and therefore the benefit cost of building multistorey housing is far reduced. Even if we encourage TOD programs, they are unlikely to solve that suburban provision problem. I go back to the network issue. We need to invest in our networks from day one of developments, so that when people move into a new development they can see the bus stop and the buses coming through it.

In Brisbane there is a threshold for the level of occupation of new suburban development such that if population does not meet a certain threshold then the bus is not provided which means that people get into the habit of using their cars and they organise their lives around their cars. Even if you provide a bus in the future, they are less likely to use it. We need to be far cleverer about the way we do our coordination of development with public transport in Australian cities.

Senator LUDLAM—Thank you for appearing today. I am aware of some of the work that you have produced, and it would have been good to see the presentations that you put together. I wonder whether you could table those in electronic or paper form?

Dr Dodson—Yes, I am happy to forward it to the committee secretary.

Senator LUDLAM—Thank you. I think one of the things that it demonstrates is that very strong geographic pattern of vulnerability in the inner and the outer cities. I wonder whether you could talk about the social impacts of the way that we are organising our cities spatially and how we can start reversing that trend.

Dr Dodson—As I outlined in my opening remarks, the way our cities are structured means that households with the lowest incomes tend to be located in the areas of our cities where public transport is most underdeveloped—the outer suburbs, the fringe areas. That means they suffer much higher transport costs than households in middle and inner areas. They are exposed to all those problems of vulnerability. So, as far as we are concerned, we see the current structure of Australian cities as being highly socially regressive. ‘Discriminating against the poor’ is perhaps an extreme way of saying it, but that is the effect. The people who are most in need of these services do not get them and they pay the highest cost for that deficit.

Prof. Sipe—Springfield in Brisbane is a great example. Springfield is a community that is about 20 kilometres from the CBD and it is rapidly developing. They just opened a 10-storey office building out there. They have a lot of development. A lot of the growth that is occurring in Brisbane is occurring in that region, yet there is no rail link and the bus service is pretty poor as well. The only way people can get anywhere is in a car. The rail corridor is there; it has been planned but it is continually being delayed. It is hard for me to see what the justification is for that. There is land there. The plans are all there, but it has been continually delayed, delayed, delayed—yet that is where the growth is occurring and where the service is really needed. It seems odd that we are not providing that service. I think you set a precedent—if you do not provide the public transport service, people find ways to get around without it. Then, once it is provided, it is kind of inconvenient, so they continue to use the car. Then, when we are faced with situations like in the last few years, where it is getting very expensive to put petrol in the car, they clamour for services that do not exist.

Senator LUDLAM—I suppose one of the things that your work demonstrates is that we are designing cities, particularly fringe urban areas, that are the worst possible configurations for providing public transport into the future. I just wonder if you see any sign of hope in the Australian landscape—can you see the tide turning? Where do you think the best-practice examples are coming from?

Dr Dodson—There is increasing recognition that we are doing things very poorly, especially at an internationally comparative level, but we have not yet seen the practice change on the ground. I am not sure exactly what the reasons for that are. State governments have been reluctant to require public transport friendly environments on the ground—partly because that implies a service provision dimension to the roll out of new suburbs. So they have preferred to encourage things like TODs in existing urban areas and not invest in new services in the suburbs.

So I think planning needs to change. There needs to be far greater connection between the land-use plans, the design plans and the funding plans—the budgets for suburban development—so that it is not a case of, ‘Oh well, we’ll build it now, and then fund the services later,’ but that they are actually coordinated together. I must say that the Queensland state government has made some advances in that area. The South-East Queensland regional plan was perhaps significant in an Australian sense, because it was one of the first to have a very detailed infrastructure plan in place with the land-use plans. We could perhaps debate the merits of the various investment options that they identified as preferring to pursue, but simply that fact—that land-use development is tied to infrastructure development—was an important step forward. But I think it needs to go forward in every Australian city—to be far more detailed and comprehensive on the local scale.

Senator LUDLAM—One of the things that your work did was identify the linkages between vulnerability to rising house prices and transport vulnerability. What happens in our outer metropolitan areas when oil prices really do go through the roof? If we are in our current state of unpreparedness, what is that going to look like?

Dr Dodson—There are two factors in this. There is the cost of fuel and the cost of housing and mortgage repayments. In the period up to around the start of last year, we saw petrol prices increase dramatically. There was a very rapid, sharp increase. That increased household transport costs, so they had an immediate hit to their budget bottom line. That increase in fuel prices, however, had a broader systemic effect in the economy and stimulated higher inflation. Under the interest rate settings at the time, the Reserve Bank responded to inflation by increasing interest rates. That then flowed into the costs of mortgages, so household mortgages went up. You had this effect whereby households with mortgages tended to also be—because of where households with mortgages tend to be located in Australian cities, primarily the outer-middle and fringe suburbs—facing much higher fuel costs and much higher mortgage interest rates. There was increasing stress within many of those outer suburban zones. That is a pretty significant issue. Who knows, with the current global financial and economic environment, where house prices will go and where mortgage interest rates will go? I suspect that, if we saw a return to the high fuel price environment of the past five years, those stressors would again be amplified depending on the approach that the Reserve Bank took to interest rates.

Prof. Sipe—I think the fuel price increase over the past couple of years showed that government at all levels was a bit unprepared and had not done much contingency planning. Now seems to be a good time to think: ‘Well, what happens if petrol prices double? What are we going to do?’ I alluded to this earlier. It has gotten a lot of people riding public transport. To some extent you hear people saying: ‘Weren’t the transport planners suggesting we needed to increase mode sharing? This mode share happened, but you guys could not provide the capacity to deal with it.’ It makes it look like we had not really thought through very carefully the plans we had been developing. We could not even provide for the capacity that the plans say we were trying to achieve.

Senator O’BRIEN—I guess this is a question for you both. You are talking about a network of transport services to encourage the use of public transport. In my mind that envisages a heavily regulated and perhaps even publicly owned system, but I am not familiar with the networks you mentioned in Vancouver and Toronto. How do they work?

Dr Dodson—The key function of a central authority would be to specify routes, service timetables and effectively frequencies and to make sure that all services, whatever services are provided by whomever they are provided, are meshed into that network. There are various options in the degree to which there is complete public control, direction and ownership. There is the model in which government owns all of the services and therefore undertakes the provision of the whole system and there are various degrees of franchising and delegation of responsibilities to other parties. For example, contracting is often used: the government sets the routes, the fares and the frequencies and then contracts the provision of that service to a private operator. In fact, Perth has operated on that basis for a few decades now. Often you will get on a bus in Perth and it is branded in the Transperth colours and looks completely indistinguishable from any other bus on the Transperth network yet there will be a small plaque near the driver's seat saying, 'This bus is owned and operated by Clarks Bus Services or Joe Bloggs Bus Services.'

The degree to which you exercise control can vary depending on whether you want to specify all aspects of service or whether you want to delegate some sort of planning and service decision to the private operator, perhaps in terms of livery. One issue that South-East Queensland TransLink has been moving towards is uniform livery of the buses. There is a uniform design that they are slowly moving towards, and they are contracting with the various individual private operators to support that uniform livery. That means that, for the user, the network becomes a seamless network. You do not look at a bus and ask, 'Is that part of the service?' because it is painted a funny colour and has a different logo on the side. They all look the same and they appear to be integrated. In the case of Brisbane, that is going to be a medium-term project, given that you have an existing rolling stock with an existing livery on it. The best systems appear to operate where the key decisions and coordination are determined by a public central authority which has the legislative capacity to set contracts with the private operators and stipulate the routes, the timetables and the service frequencies.

Prof. Sipe—It is interesting to note that there are two places that have been successful in Australia: Perth and Brisbane. On the other hand, Melbourne and Sydney have been trying to do this for decades, and they still do not have a system. We do not want to underplay the difficulty in making this happen. Integrated ticketing was an election issue here for quite a while, but they finally got it working. It is still not perfect but at least it is on the right track. To try to have a system where there is that authority with private contractors takes a lot of work and lots of politics and negotiating.

Dr Dodson—However, the gains can be pretty remarkable, and it does not require pouring concrete or tarseal. Part of the discussion that needs to be had is whether infrastructure is the way to go in terms of solving all problems or whether there are institutional, political, managerial or operational reforms that could be implemented that will provide a comparable level of gain.

Senator O'BRIEN—So we need a legislated authority which can say, 'These are the routes. If you want to ply your trade as a bus operator, for example, you have to be licensed to run a particular route or a number of particular routes.' That is how the system would work?

Dr Dodson—Yes. The authority has to be given the control to determine the routes and who gets to run them. The UK attempted the privatisation of bus services outside metropolitan

London to encourage competition between various providers. Competition tended to occur on the most highly frequented routes but with very little coordination. If you bought a ticket on one bus, you could not transfer to another bus, because it was operated by a different provider. They competed for patronage on the high-volume routes but then abandoned the low-volume routes where there was no money to be made. That sort of privatisation model was widely seen around the world as a bit of a failure. Successful models, as seen in Vancouver, Zurich and those kinds of cities, tend to have a highly centralised and powerful planning agency at the core of the network determining who actually provides the services to best fit the planned timetable, service and route structure that they have identified.

Senator O'BRIEN—Ideally, they would have integrated ticketing?

Dr Dodson—Integrated ticketing is effectively essential. In Sydney, you have 79 different types of fares, and if you change from rail to bus—

CHAIR—Seventy-nine?

Dr Dodson—I believe so. They are different fare types. That is one of the problems with its attempt to introduce an electronic ticket or a smart card ticketing system. It has to cope with all of those different fare options: whether you get a concession in one location and not in another. It has different operators determining different fares, so without that kind of centralised reform it is very difficult to achieve integration. Sydney has found that to its disappointment, I think, with its electronic card whereas Transperth has been operating a smart card for many years. TransLink has now introduced the go card, which is an electronic smart card integrated ticket. All of these things have teething problems but it seems to be working.

CHAIR—You are obviously not tabling that document, Dr Dodson?

Dr Dodson—No, I want to get home!

CHAIR—We have a very effective secretariat here.

Dr Dodson—I am sure if you ask TransLink they will provide you with an equivalent copy. Preceding the smart card ticket was just a simple integrated paper ticket. So you would buy the paper ticket and each time you went to transfer with it, you had two hours to transfer. You showed it to the driver of the next service, whether it be the same bus company, a different bus company or the rail system. They let you on and you continued your journey. It is a similar process to the limiting of waiting times. If you have to buy a new fare every time you get onto another service it is an extra cost. It is that sort of seamless service which we experience when we drive our cars. Every time we turn left at an intersection we do not have to pay a fare to go off in that direction. It is providing that seamless service that starts to replicate the quality of travel experience you get with a car so that you are not waiting and trying to figure out how things connect.

Senator O'BRIEN—Let me go back a step. For the cities which have introduced this system, was this a bipartisan policy or has it been one which has been bashed through the political system over the years? How has it been introduced?

Dr Dodson—In the case of TransLink, which I am most familiar with, it was a fairly bipartisan policy. Most of the politics occurred around the implementation, whether or not the government were effectively implementing it, whether they were getting their smart card right, for example, or whether they had stuffed it up. That was where the politics came in. The actual establishment of the authority seems to have been reasonably well received by both sides of politics.

Prof. Sipe—There are probably more issues between TransLink and Brisbane City Council than on the state government side of things, just because Brisbane owns the bus system and is a fairly large entity to deal with.

Senator O'BRIEN—What about overseas?

Dr Dodson—It has not been a significant issue overseas. Vancouver's public transport agency, TransLink, is somewhat of a model for South-East Queensland. It is seen as a very popular move. Once the service starts to improve and the agency is seen as effective in providing it, it creates a new brand in the marketplace. People start to appreciate the service that is being provided and it becomes well received by the public, so that starts to diminish the politics of it. Of course there are always debates about whether budgets are being spent effectively, whether some aspect of the operation is being managed effectively. But the question of whether there should be an authority tends to be a bit of a dead letter once they have been established.

Senator O'BRIEN—The politics are then the cost of the service, I suppose?

Dr Dodson—Standard politics around budgets, operations and efficiencies, those kinds of things. One thing it also creates and generates is a clear institutional voice on the side of public transport within government. We tended to have a fairly fragmented system of provision in Australian cities—for example, in South-East Queensland we had Brisbane Transport, the major bus operator; Queensland rail, the major rail provider. They often saw themselves as competitors with different modes of public transport rather than competing with the car for people's travel opportunities or custom. By creating a single operator, its network is now the competitor of the car and that single planning authority is now the sole point at which that kind of modal competition can occur, so it is less significant and it can quash that sort of balkanisation of the network—to put it that way—and try to concentrate on the bigger strategic game, which is increasing the market share of public transport within the broader transport task.

CHAIR—On that note, to Dr Dodson and Mr Sipe, thank you very much of your insight today.

Proceedings suspended from 12.13 pm to 1.14 pm

CHERRY, Mr John Clifford, Executive Director, Council of Mayors of South East Queensland

HOBSON, Mrs Melva Elizabeth, Deputy Chair, Environment and Sustainability Committee, Council of Mayors of South East Queensland

PEREZ, Mr Eric, Principal Project Officer, Council of Mayors of South East Queensland

CHAIR—Welcome. I invite you to make an opening statement before we go to questions.

Mrs Hobson—I am Mayor of Redland City, but I am appearing today in my capacity as Deputy Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, Council of Mayors of South-East Queensland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. Investment in public transport in South-East Queensland is absolutely vital not only to the liveability of South-East Queensland but also to the economic, environmental and social structure of South-East Queensland.

As you would be aware, population growth in South-East Queensland over the past decade has increased road congestion, which has resulted in significant increases in demand for public transport infrastructure. It has also increased quite dramatically the use of public transport, which we would all endorse and encourage. However, in order for public transport to be more accessible and to create linkages between parts of South-East Queensland there needs to be more funding. Obviously it requires funding from state and federal governments, as well as continuing support by local governments for small- and large-scale public transport projects across the region. So we encourage partnerships between all levels of government, but in this instance particularly between state and federal governments, to support the improvement and increase in infrastructure for public transport.

Four of the 15 South-East Queensland projects identified by Infrastructure Australia's interim report are publicly related transport projects. These include the Darra to Ipswich transport corridor, at a cost of \$3.8 billion. The growth that is occurring in that area can be described as nothing short of phenomenal. It includes the Brisbane inner city capacity upgrade, at a cost of \$14 billion. Our increasing use of trains at all times of the day, but particularly during peak hours, is creating great stress in that area. The Eastern Busway, stages 2 and 3, at a cost of \$680 million for stage 2 and \$140 million for stage 3. That project is very close to my heart because it has huge implications for the eastern part of South-East Queensland. Perhaps I can talk more about that later in terms of the environmental impact and the impact on carbon emissions and on the use of oil as we approach peak oil, as well as the social and economic aspects. The fourth public transport proposal is the Gold Coast rapid transport system, at a cost of \$850 million. These are big projects that will make a huge difference to liveability in South-East Queensland as well as to our economic, social and environmental fabric. They will better equip us to cope with growth and the emerging issues associated with that growth in South-East Queensland.

CHAIR—Thank you. Before we go to questions from my colleagues, would you help out a Western Australian. What is the difference between South-East Queensland and the Gold Coast?

Mrs Hobson—The Gold Coast is a part of South-East Queensland. In terms of the recognition by the Council of Mayors which represent South-East Queensland, it is an area that takes in the Sunshine Coast, through to Moreton Bay and the Moreton Regional Council, through to Toowoomba, and then down to the border on both sides. This area represents one in seven Australians.

Mr Cherry—It is also worth noting that five of the six largest local governments in Australia are in South-East Queensland. You have heard this morning from the largest local authority in Australia, the Brisbane City Council, which is a member of ours. You will hear next from the Gold Coast City Council, which is the second largest local authority in Australia. The third and fourth largest local authorities in Australia are, I think, Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast, and the sixth largest is Logan City. These are all councils in South-East Queensland.

CHAIR—I was getting confused because you still talk about Gold Coast rail lines and the Gold Coast Highway, but I understand now.

Senator WILLIAMS—I went to South-East Queensland, to the Gold Coast, in 1975, when there were not a lot of people there.

CHAIR—You were a very young man.

Senator WILLIAMS—I was a very young man; I think was still in primary school. I had hair for a start! Considering the growth of your population, on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the best, how would you mark the way in which the transport system has kept pace with the growth of the population over the past 30 years or so? One is very poor; 10 is very good.

Mrs Hobson—Being honest, I would say it is probably at about a one or a two.

Senator WILLIAMS—So it really has lagged behind?

Mrs Hobson—Absolutely. If I can comment on that, I think part of that is that the growth has occurred in such a manner that was unexpected and not realised. It has increased dramatically—and John probably has the percentage growth for the population of South-East Queensland.

Mr Cherry—I think we have doubled our population in that period since you were here, Senator, and we are expected to become home to another 1½ million people over the next two decades as well. That is a lot of people to squeeze into this sort of space.

Senator WILLIAMS—As far as fixing the transport problems go, do you say the emphasis must be placed on buses or rail or even monorail? What is your preferred option, or is it absolutely for the lot?

Mrs Hobson—From the perspective of local government and their input, it would be a mix, a combination, of all. Critical is public transport. That would include rail, where there is rail as of course in some areas there is not rail. So there is the expansion of rail, and there are a couple of examples as to that in the submission. There is also bus. I will take the Eastern Busway as an example. That system will reduce transport time from the eastern side of the city, over at Moreton Bay and Redlands, to the city from 54 minutes to about 28 minutes, and that is

minimum travel time. That has huge implications economically, socially and environmentally. So in some areas it is public trains and it is buses but it is also important to have connecting regional roads—for example, the Pacific Motorway, the Logan Motorway, the route to Toowoomba. So it is about having a well-constructed system of regional roads supported by efficient and frequent public transport consisting of both rail and road buses.

Senator WILLIAMS—Looking at the situation at the moment, is there a lot of private sector investment? In other words, are there private sector operated buses running that are profitable? The reason I ask this is because I am wondering if in the future the private sector can soak up a lot of the increase in the number of buses or if it will need the public sector on its own if it is not profitable. Otherwise, is there the potential for a combination of the private and public sectors to invest in this transport system in this huge area that you represent?

Mrs Hobson—It is a matter of both. There are private operators who are operating now and those operators operate on public infrastructure. We have some figures on the increases. The patronage has exceeded targets—and this is a real issue for us—by an increasing margin of around 12 per cent. With Brisbane buses, for example, we see 38 per cent movements on Brisbane transport. That is local government supplied transport. We see 35 per cent by rail, 23 per cent by private bus companies and 45 per cent by Brisbane city ferries.

Mr Cherry—That is 4.5. That is a typo.

Mrs Hobson—Sorry, that is a typo. It is 4.5. We are missing a dot. Otherwise that adds up to more than 100. The other thing that we notice is the use of private buses on public infrastructure. Let us take the South-Eastern Busway, which goes from the city down to Logan. That is used by both public and private transport. In that intermediate area there is not train transport for people coming from there. That busway has been an absolute boon to the south-eastern sector of South-East Queensland.

Mr Cherry—It is also worth noting, Senator, that the most recent train line developed in Brisbane is Airport Link, which you may or may not have come in on. It is actually privately owned and operated as part of a public-private partnership with the government.

Senator WILLIAMS—I did not come in on that. I drove up from Inverell and got lost when I got to the city. That is all from me, thank you, Chair.

CHAIR—Thank you, Senator Williams. We will go to Senator O'Brien.

Senator O'BRIEN—I do not know whether this is just a misplaced decimal point, but on page 28 of your submission you have allocated populations to Melbourne and Adelaide in 2002 of 35½ million—I think that is an error!

We had some evidence before lunch from Professor Sipe and Dr Dodson regarding the desirability of an authority to regulate the public transport routes within cities, and examples were given—Perth, Toronto, Vancouver—of efficiencies and increases in public transport use where that had occurred. What would the mayors of South-East Queensland think of a system where public transport was so regulated by a central authority? And do you think it would be supported by those local governments?

Mr Cherry—We sort of are. There is a body called TransLink which the Brisbane City Council may have spoken to, and the board of TransLink includes not just the state government but also Queensland Rail and the Brisbane City Council, which actually provides buses. A CEO of Brisbane City Council is on TransLink. It is trying to develop integrated ticketing and a program right across the city, not just of routes but also of future investments and ticketing and promotion. In addition to that, they are now trying to develop some congestion-busting initiatives such as the TravelSmart campaign, which is trying to encourage people to use public transport in a way that is contra to peak-hour peaks in demand, so that we can actually get a congestion element into our public transport policy.

Senator O'BRIEN—What about the other councils?

Mr Cherry—The other councils, I think, have always supported the TransLink initiative.

Mrs Hobson—Redland City Council has a TransLink program as well, which we support, and we would be pushing to have more. For example, the southern Moreton Bay islands are 50 per cent of Redland City, and we would encourage TransLink to include the marine environment and offshore islands in that process. So I think there is general consensus that a shared and coordinated approach to public transport is the only way to go.

Senator O'BRIEN—They were suggesting an authority with the power to establish what routes would be serviced and to authorise transport entities, public or private, to fulfil those services on particular routes with the aim of meshing all of the public transport arrangements through a particular city or region.

Mrs Hobson—My understanding—though I stand to be corrected—is that that is substantially what TransLink does, in conjunction with local government. So it is a partnership approach between the state and local governments and the private sector.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am trying to gauge the support for the concept. You are saying that, at least in part, it is supported now.

Mrs Hobson—Yes, it is supported. At times, I know, local governments get frustrated at the time things can take. For example, an individual local government is pushing to have an area added to the TransLink system, and that is not necessarily an easy process to go through because, again, it is looking at priorities across the region. But I know we have been really going quite strongly to have a greater involvement of TransLink in parts of Redland City.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is one of the issues: who picks the parts? If there is going to be an authority, would the concept of supporting an overall authority-wide power be something which would be embraced by the councils?

Mr Cherry—In principle, yes. The only qualification I would place on it—and this is picked up in our submission very strongly—is the important link between the investment in public transport infrastructure and land-use planning more broadly. In South-East Queensland we have a statutory regional plan, and underpinning that is, increasingly, a range of detailed thematic plans that are supposed to support the broader regional planning framework. One of those is an integrated regional transport plan which is currently being developed. That is trying to bring

together the land-use planning with the infrastructure rollout and the services. One of the frustrations that the local governments in South-East Queensland have had for a long time is that the infrastructure has not been there when the development arrives, and that is why we have such congestion on our roads and overcrowding on our buses and trains across the region.

The only qualification we would probably place on having a separate authority is that it has to sit within the land-use planning and the Integrated Regional Transport Plan, which has been developed under that plan. One of the things we are trying to do and encourage with the new regional plan is the promotion, for example, of transit orientated developments. We are trying to get the population densities up along the key transport corridors. We will be looking for infill and medium-density housing to have those along the corridors so that the city makes more sense. From that point of view you do not want to have too powerful an authority that is sitting separate from the other key planning processes in terms of the city.

Senator O'BRIEN—You would have aims that are compatible with that plan. Is that a qualification you place on it?

Mr Cherry—Yes. That is essentially what the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland is supposed to do. TransLink has been part of the planning for that along with the state government with its infrastructure rollout program.

Mrs Hobson—A number of these projects are integrally linked to that. I used the Eastern Busway as another example of where it is linked to the planning for growth, it is linked to the land-use planning and it is linked to transit oriented developments. Those three or four things all come together as part of that process.

Senator O'BRIEN—Brisbane City Council seemed to be complaining this morning when they were before us that, whilst they made a substantial financial contribution to the public transport network, residents of councils outside of their boundaries would effectively take advantage of their contribution to those systems and without their councils making a contribution. What would you say about that sort of submission?

Mrs Hobson—We are one of those councils that does not make a contribution and, being on the eastern seaboard and with Brisbane, there is nowhere else to go except west. We do not contribute to Brisbane city other than our residents, of course, buy tickets and are users of the system.

Senator O'BRIEN—The state government gets the fares.

Senator WILLIAMS—The state government collects the ticket money.

Senator O'BRIEN—I think you are right. They make a contribution in the sense that they pay fares. The reality is that in most public transport systems fares make up a proportion, and sometimes a small proportion, of the cost of running the system.

Mrs Hobson—I understand on the Gold Coast that they also make contribution to public transport. The issues that face the smaller councils, such as the council that I represent and Logan City Council, are not in and have not been in a position to fund major public transport

infrastructure because of the nature, size and growth of the cities and the demand for infrastructure there. I appreciate Brisbane city, and we appreciate what they offer, but it is a difficult. Our only access to increase funds towards funding Brisbane city public transport is through increased rates.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is that how Brisbane have done it?

Mrs Hobson—Brisbane's population and the nature of its rate base is significantly different. Local governments were part of the Australian Constitutional Convention and the meeting with Prime Minister Rudd about financial support from the Commonwealth government to local governments. There are major economies of scale that Brisbane has that, of course, smaller local governments do not have therefore we work on a regional basis. I can understand where Brisbane is coming from but I can also understand that councils that represent a smaller base are perhaps not in the same position to make contributions to public transport.

Senator O'BRIEN—Because of the economy of scale or because of the nature of their rate base?

Mrs Hobson—Possibly both. The Gold Coast probably has similar avenues in terms of breadth of rate base. Brisbane city of course has huge industrial, commercial and retail sectors, more so perhaps than areas that have become residential cities. Much of the growth, of course, has occurred in those residential areas but many of the people still work outside those areas.

Mr Cherry—I understand Gold Coast City is appearing next in front of you, which is the other council in South-East Queensland which has taken on direct funding of public transport. I think it would be interesting to raise some of those questions with them. They are the largest and second-largest local authority in Australia obviously but I think they are probably the two with the biggest footprint on public transport. Other councils like Toowoomba Regional Council have actually taken a big role trying to encourage and work with the state government about getting things like community-based public transport happening and community taxis and initiatives like that. In the smaller councils you will find that councils are involved in those initiatives. Although typically a lot of the funding comes from the state government, a lot of the initiative and a lot of the grunt work to make it happen is often from the local government.

Senator O'BRIEN—In hindsight, I think we should have had all the South-East Queensland councils here together. It would have been a much more interesting session.

CHAIR—With boxing gloves on it would be good. Senator Ludlam, I will give you as much time as you need, but I want to go to page 4 of the submission under the heading 'Funding'. There are two dot points I would like to dig deeper into. You said there has been a historical underspend on critical infrastructure in the South-East Queensland region by successive federal governments. Once you determine what is federal responsibility, what infrastructure are we talking about?

Mr Cherry—We are talking more broadly about infrastructure in that regard. I can take this history back almost 30 or 40 years. When you go through the broader spend on infrastructure spending in Australia, typically during the 40s, the 50s, the 60s and into first part of the 70s governments were much more heavily investing in infrastructure than they were in the 80s and

90s. In that period when governments were trying to cut back on spending it was often infrastructure which was the first thing to go. There have been exceptions. In South-East Queensland one of the key programs was the Better Cities program, which I think was an initiative of the Keating government. That funded key new infrastructures like the Gold Coast railway and things like that. Historically there has been a significant underspend in infrastructure more broadly across Australia but more specifically in South-East Queensland there has been a significant underspend in both state and federal spending on infrastructure over the last two to three decades.

In our main submission we have a supplementary submission, which is our submission to Infrastructure Australia, and on page 36 there is a graph of the actual infrastructure spend by state right across Australia. You can see that the Queensland government right up until about 2004-05 was, frankly, not spending very much at all on infrastructure, less than \$4 billion a year on average right up to 2004-05. It is only since 2004-05 that the infrastructure spend in Queensland has really taken off. I think this year the state government is spending around \$17 billion on infrastructure, which is a huge increase on where they were. The reason for that is because in the last two or three years the people of South-East Queensland have started to notice that the infrastructure in this state has not kept up with growth. We have been banking the benefits of growth but not keeping up with it. It is one of the reasons why the Council of Mayors took a very strong position with the regional plan, saying that they did not want to see the urban footprint expanded until the infrastructure caught up. I think you can see with those sorts of figures that the Queensland government is playing catch-up. The federal figures I do not think are in here, but they are playing catch-up. Interestingly, the infrastructure spend this year by local government in South-East Queensland is around \$2.5 billion, which is the capital works programs of all the 11 councils in South-East Queensland added up. That is very significant in terms of the capital programs they are rolling out as well. But across the entire region we are all playing catch-up.

CHAIR—When you highlight this graph to us, figure 18, I notice that you used 2003-04. In your words, it was a gross underspend. I am not here to defend the Queensland government, and I make that very clear, but they were far outspending Western Australia and Victoria in terms of relative population. Going by that, one has to say that on the surface compared to population it did not appear that they were lagging that far behind. But your submission said that in the past 10 years you have this population explosion in South-East Queensland.

Mr Cherry—That is right.

CHAIR—But, to come back to what I did ask, on what infrastructure has there been great underspending? You mentioned a railway line. Is there anything else?

Mr Cherry—Well—

CHAIR—Tell us, because we are here to really get a handle on it. I am from Western Australia, which I believe is the greatest state in the world—although I might be biased—and Queensland is second!

Mr Cherry—We in Queensland have always regarded Western Australians as distant cousins who we are very affectionate about! But it goes right across the board. The growth has hit a wall

in this region in probably the last four to five years. The roads have suddenly become clogged. The hospitals are suddenly overcrowded. Four years ago we had blackouts right through the summer because the power system could not keep up with peak loads. We have suddenly discovered, as regards our water system, that we have not built enough dams for our population. There are trains, right across the city, which are now full every morning. They cannot fit any more commuters on them. The bus system is still suffering—people stand at their bus stop and watch three buses go past because they are full. These are issues right across the city. I am sure they are issues across all cities, but this city, in particular, has become clogged by growth.

Mrs Hobson—One thing brought about as a result of this was the review of the regional plan. It was to have been in the year 2010-11 and it was brought forward by 12 months. It was identified that growth—particularly from migration—was such that there had to be a review of the plan in order to decide whether we had enough land available for people to move here. Associated with that is the question of what we are going to do in terms of the transport situation. So it brought the review of the regional plan forward by 12 months—which is no minor feat—because it was identified that the growth was actually increasing and occurring at a rate greater than had been anticipated.

CHAIR—For the purpose of the deliberations of this committee, I appreciate that answer. Now we know what we are talking about. As part of the second dot point—the funding—you talk about a need for state and federal governments ‘to direct greater levels of funding to develop public transport’. Do you have any idea how great those levels should be?

Mrs Hobson—I think that is in the submission, isn't it?

Mr Cherry—As part of our regional planning process in South-East Queensland we have the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan, and in our submission we have identified the projects in that plan. The vast bulk of those projects are unfunded in the next four to five years. They are sort of vaguely going to be funded sometime in the next 20 or 30 years but there is a huge task to bring it forward. Obviously, how much of programs you bring forward is something which is a key question for governments in terms of their fiscal needs. What we can say is that we know that every million dollars spent on infrastructure increases—what is the figure, Eric?—is eight jobs. So it is 8,000 jobs for every billion dollars you spend and it goes up from there. The state government estimates that it has spent \$17 billion this year and that that will generate around 119,000 jobs across the state, through multipliers. So it is quite a significant thing.

The argument we are also raising very significantly is that infrastructure is a fundamental part of economic growth and productivity. Across this city, the connectivity between where the jobs are and where the people live is becoming more and more disjointed. It is taking longer and longer to get from A to B. There is international research which actually shows—and this work was done by Dr Peter Brain for council mayors and the state government last year—that people will not travel above a certain distance to work. And that actually reduces the labour supply for areas where the jobs have been generated—like here in the inner city, the area around the airport, Ipswich Central and places like that. As a result, as the congestion gets worse and the labour supply falls, the productivity of the whole regional economy declines. There is an estimate that if we see congestion rise by adding just five minutes to the average trip—so that more people slip into that state of being beyond preparedness to actually take a trip to work every day—our capacity to generate jobs by 2026 could be reduced by 135,000 jobs. So there is a significant

impact from the connection between congestion, investment and capital productivity across the city.

Mrs Hobson—Could I also comment that there is not just the economic characteristic. It is the environmental issues—congestion, but also an increasing number of cars in terms of both carbon emissions and peak oil, which has its associated economic and social flow-on. We need to increase the amount of public transport usage and decrease the number of cars on the roads. That is why four of the major projects are related to increasing public transport usage. We have to really see that as a significant factor. In an era of global warming we have to make an impact. There is no choice. We have to get people out of their cars; we have to get them onto public transport. That means getting them to and from work. As John said, the connectivity makes that somewhat difficult to do.

Mr Cherry—The biggest project in our infrastructure list, which is on the Infrastructure Australia list, is the inner city rail upgrade, which will cost over 20 years \$14 billion. It is huge—absolutely huge. Just about directly underneath this building, there are currently four rail lines that go through the inner city. All the rail lines north and south of Brisbane converge in those four rail lines. They are pretty much at their peak capacity. If we are going to get more people on trains in Brisbane we need eight rail lines through the inner city. Without that you cannot expand it to the outer suburbs; you cannot expand the services to the Gold Coast or Ipswich or the Sunshine Coast; you cannot do anything until the inner city clog-up is fixed. But that is \$14 billion. Even over 20 years, that is probably beyond the capacity of Queensland Rail to fund out of its own resources. It may be beyond the capacity of the state government to fund out of its resources—but without it we are not going to treble the rail usage, which is a fundamental part of the planning for transport and public transport in South-East Queensland. How much can the federal government tip into that tin?

Senator WILLIAMS—Fourteen billion!

Mr Cherry—We are here to ask you that question. If Tim Fisher were here, we would be talking about trains all afternoon!

Senator WILLIAMS—We would have trains all over Australia!

Mrs Hobson—It is critical. You have probably read of people who travel from the Gold Coast and supply their own chair to sit somewhere in the middle of an aisle. We cannot duplicate a rail line to the east because of those critical issues within the city area. That is a major project which, although located within the inner city, has huge impacts across the whole of South-East Queensland—and that is before we even look at increases to rail in the northern area of the city, in that area of Caboolture and the Moreton Bay Regional Council, where of course there is phenomenal growth. We need to take into account the needs there for public transport, particularly increasing rail over the next relatively short period of time, 10 to 15 years.

CHAIR—Today is the first day of the inquiry, and there is a common theme coming through all the submissions, I can assure you of that.

Senator LUDLAM—Thank you very much for coming in. I apologise for missing your opening statement. I hope I am not going over old ground. You mention in your submission that

the federal government should participate in shared land use planning. Can you tell us what that would mean? Traditionally that has been left to state and local governments. What would it mean for the Commonwealth to take a role?

Mr Cherry—I think the argument we are putting is that land use planning is getting to an increasingly sophisticated level in South-East Queensland. Underneath our statutory regional plan there is an integrated regional transport plan. There is also a related South-East Queensland infrastructure plan. We are simply urging the federal government that, when they are looking at investing in South-East Queensland, they should have regard to that regional plan, to the land use objectives within that, and ensure that their investment is complementary to what is being done. The regional plan has been developed as a partnership between state and local government. We would hope that the federal government will simply have regard to it and ensure that their investments are consistent with what is happening.

Senator LUDLAM—But presumably, for example, the submissions that were made by the Queensland government and by you to Infrastructure Australia were in harmony with that planning?

Mr Cherry—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—You are obviously having to make some educated guesses about future population growth in this part of the world. What sort of assumptions are you making about future oil prices?

Mr Cherry—There is a comment here—I think I saw it early in the submission. At this stage we have not made too many assumptions about that. I know with the rail study they did sensitivity analysis on oil prices. The more oil prices go up, then obviously the more people will want to use public transport. We made a comment about that somewhere in the submission which I will draw your attention to. It is on page 10, in the third paragraph, where it says that sensitivity testing within the various multimodal transport models showed that public transport patronage would increase by about 30 per cent if oil prices doubled.

Senator LUDLAM—This is on buses and trains that are already at capacity?

Mr Cherry—Yes, they are the ones.

Senator LUDLAM—In Perth there is very similar thinking around transit oriented development. We have 80 kilometres of new railway lines and quite a well-established bus network, so there is this concentration of mixed use medium- and high-density clustering around railway stations, for example, starting to happen. But what is also happening is that this undifferentiated sprawl is marching off into the bush as well. We are kind of getting both forms of development—the very auto dependent and the TODs. Is the same going on in the areas that you are working in?

Mrs Hobson—Some of us went with the Department of Infrastructure and Planning across to Western Australia to look at some of their TODs and also saw some of the associated sprawl that was heading up towards Yanchep and places like that. The Council of Mayors and most of the mayors in South-East Queensland made a statement that they did not want to see the urban

footprint expanded, and that has been a clear direction to government for the current South-East Queensland plan. So there has been a greater emphasis on infill in South-East Queensland and we see that represented, apart from some areas to the west where we have the western corridor. But again that western corridor in the regional plan is based around transport, so it is not unfettered growth.

The mayors of South-East Queensland have been very strongly saying that we do not want urban sprawl and talking about the need for there to be a compromise with greater infill and some difficulties that that imposes as well. But that infill should be associated with transport oriented areas and that is happening. We see that happening in South-East Queensland as we speak.

Senator LUDLAM—In some North American and European cities that is done by way of an urban growth boundary where you say, ‘Beyond here we will not go.’

Mrs Hobson—That is the urban footprint.

Senator LUDLAM—That happens here?

Mr Cherry—Yes, we have that in law.

Senator LUDLAM—I was not aware of that. Congratulations. Are you able to point us to that statement? I do not know whether that is in the submission.

Mr Cherry—We can give you a link to the regional plan that is on the state government Department of Infrastructure and Planning’s website. A new draft was released in December for the next 25 years. The state government has done a range of forecasts of population moving forward to 2031 to try to work out how many people it needs and where to put them. That is what the regional plan is about. It is about trying to identify a mix of infill and greenfield sites to accommodate those people. About 40 per cent of the dwellings targets are infill—within existing urban areas—and 60 per cent is greenfield, but the greenfield areas are within the urban footprint which in themselves, as Mayor Hobson said, are geared transport corridors.

Mrs Hobson—In terms of population growth, they estimate a population of 4.5 million over the next two decades.

Senator LUDLAM—Good luck with that.

Mr Cherry—I might add that that is a medium- to low-level population projection and we have exceeded the medium- to low-level population projections for each of the last 20-odd years.

Mrs Hobson—I think the high is somewhere in the five.

Senator LUDLAM—You mentioned in your answer to one of the other questions that it is about getting people to and from work. What thinking are you doing or what exists in that land use plan or the infrastructure plan to move work closer to people?

Mrs Hobson—That is happening at the same time and it is within the regional plan. Each local government area has a target figure and an agreed commitment to creating jobs within those areas. So we see in some of the mixed areas where you can have mixed residential and commercial or retail that that is occurring and that is reflected in planning schemes. Then there are also areas—for example, the area that I am from, Redlands City—where we have an integrated employment area that has been designated where we have to produce thousands of jobs over the next 20 years. Part of our commitment is to make provision for that area, because at the moment it is not available, and other cities, such as Logan City and Ipswich City, are also increasing jobs within their areas.

That is the current movement that is occurring, but we are attempting to stem that and create jobs locally so that people do not have to travel. Given that, our public transport is at capacity as we stand without any increase. By reducing it, we still have a capacity in public transport. It is a mixture of very strong emphasis within local government to increasing employment opportunities within travel distance be it walk, cycle or bus and, across South-East Queensland, there are an increasing number of cycleways created to allow people a greater variety in access to and from work.

Senator LUDLAM—That was where I was going to go next. How important a priority do you place on cycling and pedestrianisation?

Mrs Hobson—I know, particularly in the area that I come from, there is a very strong emphasis to allow people the choice of greater varieties of transport. Currently it is about not just cycling to work but also cycling for pleasure. We have the Morton Bay Cycleway which means that you can cycle from Redcliffe, north of Brisbane, eventually almost heading down towards the Gold Coast but at least down to the Logan River. That is progressively being established. It is a shared program across local government areas to allow that cycling to occur. For example, all our road structures have cycleways and we are retrofitting cyclepaths to our key local roads as well as insisting on and planning with the Department of Main Roads for cycleways to be included in all future road construction. We see all major roads as having cycleways. As I have said, we are planning for and retrofitting existing roads within our local government area and I know the other local governments are doing the same thing.

Mr Cherry—And the state government and Brisbane City Council are currently building the fourth pedestrian cycling bridge across the Brisbane River exclusively for pedestrian and cycle use which I think is pretty remarkable. I do not know whether you asked this question of the Brisbane City Council but they have a huge number of initiatives at the moment. The lord mayor has just released a tender for the first cycle exchange program in the inner city to allow people to cycle from A to B Parisian style within the inner city for a small deposit for their bike. The Brisbane City Council has just opened a new integrated cycling centre as part of the new bus station beneath King George Square where cyclists can park their bikes safely, have a shower and walk to work.

CHAIR—No helmet head!

Mr Cherry—It will remove helmet hair which is very important! Most new buildings in the city are also required to provide cycle parking facilities. It is getting quite exciting.

Mrs Hobson—We want to see greater opportunity for a mix so people can cycle to points of public transport and then take their bike with them. We need to see a greater quantity of that on both buses and trains. In those outlying areas people can actually cycle to the source of public transport. We want to see an increase in that. A number of Brisbane city buses have the opportunity to put a bicycle on but we need to see more.

Mr Cherry—You would also be aware that there is still a desperate need to educate drivers about cyclists' safety. There have been a couple of very interesting media articles up here about some of the road rage that drivers are still showing to cyclists and some of the terrible accidents that are occurring. Even in the shared spaces between cyclists and pedestrians there is road rage that cyclists engage in against pedestrians. They are not all perfect out there.

Senator WILLIAMS—You are saying that you have to build more underground rail. Is the general perception of monorail and above ground rail that it is not acceptable? We saw the protests when they first put the monorail in Sydney and it is in Bangkok now. To me it would be cheaper to build. It is electric; it is efficient. Is it ruled out of the equation, do people simply not want it or do people want above ground monorail instead of the underground rail?

Mr Cherry—I will answer that in two ways. In the inner city it has to be underground because it is the inner city. You have to tunnel under it because there are all these 24-storey buildings across the inner city. There is no alternative there. They are looking at different corridors. They have been asked to cost different corridors as part of the feasibility study, which I think is the next stage they are seeking federal funding for. That might look at putting more of the rail on the surface rather than underground as a way of saving money but that would result in different corridors from what they were talking about. It is a marvellously technical area which I could talk about all afternoon, but I will not. There is resistance. Interestingly, most of the eastern busway, which Councillor Hobson has been talking about, is underground because of the continuing political resistance to building surface-way new developments, which is a big issue.

CHAIR—Thank you for your presentation and your assistance to the committee.

[2.00 pm]

GROSE, Mr Rodney Edward, Manager, Transport Planning, Gold Coast City Council

KRIMMER, Mr Anthony, Coordinator, InvestWEST

MOON, Councillor Graham Charles, Deputy Mayor, Lockyer Valley Regional Council

ROWE, Mr Warren Gordon, Director, Planning, Environment and Transport, Gold Coast City Council

CHAIR—I welcome the Gold Coast City Council and representatives from InvestWEST Alliance of Councils. I will invite representatives to make a brief opening statement, starting with you, Mr Rowe.

Mr Rowe—The city has put a submission in which I believe has been tabled. Transport for our city was identified by council some time ago as one of the key risks to the future prosperity of the city and one of the key areas on which the council wanted to focus in a policy and funding sense. As was contained in the submission to you, yes, we are the second largest local authority and the six largest city in Australia. We have about 500,000 people, but we have been growing for a very long period of time at very substantial rates—three to four per cent. One of the other things that the submission also highlights, and what is often forgotten about the Gold Coast, is that on any given night there are somewhere between 70,000 to 100,000 visitors in our city. When we are at the table seeking a reasonable share of taxation, that is often overlooked, because 70,000 visitors have a significant impact on our infrastructure, of which transport is part.

As with most cities this age, the city is highly urbanised and is predominantly built around the car, with all of the attendant problems that a highly mobile, car dominated city faces. I will not go into the submission, because you have that, but I will highlight some of the initiatives that the city has been involved with. Some time ago, the city decided that transport was an issue that we could not ignore for our residents and that we could not continue to point at other levels of government and say to our community that it was the state and, dare I say it, federal governments' fault for ignoring transport infrastructure for so long. So it introduced a transport levy on its residents, which has now been in place for about five years. It has grown from about \$15 up to about \$70 per ratepayer. That funding was introduced by council not to fund its infrastructure, its legitimate responsibilities for road infrastructure, but to move into areas of the transport equation that the city has not been in before—primarily public transport.

The submission highlights some of the significant initiatives that the city has been involved with. The Gold Coast, like most local authorities in Queensland, is not and has not been a transport operator. However, with the use of the transport levy funds, we have actually moved in to augmenting our transport services. For example, the levy is used to fund the purchase off the state government of a variety of new bus routes for the city. The fare box revenue really does not justify it in some of those areas at this stage but, in the council's view, if we could actually get in and provide an alternative form of transport to the motor car then we might actually grow that.

That has occurred. Some of those routes have been handed back to the state government and we have reinvested that money in additional routes. For example, we doubled the weekend services, particularly on Sundays, to provide a level of opportunity for residents.

Our rapid transit project is probably our major flagship project. We are a partner of state government in the delivery of what will hopefully be a mass transit light rail based system for the Gold Coast. It is a project that ultimately will cost, at least in the first stage, over \$1 billion. The council has elected to provide about \$120 million for the first stages of that, with a further \$30 million on the table for a more rapid expansion of the system north and south. If you know the Gold Coast, the first stage is scheduled to go from Griffith University and the new hospital to Broadbeach to the convention centre, the casino et cetera. It is a project which the state has made a submission to infrastructure Australia about for the opportunity to get federal funding to accelerate the provision of that infrastructure and the expansion of that infrastructure as it rolls out.

We have a thing called a 'council cab' which our transport levy funds. It is based on the local cab company and it provides for a \$2 fare for direct transport from an individual's home to a shopping centre for pensioners and people on disability pensions. It is a highly popular service that we run. We saw that for a small amount of money we could provide an additional service to our people. As I have said, it has proved to be very popular.

I suppose the final thing that I might say here is that for a long time the city has felt that there is a great opportunity for the Commonwealth government to enter into the fray in terms of transport generally but public transport specifically in the city. For example, the last time the federal government actually did inject itself in any substantive way into the initial transport in the inner city was for the Better Cities Program. The result of that Better Cities Program was the Gold Coast railway line. I say to people that you can imagine what our city would be like now if there was not a railway line connecting the new major centres of Brisbane and the Gold Coast. That piece of infrastructure has proved to be extraordinarily pivotal in terms of the land use and the patterns of land use and travel along that corridor.

CHAIR—That is the Robina—

Mr Rowe—It currently goes to Robina. That is the terminus. It is being constructed to Reedy Creek, which is down towards Burleigh Heads. Ultimately, the plan is to take it to the airport. If you can visualise a map of the Gold Coast, you have the heavy rail system running to the west and north-south and you have the proposed light rail system that basically connects to the heavy rail system at Helensvale and then runs along the coast. They form the two sides of a public transport ladder, if you like. The investment in bus routes to connect the east to the west is the plan for the state government in terms of reorienting a bus system on the coast.

CHAIR—That western rail is your RPT light rail, is it?

Mr Rowe—The western one is the heavy rail.

CHAIR—Because we are on the other side of Australia.

Mr Rowe—Yes. The surf rolls this way on this side, not away from the coast. As I said, we have provided a range of other observations in our submission and we are happy to answer questions as we go on.

CHAIR—Thank you. That was a good opening statement. Councillor Moon, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Councillor Moon—Very briefly, if I may.

CHAIR—Yes.

Councillor Moon—Firstly, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here. Secondly, I would like to express our support for the submission from the Council of Mayors. We are a part of the Council of Mayors. InvestWEST, or WESROC as it used to be called, takes in five western councils, starting with Ipswich City Council, followed by the Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council, the Scenic Rim Regional Council and Toowoomba Regional Council. That is quite a large area. Many of those areas base their future on rural production and the rural communities.

We have a major challenge with rail in particular. The rail system from Brisbane west through our community, west of Toowoomba, is a system that you could only describe as being completely jammed up. There is insufficient ability to get produce down that western line into the Port of Brisbane. Our primary concern and our primary thrust would be to have an upgrade of the rail system from Grandchester to Gowrie. That would be up and over the Toowoomba range. That is without doubt one of our major problems. We certainly need a far better rail system to the other side of Toowoomba. The range crossing is also an issue. I am sure Toowoomba will be talking about that.

CHAIR—Thank you, Councillor Moon. We will go to questions.

Senator LUDLAM—I will start with the Gold Coast. Are you essentially waiting for an announcement from Infrastructure Australia as to the funding for the light rail?

Mr Rowe—My understanding is that there has been a submission made by the state government to Infrastructure Australia. It is being considered by Infrastructure Australia. Apart from that, it is a matter that has been driven by the state government, so it was a state government submission.

Senator LUDLAM—But you have done most of the work on the planning, including setting aside a portion of funding.

Mr Rowe—No. The business case that was developed for the light rail was a very lengthy process that was basically run by the state government, but, in the recognition that it is such a fundamental part of not only our transport infrastructure but our economic infrastructure for the city, the city decided to become an equal partner. There is an MOU between both levels of government on this. Ultimately, when the announcement was made that the government would proceed with it, the council elected to make a sizeable contribution towards the construction.

Senator LUDLAM—This morning we have heard a lot about buses and heavy rail from the other councils. Why did you choose light rail for this particular link?

Mr Rowe—This is a project that has had a 10-year genesis. There has been a substantial amount of work done around the need for a mass rapid transit system for the Gold Coast. That was the first decision to be taken. The next decision to be taken was what was the appropriate mode to operate that. In actual fact, the business case that was produced was directed to consider both bus rapid and light rail. There were a variety of matters that were considered, such as future capacity, existing technology and the value that light rail adds to the surrounding land use. Light rail was considered by the state government to be the most appropriate mode to deliver what was needed.

Senator LUDLAM—Obviously you have supported that strategy. Can you talk a little bit more about that, if you know what the thinking was? For example, we heard this morning that Brisbane City Council considered light rail at one stage and that the bus rapid transit stuff came out cheaper. So I am wondering why the Gold Coast has gone down this track.

Mr Rowe—There was a full value for money assessment done it. The final drafts of the documents were deposited on my table this morning and they stand quite high. In essence it was found that light rail was the type of technology that actually added patronage and actually attracted patronage. For a place like the Gold Coast, which has, for example, about 70,000 visitors on any given night, that was also seen as an attractive form of public transport for tourists and visitors. I am sure that after the election if the committee were interested in getting a full brief on the business case the state could arrange that, because it was a very comprehensive assessment around value for money, prediction of patronage and capacity issues. I suppose the other thing that I would point out is that we were building a system for 30 years time. When you look at the patronage figures that were to be generated for bus rapid to achieve the same thing, it would have had to have been two sets of double articulated vehicles running nose to tail along the route, whereas with the current technology of light rail here and now you can provide vehicles that actually have that general capacity. But there were a range of other reasons. The total cost at the end of the day was, I think, marginal between the two. Light rail was marginally more expensive to provide but had less risk and greater operational and capacity factors.

Senator LUDLAM—I guess being electrified you are insulated from future price rises in oil and gas.

Mr Rowe—Also, you can access alternative forms of electricity generation as well. The other thing was that the topography of the coast suits light rail.

Senator LUDLAM—I turn to the InvestWEST folk. From your opening statement I take it that the key project that you are interested in is the heavy rail link out to Toowoomba. What is the condition of services at the moment? How far does the rail go. This is for the benefit of another Western Australian.

Councillor Moon—The electric rail goes as far as Ipswich. There is a small community further on past Ipswich called Rosewood, and it goes to there. That is the last of the passenger services that stop at every station. There is no passenger service west of Ipswich to Toowoomba other than the Westlander and the major inland trains. There is a bus service that commences in

Toowoomba and provides a connection to that electric rail system. But, apart from that, there is no means by which people can catch a train from our local community, for example, or from any other local community west of Rosewood.

Senator LUDLAM—Is there a costed proposal for a rail link right through into the city?

Councillor Moon—I do not think so.

Mr Krimmer—There is no properly costed submission at this stage, Senator.

Senator LUDLAM—Okay. Maybe it would be good if there were. Can you tell us a bit more about the hinterland and the area off that main sort of axis behind Brisbane? Is there anything all that exists out there? Are there bus services?

Councillor Moon—Once you go west of the electric rail system where it terminates at Rosewood, the only method for people to get to work—and there are many people in that area that work here in Brisbane, work in Ipswich or maybe even work in Toowoomba—is road transport, whether it be bus or predominantly car. So there is a complete lack of services west of this area, and that is very frustrating for people who move into these areas. There has been, and there will be into the future, considerably more development—being rural residential type development—and the population increase is going to be quite large in that area over the next 10 to 15 years. A rail system would be by far the most positive and probably cost effective way of getting people into the city.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks.

Senator WILLIAMS—Have you actually invited anyone from Infrastructure up here to look at your region considering the obvious huge urgency concerning your transport network?

Mr Rowe—We have actually made representations on behalf of the city to Infrastructure Australia, as I suppose every other major urban area has. I am not sure whether Infrastructure Australia has been to South-East Queensland.

Mr Krimmer—The Council of Mayors did not invite Infrastructure Australia up to inspect the facilities.

Senator WILLIAMS—Did they do that?

Mr Krimmer—They flew over. They took a helicopter tour.

Senator WILLIAMS—Infrastructure Australia is the recommending body for the federal government to spend the moneys. I think they have just a board of 12. I know I have invited them to visit the north of New South Wales. May I recommend that you perhaps invite them again because it is important to get them to look around. When you are seeking federal government funding obviously they are the ones who make the recommendations.

On the council cabs, have they had a negative effect on ordinary taxis? Are they concerned you are taking business off them? I hope they are not.

Mr Rowe—No, in actual fact we pay the full fare.

Senator WILLIAMS—So the actual cab does it. They still get their full tariff and you subsidise the fare.

Mr Rowe—That is right. The participant pays \$2 and they go from home to the shopping centre and return, and we pick up the tab in between. Basically, at the moment I think we are spending close to \$200,000 and looking to expand. It is not just a vehicle to go from here to here; there is actually a lot of social networking that goes on. People share ride. Every pension day there is the opportunity for interaction. It has benefits far beyond just moving people from home to the shopping centre and back.

Senator WILLIAMS—Excuse my ignorance, I am from a country town.

CHAIR—On the council cabs, are they normal cabs?

Mr Rowe—Yes, normal cabs.

CHAIR—Why did you do it that way?

Mr Rowe—The council identified a need within its community to provide access to low-level facilities for certain parts of its population. The cab companies actually have a ready-made system of booking and tracking payment et cetera, so it was a relatively easy model to pursue. I should add too that, as with all good ideas, this is not a new one for us: Brisbane City have a similar project that operates and we unashamedly stole the best bits of that for the city.

CHAIR—I made some notes just as you were talking earlier. You said ‘from home to shopping centre’. It is not limited from home to shopping centre for pensioners—is that right?

Mr Grose—It picks people up at their home. They book the taxi and it comes to their home to pick them up and it takes them to local supermarket shopping centres, not just to a corner store locally but where there is a supermarket. There is usually a range of other services there as well that people want like a doctor, optometrist, dentist and those sorts of things. People might catch a bus from there to go on further as an independent journey. The cab meets them at a fixed time to take them back to their home. It is a shared service so there may be three or four people in the taxi going to different places. People can book it on a regular basis. They need only make the booking once and it will pick them up every week on the same day at the same time or they can book it just for the journeys that they want. If they do not want to return or if they want to stay for a longer or a shorter time, they are able to return home at their own convenience.

CHAIR—What a wonderful initiative. How do you qualify for that service?

Mr Grose—You have to be 60 years of age or have a disability. If you are disabled a carer person can go with you for the same fare. We do not ask people to bring along their birth certificate. If they say they are 60 and they are only 59 and 11 months, we are not too worried about that.

CHAIR—That is great. How long has that been going?

Mr Grose—About two or three years.

CHAIR—I did not know that Brisbane had done it. I know that up in Darwin—the last time I checked in Darwin—they have the Arafura Express or ‘Arafura’ something. It is an ad hoc taxi service. It has got the taxi industry up in Darwin really peed off because it is cheap—and reliable, I suppose. Have you seen what goes on up there?

Mr Grose—No, I have not seen that one. Can I say, though, that the taxi company are 100 per cent supportive of what we are doing. It gives them additional clients at a time of the day—usually a Thursday morning or a Wednesday morning—when they are not as busy as they might be taking people to the airport or taking tourists around. So it fills in capacity for them. We do not run it in the busiest weeks of the year for taxis such as Christmas time or when the Indy car race is on at the Gold Coast; it stops for that week. It operates for the other 50 weeks a year.

CHAIR—I could understand them being supportive because it is supplementing their income, and that is good. Everyone has a win.

Mr Rowe—They tend to have less troublesome clients too.

CHAIR—That is a wonderful initiative. Do you see that expanding?

Mr Rowe—Yes. It is something that we have expanded since its first introduction. Council is keen to provide it. Remember that this was a toe in the water for us. This is getting into an area of provision that we have never been in, and councils are rightfully nervous about starting something that they might not be able to continue to fund. We are looking at opportunities to expand it to different client groups as well. That is part of our looking to go forward. What made it possible for us to do this was the transport levy on our community.

Senator WILLIAMS—Chair, may I add something?

CHAIR—Yes, by all means.

Senator WILLIAMS—I think the \$2 fee you charge is essential, because if you make it free it will get abused, just as many do with our hospital system. So I commend you on having that small fee.

CHAIR—So that tripartite set-up is working great for your ratepayers, the council and the taxi operators. I will take one step back and not use too many words to describe it and say that in Perth it just would not work, because in Perth you cannot even book a taxi. The taxi system in Perth is abhorrent—and I will stand by those words and argue with anyone over them. All that is fine until they start getting too busy and then you cannot book. Have you experienced problems like that yet?

Mr Grose—No.

Mr Rowe—We have a pretty close working relationship with the taxi company on the Gold Coast. We are very attuned to some of their issues. For example, we move taxi ranks around in response to some of their concerns and we provide security in some instances in places like

Surfers during particular times of the year. So the relationship is reasonably close. We are actually looking to work with the taxi industry on another proposal that involves a bit more of an on-demand system for anyone—because they have got the technology of queuing and what have you.

CHAIR—That makes sense.

Mr Rowe—It now provides them with a small stream of almost guaranteed income that they can use to look at their existing resources.

CHAIR—So how many movements would you average a year roughly?

Mr Grose—I would not know. We are not too concerned. The numbers fluctuate. The taxis can hold four to five passengers in a standard car. They have maxitaxis as well, which can take up to a dozen. Getting a dozen people in a shared service and picking them up individually makes it a long journey, so we try not to get a dozen in a taxi. But if there is a need for more they put more on.

CHAIR—Mr Grose, I respect and admire your honesty when you say you are not really concerned. But I am, because I think it is a wonderful initiative. I really see some benefits in it.

Mr Rowe—We can actually provide you with ridership data.

CHAIR—Yes, if you could please.

Mr Rowe—Yes, we can send that to the committee.

CHAIR—That would be fantastic. We will go to Senator O'Brien.

Senator O'BRIEN—This question goes particularly to the Gold Coast City Council. Obviously, you have some expenditure in the public transport field at the moment with some potential expansion. How would you envisage the council funding its public transport responsibilities for the future, given the possibility of growth?

Mr Rowe—That is a very difficult question. I believe my council made a very brave decision to introduce a transport levy for its ratepayers and then grow it over a period of time. In order to grow it and not receive the sort of criticism that we in local government often get about raising rates and other charges, it had to prove that the money was being well used. This money is not just used to provide additional public transport; we often use it where our road network interfaces with the state road network. We try to help the state bring forward intersection improvements and those sorts of things that actually help us. It is actually spread fairly broadly. The plan is to continue to grow the levy over the next few years. Our 10-year—

Senator O'BRIEN—How much is it?

Mr Rowe—It is currently \$79. It grew from \$15. It is probably—I think we have earmarked it to head towards a hundred and—

Mr Grose—That is for budget discussion.

Mr Rowe—Absolutely right.

Senator LUDLAM—You can tell us; we won't tell anyone.

CHAIR—What was that number again?

Senator WILLIAMS—No-one will know here.

Mr Rowe—It is intended to grow over a period of time, subject to the community's ability to pay, and also subject to the community agreeing to pay that—and that can only come through the provision of additional services over and above what is currently there. Longer term—in a forum just recently, I said that local government tends to be the bottom feeder of the taxation world, because our opportunity to generate income is very, very limited. In relation to one of your questions—one of the terms of reference is around funding and what have you. For a very long period of time, local government has sought access to a growth tax or a share of a growth tax, because it is only through sharing in a growth tax that you can have a guaranteed line of income that grows according to the demands that are actually going to be placed upon it. We do not have that, so we make do with land tax, fees, charges and grants. We are very grateful for those—but it really is problematic. What we have seen on the coast are circumstances where, at the end of a very long period of underfunding by all levels of government—not just local government but also state and federal government—in the area of transport, we are trying in limited ways to increase the transport opportunity. But it is very, very difficult—extremely difficult.

Senator O'BRIEN—So how does business pay this? Is it one levy per business or one levy per ratepayer?

Mr Rowe—The levy is actually in two parts. It is a per ratepayer levy, so it is a standard charge per ratepayer. Then, last year or the year before, we introduced in effect a differential rate for our commercial properties. So the larger traffic generators, such as major shopping centres, pay more. Prior to that, they paid the same as a house in the suburbs pays, so council moved to ensure that the burden was more equitably stretched across the users of the transport system in the city.

Senator O'BRIEN—Obviously, for InvestWEST councils, in the main, it is not an option to pay for this sort of public transport?

Councillor Moon—It certainly is not. Our resource base is nothing like that of Gold Coast City Council or the other large shires or councils within the region. We just do not have that ability to provide a service such as we have just heard. I think that there are probably means by which certain things can be done—bikeways et cetera could be put in to assist people to travel from A to B perhaps. But the type of service we have just heard about—no, it is out of the question.

Senator O'BRIEN—I imagine that councils would have council cars and the like for transporting people to more distant service needs—medical needs and the like?

Councillor Moon—No. The only cars that the council has are for senior staff. As a councillor, I do not get a car. The only car that is provided in our council is for the mayor.

Senator O'BRIEN—So how do people in your communities get to more distant areas?

Councillor Moon—People within our community rely on their own transport. We just do not have the resources to provide a transport system.

CHAIR—It really drives it home when you see the vast difference between two councils. If we threw in golden beaches, theme parks, a casino, major shopping centres, high rise apartments and hospitality and tourism, you could be licking your lips for the same levy. I can clearly see the dramas that are faced, and each council has their own.

Mr Rowe—If I can add there, too, that one of the issues relates to land use and transport and the relationship between land use and transport. Transport and the efficiency of the transport system is often directly related to intensity of activity, and so in those areas where the distances are greater between that activity it is a very difficult exercise to fund. For example, with our light rail system, the business case showed that the population along that route was 25 per cent of the city, half the businesses and two-thirds of the tourists. So there was an intensity of activity which allowed that business decision involving a very sizeable investment to be made. It is almost like a chicken and egg situation. Certainly, the more separated those communities are, the harder it is to provide secure sources of funding.

Councillor Moon—Could I also add that it is an issue that is discussed very, very regularly. As elected people, we are concerned that there are people within the community who have difficulty in accessing services. For example, in many cases, it is important that people who come into our region, particularly if they are going to live in a rural-residential type development area, have two vehicles. If they do not have two cars, there are problems. And there are many people who do not have two vehicles. So it is an ongoing problem. It is one that we are very conscious of, and it is one that we discuss regularly and try to look at ways of overcoming it.

CHAIR—Earlier, Professor Sipe and Dr Dodson from the Griffith University School of Environment put it to us very clearly—and I assume that this would fit into the area that you represent, Councillor Moon—that, as get further away from the city, there is cheaper land and first home buyers. It is those people who need public transport more than people in the city who, dare I say it, can probably afford it more than the people that you represent.

Councillor Moon—That is probably right. Although, even the cheaper land situation no longer exists. An acre and half block of land within the Laidley area, which is part of the Lockyer Valley Regional Council, will probably cost you about \$120,000 today. A few years ago, you could have bought that for \$30,000. Even a small building block will cost you close to \$100,000. The issue of land being cheap because you are going further west is not really the situation now at all.

Senator WILLIAMS—I want to go back to the tax issue. At the supermarket, we can get a local fuel issue discount of 4c or 5c a litre, or whatever is being offered at the time. Have you ever considered asking the specific retail outlets whether they want to give a rebate to your council for the subsidy that you provide for taking people there?

Mr Rowe—No, because we actually hit them up as part of the differential rate. They do not escape us.

Senator WILLIAMS—Good. Do you have rate pegging on your council roads in Queensland?

Mr Rowe—No. The only rate pegging occurs through the power of politics.

Senator WILLIAMS—It is a controversial thing in New South Wales.

Senator LUDLAM—I have a question about the Gold Coast. What kind of ownership and operation model have you got planned for the light rail system? And how do you plan to integrate that with the previous and existing bus services?

Mr Rowe—There are a number of proposals for both the provision and operation of it. The government has looked at the government providing the facility and at the private sector providing and operating the system. The business case produces figures around all of that. It is a bit hard for me to talk about it because some of it is commercial-in-confidence information at this stage and it will be part of any bid process that goes on. Initially, the Queensland government was interested in sounding out the private sector. We ran a market-sounding day just prior to Christmas and there were about 120-odd participants, which included potential financiers, operators and vehicle manufacturers. People flew out from Paris and Spain to have a look at the system. At the end of the day, it will depend largely upon the availability of finance and so on. Initially, there was an interest in the private sector being involved in some way. Council has expressed an interest in ultimately being involved in whatever operating model—be it a company—that might eventuate.

Senator LUDLAM—It sounds as though some of the detail is yet to be pinned down. If there is a funding announcement in the next couple of weeks and you or the state is successful in securing the remaining funds, what is your timetable for getting it built?

Mr Rowe—The project has a high level of readiness. I think the terms ‘shovel ready’, which is awful. The work that has been done both in terms of the route selection and the design of the route has been extensive to get government support for it. Council’s money is being used to purchase property from the property owners who will be affected directly by the route. All things being equal, council anticipates that the line will be open in 2012.

Senator LUDLAM—I have a question for InvestWEST. I was up in Toowoomba yesterday, visiting it for the first time—it is really gorgeous up there—and I noticed that quite a degree of freight rail was carrying agricultural produce and coal in and around the region. Is there any potential there for synergies with passenger services? Has that ever been investigated?

Councillor Moon—I cannot answer that. I do not have the figures, but I am of the belief that, for example, in relation to coal transport by rail, there are only a certain number of coal trains that can get through the system in Brisbane in a week. I have been given the figure of 19 trains a week that can go to the port. It is obvious that a lot of the wealth created west of here has great difficulty in getting to the port for export. Having said that, I am sure that, if there were a far better rail system into Brisbane, many people would use it as a means of transport for both work

and recreation from the Darling Downs, from Toowoomba, into Brisbane. I am sure that would happen.

Senator LUDLAM—But there is no potential crossover with the freight rail network? There is no room for passenger services?

Councillor Moon—At the present time, I do not believe there is room. Apart from that, the state government have seen fit not to provide an electric system further west than Rosewood, or just the other side of Ipswich.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Gold Coast City Council and InvestWEST Alliance of Councils.

Proceedings suspended from 2.43 pm to 2.59 pm

FURZE, Mrs Susan Jane, Senior Transport Economist, RACQ

ROTH, Mr Michael Tony, Executive Manager, Public Policy, RACQ

CHAIR (Senator Sterle)—I welcome representatives of RACQ. I invite you to make an opening statement before we go to questions.

Mr Roth—Thank you. RACQ appreciate the invitation and opportunity to address the Senate committee, and we are happy to provide any information we can today. RACQ is Queensland's peak motoring organisation, with 1.2 million members. Those members look to us to represent their interests on a broad range of motoring matters, including the adequacy of transport infrastructure and escalating urban congestion. While much of RACQ's focus is on roads, our policy considers the total urban transport network. We know that growing congestion requires the operation of safe, convenient and reliable walking, cycling and public transport facilities. Most of our urban members also walk, cycle or use public transport, so all modes are integral to their mobility. The role of public passenger services and private motor vehicles has changed considerably over the past 50 years. The mode share of cars has increased at the expense of public transport, walking and cycling. Although this has facilitated large suburban populations and economic growth, it has also created a range of new challenges, like congestion.

A national response to worsening urban traffic congestion in our major cities is required. The economic, social and environmental costs of congestion are well documented and are expected to increase. This means higher social costs of pollution, delays, trip-time variability and fuel costs. Research and on-road tests carried out by RACQ show that driving in stop-start congested traffic increases fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by around 30 per cent. Transport funding should be directed to projects that maximise returns to the community and support the long-term vision of a sustainable, integrated and resilient transport system. When assessing transport projects, maximising social welfare benefits should be the goal and government should avoid the temptation to pick winners without exploring all options. For instance, many congested road corridors to central business districts carry a substantial flow of bus passengers and car drivers during peak hours. If corridor upgrade options focus only on public transport benefits, and ignore the impact on traffic congestion, the likely result is reduced social welfare and higher fuel costs and greenhouse emissions. With 80 per cent of the Australian population living in capital cities, there is a strong case for greater federal engagement on urban transport. The federal government can increase funding for the best projects and change the mix of motoring costs to influence travel choices.

The fringe benefit tax treatment of motor vehicles is an obvious example of something that should be modified to remove the incentive for additional travel. Our members survey in 2008 revealed that 51 per cent of members support a fixed FBT percentage, compared with only 19 per cent opposing it. The federal government collects around \$14 billion each year in fuel excise and returns less than a third of this to fund road infrastructure. If a greater portion was returned to transport networks, it could relieve congestion and replace inefficient motoring charges. Imposing a toll charge on our newest and best urban roads diverts potential uses back on to the surrounding road network, which increases congestion, fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The imposition of tolls on new urban links is a major barrier to reducing congestion. The negative impacts of the distorted traffic flows are compounded by potential contractual

arrangements between government and the toll road owners. They have a powerful incentive to block any attempts to reduce congestion or improve public transport on alternative routes, as this would reduce their traffic flows and their financial return.

Reversing the current tolling trend will require greater federal government funding of transport infrastructure and an undertaking to explore more efficient pricing mechanisms, such as inner-city congestion or cordon charging. Our members survey in 2008 revealed almost double the support for congestion charging compared with tolls. Congestion charging has been shown to effectively reduce inner-city congestion, by focusing variable charges where congestion is worst and by encouraging the efficient use of existing road capacity and public transport alternatives. Congestion charging can also provide a revenue stream for road and rail infrastructure. RACQ supports the consideration of inner-city congestion charging along with public transport improvements in adequate free bypass roads as a more equitable and efficient alternative to toll roads. A number of international cities, such as London, Singapore and Stockholm, have successful inner-city congestion charging schemes in operation.

The objectives for urban transport are to facilitate mobility and exchanges while minimising any negative economic, social and environmental impacts. The federal government should work with other levels of government to fund greater investment in the urban road and rail network, integrate land use and transport planning, improve traffic management systems, implement behaviour change programs and replace inefficient motor vehicle taxes and charges, such as fringe benefits tax and toll road charges. Thank you. We are happy to take any questions.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Roth. We will go to questions.

Senator WILLIAMS—Mr Roth, does the RACQ support the principle where heavy freight should be placed on rail and taken off the roads?

Mr Roth—To the extent that that is possible, although we are aware that that is only possible with a small portion of the existing freight traffic.

Senator WILLIAMS—Have you lobbied for that type of change or for increased infrastructure for the heavy rail network?

Mr Roth—As similarly with our policy on urban transport infrastructure, we lobby for the best infrastructure to be provided to meet the needs out there. In some cases that will be road. In some cases that will be rail infrastructure. It depends on the complex dynamics of the market, the type of freight, the distances carried, the timing, the perishable nature of the goods and many other factors.

Senator WILLIAMS—Because heavy freight is very damaging to the road, isn't it?

Mr Roth—It is very damaging to the road, and many of our members do not like driving near heavy road freight vehicles. So where rail freight is feasible we support that.

Senator WILLIAMS—Of course it is still essential to have transports on the roads especially for short haulage and deliveries et cetera, so I suppose that is part and parcel of the system to remain.

Mr Roth—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—Thank you for coming in this afternoon and for your submission. Congestion is obviously the subject of the moment. Can you tell us if you know how we price congestion? How do we come up with a figure for what congestion costs the economy in an average year?

Mrs Furze—Essentially, the RACQ data comes from research undertaken by other bodies including, for example, a COAG group that did an urban transport review at the end of 2007. As part of that review, I believe they actually asked the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics to cost congestion. It was as part of the COAG review findings that they came up with a trend that showed that, for example, congestion costs over the next 10 years are going to double. I believe for South-East Queensland they costed the avoidable costs of congestion at about \$1.2 billion at the moment with that increasing to around \$3.8 billion by 2020. So the RACQ simply do not have the resources to independently go out and cost congestion ourselves so we do rely on independent research.

Senator LUDLAM—Is it basically the price of lost time? So it is a certain hourly rate for the amount of time you spend sitting in traffic?

Mr Roth—It is the price of travel delays. It is also the additional vehicle operating costs that result from the additional fuel that is burnt while vehicles are sitting in congestion.

Senator LUDLAM—Can you talk a little bit more about the kind of congestion charging that you would like to see? You go into a little bit of detail in your submission about why you are not very supportive of toll roads. Do you want to bounce those two ideas off each other?

Mr Roth—Congestion charging is something for which we do not have a defined scheme as yet. What we are suggesting is that government needs to go to the experts, the community and all the stakeholders and look at how we can actually build up something that makes sense. The principle of congestion charging is pricing off marginal demand where it is most valuable to remove that marginal demand, whereas toll roads have the reverse effect where they are pricing off a significant amount of the demand which ends up having to use longer routes, slower routes and consume more fuel and time. So as revenue mechanisms congestion charging is very efficient whereas toll roads are not efficient at all. We cannot define the scope exactly of a congestion charging scheme, but we would propose that at this stage it is likely to use technology similar to the current toll roads that are opening up, as in e-toll free-flow technology, and it would be based around a small inner city area.

Senator LUDLAM—Similar to what Ken Livingstone introduced in London?

Mr Roth—Yes; however, it would be using better technology.

Senator LUDLAM—If you were going to be doing that, and charging people to come into the city, using whatever model—are we not just making it more expensive but not providing alternatives for people? We heard evidence this morning that public transport, particularly at peak times, is basically at capacity.

Mr Roth—One of the key parts of setting up a congestion-charging scheme is to have the alternatives in place. So it would require a multiyear project that included setting up road infrastructures to allow people around the congested zone and also improving the capacity of public transport to take the additional flows into the CBD area. They are integral components of setting up a congestion-charging scheme.

Senator LUDLAM—One of the terms of reference of this inquiry is whether or not the Commonwealth should play a direct role in funding and planning public transport. I take it that you would be in favour of that?

Mr Roth—We are definitely in favour of that. One point we make is that the Commonwealth should not limit itself only to public transport—because it is picking winners, and often the best solution is in making the entire network function more efficiently, not in trying to move part of the demand from one side to another.

Senator LUDLAM—Can you just tease out what you mean by that, ‘not being limited to public transport’? What else should they be looking at?

Mr Roth—I will use an example of bus lanes versus busways. The Queensland government has invested a considerable amount of money into busways. They are providing a totally separated corridor for buses to travel in. That is obviously the most expensive solution to fix the demand along a corridor. A much cheaper solution may involve expanding the existing surface road corridor and giving buses more priority on that corridor—so, for a fraction of the price of the busway, you can achieve the majority of the benefits but also relieve some of the road congestion. The process of increasing congestion to try to force people onto public transport is a reduction in social welfare. We are saying: let us fix the whole system so it functions more efficiently, both car travel and bus travel—and the rail network, for that matter.

Senator LUDLAM—Do you have a position on the kind of endless debates that swirl around the benefits of busways as opposed to light rail in metropolitan areas?

Mr Roth—We do not have a fixed position on that. I think it is probably a matter of horses for courses. It would depend on the specifics of the demand—the types of trip generators it is going to, the volume of movements and the cost for the different infrastructure based on the existing corridors that are available.

CHAIR—Are there any further questions from committee members? No? In that case, I thank the RACQ for their time and assistance to the committee.

[3.14 pm]

YEATES, Mr Michael Macrae , Convenor, Public Transport Alliance

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Yeates. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Yeates—Thank you. The Public Transport Alliance was created in the mid-1990s as part of the Integrated Regional Transport planning process. I will just present a little handout with some dot points. The first one is the IRTP goals. This was prepared in November 1998, so we are talking nearly 11 years ago. The IRTP, which has been mentioned several times, is an ongoing planning process. Our view was that there were some fairly crucial components of it that in effect allow it to be audited. These might be called standards. The first one is the question of accessibility, and that is to provide equity of mobility to everybody in some form or other. This seems to cover from the very urban discussions we have had to the kind of problems that were alluded to by my friends from the Lockyer Valley, small rural areas and out in the bush. Public transport, cycling and walking priority: there seems to be an emphasis on providing additional capacity and additional funds to provide these facilities for buses, for public transport in various sorts of ways. But again the very vexed question is whether in fact we need to spend a lot of money on additional facilities or whether we can better use the existing ones. I guess you would have heard some of that already by Professor Sipe and Dr Dodson.

The question about bus lanes and busways is another one that was raised a minute ago where there are options for carrying a lot more people if people carrying is the measure, not vehicles. At the moment I think we are still talking about road capacity and road expansion in terms of number of vehicles, whereas a standard bus, for example, can carry up to 60 people and light rail vehicles up to about 250 on the road in a lane. An integrated system ticket system was an interesting thing. We have started to get it working here but for many ways for users the integrated ticket system here is still very restrictive. I noticed this morning that more and more people are using the integrated ticket system and, while it is quicker to load, it is now becoming a problem getting off the bus because as you leave the bus there is now a queue to sign off as you leave the bus. The integrated ticket is a smart card. You flash it as you get on the bus and you flash it as you get off. It is quicker loading but I do not think people have taken into account the total time, because now instead of just pouring off the bus when you get to town everybody has a flash their card individually. In effect we should be counting double the time. Even though it is quicker to put it on, it is twice the time.

Another measure is the useful map of the integrated public transport system. Again, it is unfortunate that Queensland Transport is not here or Translink, but if you were to ask for a map which shows the public transport system in South-East Queensland and Brisbane I think you would be amazed. One of the issues there is that, while there are many bus routes, for example, shown, many of them have very poor frequency. And there is no easy way to see the principal routes, the high-capacity ones, unless you actually know the bus routes and obviously the train routes.

Finally there is the question of integrated whole system timetabling, which has again been touched on. It is absolutely crucial. For people who are using public transport you have got the

total trip time. It starts when you start the trip, walking out the door and heading off down the road. If you have to take 10 or 15 minutes to get across several major roads because you have got traffic lights that only give you six seconds of green man and so on, you can spend a lot of time getting to the public transport. The emphasis seems to be more and more on getting the public transport fast but further away from where people actually are.

I will come to it in a minute on the other sheet, but the point is that we need to get public transport where it is needed, at a high frequency. You will have heard Zurich mentioned a number of times. It seems to be the world's best practice in terms of timetabling in that you virtually know what time your little local bus is going to go to somewhere else, where you get off and catch something bigger. It might be light rail, it might be a local train or whatever. You cannot do that in Brisbane. You simply cannot. This photocopy of a photo shows a bus that left just as a train arrived at a local station in Brisbane. It is just an illustration of the problem. It brought people to the station but did not wait to take people away. I am familiar enough with Transperth and many other models. It is absolutely crucial that those buses stay there to drop people to the forthcoming train in both directions and then to wait to take the people away, otherwise in this particular case, even though it is a 15-minute train service it was an hour's wait for the next bus, and of course nobody is going to wait that long, they are going to drive their car.

The next page is the four ways of viewing public transport. I think this is a really important issue. The first one is structural: the modes, the planning, the operation. You will have heard today a litany of planning failures. We have got plans where the population predictions were wrong, we have got the whole process. So really what we are doing at the moment is managing and we are probably managing post facto. We are trying all the time to patch the systems up. There is a lack of really good core public transport, and transport more generally, infrastructure that actually provides a role in a functional sense. Here I am going to refer back to Canberra, where there is quite a strong structure as a plan of the various areas, Gungahlin, Woden, the ACT centre and whatever. There are good strong lines of connection for public transport and for roads and the system is quite legible. What we seem to be in particular in Brisbane, is contrary to what my good friend and my local councillor, Jane Prentice, who is actually a long-term friend, is saying. You need to go and try the public transport service, try and find your way to the airport or try and walk from here to QUT Kelvin Grove campus, which is only about a kilometre and a half that way but it is a very difficult route because the whole thing has been blown apart by road corridors and so on.

The second issue in the four ways of viewing public transport is the equity issue. It has to most suit most users. The problem there is that we still think to be running provision on people who are currently using the system. So the problem then is how you find out why people are not using the system, how do you make sure that provision of supply side is right. I think the airlines get the closest model we can give, because you cannot just run a plane assuming people are going to catch it. You get a better picture of the demand model. If people provide this infrastructure, they know it is going to go at a certain time, you will be there. If it is not there you cannot catch it.

There are questions about disabled access. I can tell you for sure that Brisbane City Council may well have met—I am not going to challenge what Councillor Prentice said—the DDA requirements. But I can tell you there are almost no local bus routes in Brisbane at all that run a

scheduled disabled service; almost none. If you have a follow-up mechanism, you could ask the council—

Senator O'BRIEN—You mean it is random.

Mr Yeates—It is random. They have got a lot of buses. So there is a very big problem with the DDA compliance in the transport model and the negotiations for the transport provision. This is a problem when you set rules—I understand both sides of this—where suddenly things are trapped.

Schools is another thing. We seem to be funding more and more school based public transport that other people cannot catch. So you have got the annoying exercise of living on a fairly poor bus corridor where buses are out of service because they are running for schools, so there is a kind of subsidy issue about access.

I think Senator Williams asked a question this morning about electric bikes. There have certainly been some very good submissions to various sections of the Commonwealth in recent times in regard to the definite need to upgrade the electric power assisted bike regulations from 200 to 250 watts electric. That is very clearly a Commonwealth matter. That would bring us into alignment with most other places in the world and opens up a world market, whereas at the moment that has been totally banned. The vehicles are illegal at the moment and yet there are very good vehicles outside. That is an equity kind of issue. Older folk for whom hills are a problem ride an electric bike. As you can probably tell, I am on the margins of being an older person. As for the economic issues, GDP, costs, I am old enough to remember when you could buy three gallons of petrol for a dollar Australian—

CHAIR—I was pumping it after school.

Mr Yeates—Three gallons for a dollar. It was 10 shillings. If you work out what that is in litres, it is appalling. I do not believe the petrol price really has the effect that most people think it does. For those who can pay, they keep paying. If it is a wealthier society, what will happen is that you get a very inequitable economic model developing. It is very hard to challenge but I think it needs to be looked at very closely. At the same time I am old enough to remember when Brisbane had trams and light rail. The interesting thing there is that the well-known former Lord Mayor Clem Jones was the one who took them off, in effect to make more room for more cars on the roads. I am convinced now from my trips overseas at various stages that light rail as we had it was excellent.

CHAIR—Was that electric light rail?

Mr Yeates—Yes. We had electric trolley buses too. I have mentioned environmental. I think the macro health and safety issues are all well-known. The safety one that is interesting to me is the \$20 billion a year we subsidise crash costs on the roads. I have given you a reference to a paper that I did but also a conference in 2001 looking at the Swedish Vision Zero approach to road safety and road design. I commend that to you.

In terms of public transport service, we have heard a lot about commuter but we have heard almost nothing about local services other than the council cabinet type models. To all intents and

purposes what we are really talking about is that you need a level of service provision such that you do not need a car. Once you have got a car, you will use it. If you have got the time like I have at the moment, I can choose, and I tend to try to choose the models that best reflect transport planning theory. Not surprisingly, I caught a bus in this morning. We got stuck in the traffic and it took a lot longer than I would have taken by bicycle, but there is no parking for a bike here. I know that. Even if I did not know, I would not risk it, five kilometres from the city. So there are decisions about that.

Walking gets mentioned. The Pedestrian Council of Australia has a very good pedestrian charter, which is on the web. Again, the references idea. My submission includes people with disabilities as part of walking and pedestrian. That is a big challenge for local government, including something as simple as a bus stop. If you cannot get to a bus stop there is no point in having 70 per cent of your bus fleet accessible.

The interchange model and a single mode was discussed briefly. Interchange is absolutely crucial. I think you are going to Perth. I notice several of the committee are from Western Australia. Perth is very good on a number of these things, including disabled access, I suspect as a result of the Disability Services Commission some years ago having an impact on how various service providers addressed the disability issue. Transperth is very good.

Mr Yeates—It is an exercise—here I speak as an architect—in looking at whether people are trying to avoid committing to what the obligations to the extent that they can avoid those obligations or whether they try and meet them. I have referenced an example where a \$26 million station upgrade at Indooroopilly, in Councillor Prentice's ward but that is a state government project, has been spent on an upgrade of the station but the station itself is one of those that is a bit problematic in terms of getting the platform levels. That was an opportunity to relocate it not very far away, and the \$26 million would have gone a long way towards relocating a big station. It was and probably still is the biggest volume of pedestrians going through that station outside the CBD. Yet it has been upgraded for \$26 million and theoretically complies with the DDA.

The interchange thing is really about getting the timetable timing ticketing what-nots to work. Little wonder then that people feel that they do not want to make an interchange. But I use a Melbourne tram example, where you catch a tram to such and such and get off and go across the road and catch the one going at right angles. You rely on that system working because you know it is going to be there, you know it is going to come pretty frequently and it has been well tried and so on. Without that, public transport fails. I think that is the single biggest issue now, that it is commuter driven and not looking at interchangeability, so people have to use their car and you get into park-and-ride and so on.

TODs is an interesting one. I have said here that if they really are transport oriented, why on earth do they still have so much required car-parking. We have got some big ones going into Brisbane at the moment in the suburbs right beside a railway station and the question really is why is there so much council required or state planning legislation required mandatory car parking when similar examples using, it is a bit of an overstatement, but car free or much reduced car parking requirements will make those developments much cheaper. It costs an enormous amount to build car-parking into the basements of high-rise buildings but also it is adding to the road infrastructure. I did not know what our figures are here but the Dutch use

examples of the average car in the Netherlands being used less than an hour a day. The rest of the time it is got parking provided all over the place, not only once but all over the place, so that in a sense you can jump in your car and expect to find a car park somewhere. They are cutting back on that car-parking provision to the point where some of the places are almost car free. That does not mean that you cannot have short-term parking, convenience parking, disabled parking and a lot of other parking, but trying to get rid of the choice that makes the car the logical option.

CHAIR—Did you say that was the Netherlands or Amsterdam?

Mr Yeates—In the Netherlands and more generally. I will give you some examples in a second. The other side of TODs is an interesting one here which is a case study for possible consideration given Commonwealth ownership of land that does not have to apply to town planning requirements in the states and local authorities. That is two blocks of land, one owned by the CSIRO at Long Pocket, which is about 2½ to three kilometres from the nearest railway station in an area of typical suburban housing. The fear is that the Commonwealth pressure for higher density housing, state pressure for higher density housing and even local government pressure for higher density housing is going to lead to creating an island of high-density housing two to three kilometres from a railway station with no real possibility of much increase in buses because clearly there are not enough people. However, the ABC site at Toowong is right on the river, right in the middle of Toowong and an absolutely ideal place for much higher density housing. So one of the questions that exercises the mind if you think about public transport and various national goals would be to cross-subsidise. That might be difficult, but ring-fencing those two sites you could trade off one for the other and say, ‘The Commonwealth is not bound in terms of development on these sites and can probably quite legitimately claim much higher density development and more expensive development on the Toowong site, ex-ABC radio and TV, as distinct from the other one, where it might have to take a big loss on its value if it was overdeveloped in its current form.

So I think there are a lot of issues at the moment that lack national or consistent guidance. It ranges from things like e bikes, power assisted bikes, through to land value, land capture, land value capture, betterment taxes—there are a whole lot of issues like that. Here I speak again with 30 years experience as a development architect working for developers. You are always pushing the edge, not quite wanting to get anyone in jail but you are always looking to break the rules. When you turn around and become what someone has called a poacher turned gamekeeper, it is quite interesting to look at how weak many of the policies really are, and I guess in that sense often misleading.

I would like to see things like the \$20 billion crash cost, issues like much lower speed limits in urban areas. Not far from here there is a major road which is going to stay 60 kilometres per hour in the centre of the CBD. It does not make a lot of sense, if you do not want through traffic to have a 60 kilometre per hour four-lane road. Make it 30 like they do in Europe and it suddenly becomes a whole lot safer. It is not very good now because people have got to cross that road to get to the two major city railway stations. It is a package. I have tried to cover in that discussion much of what is in the actual submission.

The final document attached there turned up in a letter yesterday, so I apologise for putting it in late. It came attached to a letter from the Lord Mayor. The problem I think we face in a lot of

these issues is the message that somehow or other massive investments—in this case, \$1.2 billion over four years—are going to ease congestion on suburban roads for more than the short term. I say, ‘more than the short term’, because history has shown us that every time we do this kind of big road-capacity exercise we just get more traffic. I have cited what has got to be one of the great statements of all time, John Anderson’s statement—not that I am a fan necessarily—that the federal government should not fund commuter traffic on national roads. He did not win that battle, but one day somebody is going to say: the Commonwealth is not going to fund national roads that end up full of commuters. I have cited some examples. I think he was referring to the Gold Coast Highway—I am not certain. But, certainly, the Commonwealth funding that has been added to the national road network north of Sydney, north of here and the Ipswich motorway project are billion-dollar projects, and all they are going to do is fill up with commuters. I think the message there is really: yes, we have got a lot of buses, but they are not being properly used. There is a lot of money being spent on roadworks. We could have spent most of that \$1.2 billion on providing public transport, walking and cycling to ease the demand that is causing the congestion.

CHAIR—The \$20 billion crash cost—is that \$20 billion per year?

Mr Yeates—Yes. I am estimating that. It was about one point up—last time I saw it. It was about \$18 billion, a couple of years ago—you can appreciate that those figures are pretty rubbery.

CHAIR—It is still a lot of money. I want to quickly talk about the interchange model. I wholeheartedly support you. You did mention Transperth, and I will just add: yes, it is a brilliant system—there is no doubt about that. But, on that, in Perth we have the major link from the southern suburbs into the CBD, the Kwinana Freeway. Day-in, day-out, minute-in, minute-out, there are so many single passenger movements in cars. You can have the best system in the world, but how do you educate the travelling public? Why would you spend all that money chasing around a Wilson car park, paying X amount of dollars per day, going through the frustration of using that fuel sitting in queues—when you can jump on public transport and be there a heck of a lot quicker?

Mr Yeates—I suppose I have hinted at it by waving this. I am obviously not party political, but I have just waved that down.

CHAIR—That is what we say at times too.

Mr Yeates—I am sure it is said probably more often than is appropriate. Many others have said it. One of the issues is this idea that somehow, if more people use cars, there will be better improvements for cars. So there is a kind of market-driven idea of: provided it and they’ll use it. It is classic market theory, as I understand it. My view is—and I have touched on this in the submission—that it is the old carrot-and-stick problem. The problem at the moment—and I heard it from my good friend Michael Roth a minute ago—is that nobody is willing to provide better public transport incrementally instead of continually increasing the road capacity. That is a very general statement—but nevertheless. So, to the extent that people feel comfortable using their car, it is quite a rational choice. For most purposes, I still use a car a lot in Brisbane, for the same reason. I am only five kilometres from the CBD, but for most of my trips I tend to package them up together and do them one day a week or something like that. But, most other people

have to be convinced that what is happening out there is important. I also touch on a slight difference between us as a group and the user groups and specific interest groups—for example, RACQ. But that might also include cycling groups, disability user groups and public transport groups, which I think will happen. You have to have a system that works fully across the whole range of possible trips. What we have at the moment is a tendency to focus on particular trips, and when they get overloaded you get an enormous amount of publicity—about, say, the Bombay Express. You have heard that term. The problem with that is that it is telling people: ‘Don’t use it. Stay in your car.’

I have also so touched on the Commonwealth role on Better Cities, for example. I was just joking with Warren Rowe earlier—how it is very much the same. Bill Croft, who is now the transport manager of policy at Logan City, is an absolute wealth of knowledge about the Better Cities Program at the Gold Coast Highway. If you want to get hold of information from particular people, he would be one from whom I would suggest the committee might seek some history on the Better Cities work. The problem is that we have a Better Cities rail project down there and, immediately after it was put in place, the state government spent \$1 billion on upgrading a road corridor between the Gold Coast and Brisbane. That was \$1 billion that could have been put into duplicating more of the railway line, which is still a single line in part, to the coast. So, while it sounds grand to have a Gold Coast railway line, it is still single line in part. It has passing loops for the trains to pull in at stations and let the other ones go past. It is not by any stretch of the imagination a top public transport corridor. It does not go anywhere near that. There is a lot of commonality between our north-south coastal planning development and Perth—socioeconomic things are quite similar—but it does not go near the Mitchell Freeway project. As far as I know, there are two lines all the way beyond Joondalup and we do not have that to the Gold Coast.

CHAIR—Thank you. We have limited time and I know there are other questions. I have a few more but I will not ask them; I will go to Senator Ludlam.

Senator LUDLAM—I just have a couple of quick questions. Would you be able to reference for us the \$20 billion figure? That is an extraordinary amount of money. On notice, if you like, could you tell us how that figure was put together?

Mr Yeates—I am not sure how it was put together. There is a regular cost attributed to the annual cost of road crashes in Australia. I will try to find it for you. I guess any reference would do because that will give you a trail. Do you have a research director or a search person?

Senator LUDLAM—If you are able to provide us—

Mr Yeates—I mean to actually dig out references.

Senator LUDLAM—Some sort of citation would be helpful.

Mr Yeates—Okay. I will see if I can find a figure for you. As I said before, that is extrapolated over a couple of years. The last figure was about \$16 billion or \$17 billion a year. That does not take into account long-term costs. One way to find out about this is to ask the road industry and suggest that the cost of the crashes be included in road registration fees. You would get a quick response from that.

Senator LUDLAM—That would be helpful. Again, along the same lines, there is quite an extensive body of work out there around the theory or the demonstration that building more roads creates more traffic. Perhaps you could provide some citations for some of that work.

Mr Yeates—An example I will put on the record is from the UK. It goes under the name of SACTRA. It is a committee. I will certainly find out about that. It basically argues is that, if you take away a bit of road the traffic disappears, but if you put it back again the traffic comes back. But, because of the hardship of going somewhere else, some traffic disappears. The converse is that if you provide a better road you will get more traffic than you expected, and that always seems to be the case. There is another body of work which suggests that most projects are overestimated in terms of their likely need, so they end up being even better than is necessary and that also induces more use. It makes sense: if you provide a better service, people will come to you. It is basic marketing: a better road, a better train, better planes—better whatever level of service.

Senator LUDLAM—Lastly, could you give us your thoughts on urban form and land use planning? We heard a little bit about that this morning. We heard a lot of optimistic stuff from the different councils. We are pursuing transit oriented development, land use management and urban growth boundaries. A lot of it sounds very good but, from your perspective, how are we actually doing?

Mr Yeates—I got involved in this in the 1980s in the lead-up to the Better Cities work—but also AMCORD mark 2 and various other sorts of land use and transport policy leadership from the Commonwealth, which was excellent—primarily through housing and then I began to realise that this other part was not being addressed and I shifted to that. My own view on it is that it is not very good at all. There is a lot of rhetoric and not much has been resolved. I think you measure that by way of audits, and I have also referred to that in the submission. As Jago Dodson mentioned this morning, if people are demanding park-and-ride, it is almost certainly because there is no good access to public transport locally or facilities for riding a bike. If you talk about access to and from a station, you can easily travel three kilometres on a bike in the time that you can walk a kilometre. But look at the traffic impediments in a typical suburban or peri-urban area to walking and cycling. Obviously, if public transport is not there you cannot use it.

One of the best examples of that was the Better Cities Program in the western rail corridor between here and Ipswich, which almost did not go ahead. There was very little of it done because at the time—and I have cited it here, although I have not made it clear who the mayor was at the time—there was a feeling that people did not ride bicycles, because poor people did that. There is also a valuable study called HALCS—I think it stands for accessibility and locational, but I cannot remember the keyword, but it is about housing. It is a Commonwealth study and it is to do with housing—

CHAIR—We are running out of time. Mr Yeates, I did not mean to cut you off, but we have some other questioners.

Senator WILLIAMS—Referring to what you said earlier, ‘The bus leaves just as a train pulls up.’ Surely, this organisation and planning is a local and state issue and probably has nothing to do with the federal government. Would you agree?

Mr Yeates—No, I would not, because hopefully we have gone past the states' rights issues. We need to have standards that work from one place to another. Currently, we have public transport systems that are different in every state. We must start to get standards. If you are linking this issue to funding, which I think we are, and/or national standards, with or without the funding, we have to make the systems more consistent and, if not, set up standards and guidelines as to what good public transport actually is. Otherwise, what we will have is an endless system of these sorts of hearings, which are obviously valuable in getting into the issues. But if we do not change the systems—and, to me, I think that is a national task and possibly is not conditional on funding—then it will continue to be a problem.

Senator WILLIAMS—I do not have an interest anymore in selling e-bikes. I used to but I sold my business. I thought I should clarify that, Chair. It is good to see you are familiar with e-bikes and I think it is something Australia should be endorsing and really going with. However, there seem to be hurdles. What is your opinion? You are obviously familiar with e-bikes.

Mr Yeates—I am, to some extent, but I think the national authority on that is Alan Parker, who comes from Victoria, who has made a number of submissions, I think, to the earlier submission on—

CHAIR—The inquiry into Australia's future oil supply and alternative transport fuels.

Mr Yeates—I am pretty sure he made a detailed submission to that inquiry. The key issue is the upgrade from 200 to 250 watts, because that way the state governments cannot then fiddle with it. It is a national standard in terms of what can be imported into the country that qualifies and, once the Commonwealth government makes a decision to lift that to 250, the states really should follow. In fact, you have to argue that they have to follow.

CHAIR—I would like to talk about that at some other time. Thank you.

Senator O'BRIEN—What is the likelihood of the councils of South-East Queensland, or at least the more metropolitan of those, embracing the concept of a transport authority that will direct which routes are operated to provide an integrated transport network for Brisbane?

Mr Yeates—Without knowing the sorts of negotiations that go on behind closed doors, I would answer that by saying that if you go outside Brisbane the systems change dramatically. For example, I mentioned to Warren Rowe that if you are on the Gold Coast, you should visit the stations at Robina, Helensvale and Nerang. They are well worth a visit. They are pretty good and are on a par with the ones in Western Australia, for example. They are new. You can tell there is a train coming, because the buses are coming in. You can go on the Ipswich line and the same thing happens. The frequency there drops down to half hourly. It really should be quarter hourly all the way to Ipswich, but that is another story. My own experience in negotiating some of this stuff is that Queensland Transport has people in there who know what they should be doing but there are other, what are called more political elements than technical elements—that is a point I have touched on.

The other point I would make is that we need to look for exemplars. The Better Cities projects were meant to be exemplary. They are not perfect but exemplars, and I think we need to do that. The Gold Coast light rail is one of them in the sense that it moves the discussion from what-ifs

and all the negatives and debates to actually putting something in place, and that way many people can see how well it works. Melbourne's trams are of that ilk, as is Adelaide's light rail, which goes through to the coast. They give you examples of how it works, and then you can go from there. They are some examples. Finally, can I just say that there a couple of typos and, if you do not mind, I will resubmit—

CHAIR—If we can wrap up on the correction of the typos, Mr Yeates, that would be appreciated.

Mr Yeates—One other point is that you asked for some examples. I will give you three examples. One is Graz, which is a city in south-eastern Austria. It is an example of world's best practice in integrated transport policy. You have asked some pretty tough questions and in my paper I have tried to address f criterion of your terms of reference. Another is Houten, a new town in the Netherlands. No-one has been killed on the roads there recently because of the way the road system is designed. That should appeal to people in Australia but it does not. I have mentioned the livable neighbourhoods in Western Australia and why nobody can deal with the other issues involved in that. Finally, Groningen, which is in the north of the Netherlands, is a fairly reasonably sized city of roughly 150,000 people. It has done a huge amount of retrofitting work, and so it has almost no new infrastructure. It has not had to put in tunnels, build bridges, knock down buildings, build freeways or any of that sort of stuff. It has just retrofitted and got a lot of the benefits from that. Most cities in Europe are driven by imperatives that we do not have yet, or at least we do not recognise them, and they are to do with air pollution and all sorts of other things.

CHAIR—Would it be fair to say that the major form of transport in the Netherlands is the push-bike?

Mr Yeates—No. It is not fair to say that. We actually have records of more people using bicycles here than in the Netherlands, which go right through until about the Second World War. I think this policy issue was mentioned before, which is that after the war we had a quite deliberate strategy, like we have at the moment, of choosing what to spend money on to get people back into jobs and to maintain the economy. We went for suburban housing. It was probably a good policy at the time, but it has led us down a track of not having higher density options and, of course, we have become auto dependent.

CHAIR—Thank you for your assistance to the committee.

[3.53 pm]

WHITE, Mr David, President, Community Action for Sustainable Transport Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you wish to make a brief opening statement before we go to questions?

Mr White—Firstly, thank you for giving me the opportunity to give evidence today. Our group has never been given an opportunity at state level to make any submission in person, so we are very grateful for this. I would like to make a very brief opening statement. I am not going to give the committee a whole range of statistics. I am not going to indulge in a lot of rhetoric or outrageous statements. You have probably had enough of that already today. I want to give you a summary from the view point of the public transport commuter.

Our group has got of the order of 150 members and supporters. I think that we have a pretty good idea of what is happening on the ground. I use public transport in excess of 2,000 times a year, so I think I have got a pretty good idea of what is actually happening, but I do not think a lot of the service providers and the executives of the state authorities really know what is happening on the ground.

I just want to make some brief comments. I have the committee's terms of reference in front of me and I thought I might just quickly make some comments based on those terms of reference. Item (a) talks about the state of public passenger transport in Australia. Our view is that the long-suffering public transport commuter is basically fed up with the very poor state of public transport here. I only want to talk about Queensland, because we have affiliates in other states who will tell you what is happening in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. But I can talk about Queensland because I know what is happening here. Whilst the services and infrastructure here have improved in the last few years, in general our view is that the level of services and infrastructure is typically appalling. Basically commuters are extremely unhappy. Most of the public transport commuters in this state fall into the categories of the young, the poor, the frail and the aged and people who basically cannot afford to get about in the city or in the regions in any other way. In other words, they would prefer, because the services are so poor, to use cars. A lot of them have tried using public transport but have gone back to using cars only because the state of the services is so poor.

Item (b) of your terms of reference talks about the levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure. As I said earlier, I am not going to give you any wads of statistics about that—I expect that you have had loads of those—but I will say that I think it is pretty well acknowledged that the vehicle industry is so powerful in this country that it has been able to exert political pressure on governments at all levels to ensure that the public investment levels in public transport and active transport are kept low to facilitate the vehicle industry. Despite what you might have been told today, I just do not think that that is changing significantly. There is no doubt that in the last few years the patronage of public transport here in Queensland has increased significantly; however, the problem is that, not just for years but for decades, investment in services and infrastructure in public transport in Queensland has just been left totally neglected. So we are working off such a low base that, to

try to make significant improvements in such a short time, all we are really doing is marking time, because the patronage is increasing at such a rate, despite the poor services, that nothing is really changing.

Item (c) of your terms of reference talks about an assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport. I think that, again, you have probably heard today clear evidence that there are outstanding benefits of increasing the levels of public transport services, getting higher patronage and taking people off the road. The benefits of that are numerous because at present you have not only the effects of money going into the roads but also the road tolls and all the trauma involved in road accidents, and the cost of the time involved in people sitting traffic jams, which affects industry.

Item (d) of your terms of reference talks about measures by which the Commonwealth government could facilitate improvement to public passenger transport services, and the role of the Commonwealth government. It is our view that the best way that the Commonwealth can improve the situation is to make financial grants to the states for public transport investment. However, the grants must be tied grants. They must be made on that basis of states committing to achieving independent and rigorous performance standards and goals. Here in Queensland there is basically no accountability at a state level within the public transport system, from the authorities or the departments.

We have tried to get some accountability. I can tell you through personal evidence that representations and complaints to the council in regard to buses, TransLink, and complaints to Queensland Rail with regard to train services, are either not responded to or we get platitudes and spin. The level of dissatisfaction out there is just immense. I get reports every day from people who make complaints and do not get a response at all. So we believe the only way to go is for the Commonwealth to make grants that tie the states into making some sort of commitment to achieve performance standards.

Finally, your terms of reference talk about best practice international examples of public passenger transport services. Again I think you have probably heard about examples of what happens in Europe. There is no reason why we cannot achieve the same here in Australia. You would probably know that if someone wants to get a train here from Brisbane down to Sydney the trip takes 14½ hours, which in my view is really outrageous in this time. Obviously that is not the fault of the drivers. It is the fault of the very poor infrastructure. To make it worse, if you decide to do that train trip it will cost you more than it will if you fly to Sydney. So there is basically no incentive for anyone to do so. That is all I really wanted to comment on, but I am happy to answer questions.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr White. We will go to questions. Firstly, are your 150 members and supporters in Brisbane metropolitan or are they throughout the state?

Mr White—Primarily metropolitan, but also South-East Queensland region.

Senator LUDLAM—I just want to get a bit of an idea of the group and the role that you play in Brisbane. Do you see yourselves as an advocacy group or are you reporting and aggregating complaints and passing them on to the transport operators? What is your role?

Mr White—We regard ourselves as having an advocacy role, because we see that as the primary role we should take. If people want to use us as a way of getting information about services we are happy to do that, but we do not see that as our primary role, because the ways that commuters can complain or get information are pretty well known, I think.

Senator LUDLAM—Right at the beginning you used words such as ‘very poor’ and ‘appalling’ and later other similar words. You said things have improved little bit in the last couple of years. From your awareness of where the state government but in particular the Brisbane City Council are planning on going in the next two years, what is your level of confidence that things are going to keep improving?

Mr White—There is no doubt that there is marginal improvement. We know that Brisbane is getting new buses. However, because of the way the system operates basically we are just marking time, in that, although the committee might not be aware of this, we have buses here in Brisbane that are nearly 25 years old and they are basically just tanks on wheels, and a lot of them are not air-conditioned. So, as Brisbane gets new buses, of course some of those new buses are going to just be replacing the buses that are about to die.

So we do think there will be an improvement, but it seems to me the answer does not lie in the Commonwealth providing wads of new money to the council for buses. It is our very strong view that the funds that they do have now are being spent in areas that are not achieving the result that we want, and that is to ease traffic congestion here in the city and in the suburbs. I do not know whether the committee realises, but Brisbane City Council, in the last 2½ years, has put in \$1 billion of taxpayer money into underground road tunnels—that is, ratepayers’ money. This is a private tunnel that the council has committed nearly \$1 billion of ratepayers’ money towards, because that was the only way that it would be funded. I assume that you have already heard this.

Senator LUDLAM—We have heard a little bit about road infrastructure. You suggest that, if the Commonwealth is going to be providing more funding for public transport infrastructure, there should be conditions attached to it; what kinds of conditions do you want?

Mr White—There must be standards set so that the states and local government have to meet performance standards—for example, service on-time standards. At the moment Queensland Rail say that they are meeting 92 per cent of their on-time standards. Our evidence is that they are not meeting their standards; they are nowhere near those standards. However, it is very difficult for us to get access to that information. All those figures are kept confidential, as is how they arrive at them. We think that the standards should include things like, when people complain, how, when and how quickly those complaints are resolved. Those sorts of standards, I think, are just essential, and I do not see any other way that the state and the council can be held accountable. We are not suggesting that the Commonwealth provide a very large amount of funds, but if there were a small amount of funds which were tied to standards at least there would be some control over how they were spent.

Senator LUDLAM—Okay. Thanks.

Senator WILLIAMS—Mr White, I am curious to know: you average five to six trips a day on public transport, seven days a week; is this for you to inspect the transport, or is that for you yourself to go to and from home or work or whatever?

Mr White—No, I use it myself. I have used it five times already today.

Senator WILLIAMS—Really?

Mr White—These are not long trips but they are individual trips. I get a weekly ticket, so I can use it any number of times I like for the same price.

Senator WILLIAMS—Is that road and rail?

Mr White—This is bus and rail.

Senator WILLIAMS—That is what I mean, bus and rail.

Mr White—I use the old-style ticket because when I use it that many times, if I go onto these new plastic go cards, it actually costs me more. We have tried to get the state to revise their pricing structure and they have just refused.

Senator WILLIAMS—You have obviously use public transport a lot. You said that it has improved and you agree it has improved over the last few years.

Mr White—Yes.

Senator WILLIAMS—The statistics from councils show that there are a lot more people using the bus network.

Mr White—It has improved. However, if the council provides you with a number of full buses, in other words buses that just go past and cannot pick any more people up, they might find those enlightening.

Senator O'BRIEN—When you talked about public transport being on time, do you mean arriving on time or leaving on time?

Mr White—Arriving on time.

Senator O'BRIEN—I personally think it is more important that it departs on time given that people who want to pick up an item of transport at a particular stop would want to know when it is going to leave. If it arrives early and leaves early then they will miss it. Do you think that is a fair approach?

Mr White—All I would say is that in the vast majority of cases, apart from the trains in central, the times of arrival and departure are basically the same. Commuters get exasperated when they turn up to a bus stop or a railway station and the timetable says it is going to leave at 9.05 and they are still standing there at 9.20, and there is no train or bus.

Senator O'BRIEN—Yes. I understand that when there are extensive delays in the system that that is frustrating. In another city I understood that bus drivers were fined if they got ahead of schedule, in other words they were leaving places before they were supposed to, and people were not able to make their schedule transport connections because of that. Is that a fair approach?

Mr White—I do not support fining drivers for being early.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is the approach with the emphasis on time of departure, not arrival, and is a better way of judging schedule.

Mr White—Okay, I can see that. As I said, I think the commuter is basically interested in if the timetable says that a bus or a train is going to be there they can jump onto it at a certain time. That is what they want. Most people are reasonable and they realise that there are things that can happen—we are not talking about Mussolini's Italy—through a climatic event or whatever. What commuters get upset about is when trains and buses run invariably late, which happens, and the commuter is not advised of this, or even the trains or buses do not turn up at all. That has happened to me numerous times. They never turned up at all. You contact TransLink and say, 'Why didn't that bus or train turn up on time?' and you do not get a satisfactory reply.

Senator O'BRIEN—Do you have communication with the Brisbane City Council about those issues?

Mr White—Under our state setup in Queensland all complaints about that go to TransLink. They are then supposed to take it up with the service provider, which is the council or Queensland Rail. So it has to go through two processes.

Senator O'BRIEN—You are telling us that, at best, it is not efficient and at worst it is a black hole.

Mr White—That is right. They are exactly my words. There is a huge black hole in TransLink. It covers more than just the services. With a group like ours we have effectively been shut out of the transport planning in Queensland in that TransLink just do not seem interested in talking to us, yet we are a commuter advocacy body. If tomorrow TransLink rang us up and said, 'Would you come in and have a chat with us?' we would be there in a shot.

Senator O'BRIEN—Brisbane City Council gave us some figures which indicate that bus patronage has grown from about 48 million boardings per annum in 2003-04 to 67½ million in 2007-08. Given your description of the people who patronise the system, is that reflective of a growth in that part of the population—people who are poor, old, disabled or frail? Or is that more an indication that the proportion of the population that are using it has expanded to others who use it for normal commuting purposes?

Mr White—I did not say that to denigrate the people in those categories. I am saying that because that is basically the way we see it. I did not include in that the people who use it to commute to and from work. But we find that most people who do use it to commute to and from work do it for economic purposes. They find it cheaper to do it that way. Incidentally, we are not suggesting that the way to go is for the Commonwealth to go to the states and say, 'We'll fund

you to the extent that you can make services free,' because we just do not see that that is the right answer. If all the services were free, that might encourage more patronage. The problem is that in Queensland, if that were the case, if patronage increased by 50 per cent overnight, the services just could not cope because the infrastructure is not there and the rolling stock is not there. The service providers do not really want an increase in patronage. They cannot cope with it now anyway. The trains and the lines just are not there. If you knock off now and go down to get a train here at peak hour, you will find that most of the trains are absolutely packed. You have seen what happens in Japan. That is what is happening here in Brisbane at peak hour. People are jammed in like sardines. Some of those people have to stand like that for up to an hour to get home.

Senator O'BRIEN—Where would that mean they were going to? How far out of Britain city would you get?

Mr White—That would take you up to, say, Caboolture. That is 45 minutes by train. Towards the end they would get a seat, but for at least half of that they would be standing at peak hour. I do not want to be too critical. The situation is that QR can only provide the services depending on the actual lines and the rolling stock they have. I am not trying to be unreasonable here. I am saying that the fault lies higher up.

Senator WILLIAMS—You would never suggest that any government should offer free public transport, would you?

Mr White—I would if the service providers could provide the rolling stock and the lines to be able to cope with the patronage. I would rather that than the current situation, where people are stuck in their cars in traffic jams for up to 2½ hours every day. To me, that is the worst possible situation. Look at all the funding that goes into roadworks. If it came down to a choice, yes, I would go for that. I think the current situation of spending on roads is just outrageous. The only answer to this in the long term is to get people out of their cars as much as possible. That not only involves transport services and infrastructure but includes urban planning as well so that, ideally, people do not have to travel for an hour and a half each way, every day, to get to work. A lot of people here in Brisbane have to do that. People who live on the outer north side and work on the outer south side find that the public transport services are either nonexistent or so bad that they have to drive. They have no choice and they just have to drive. To me, that has huge implications that you would be aware of.

Senator O'BRIEN—Just as some people in regional areas have to drive because there is no public transport alternative. Thank you for your evidence. I appreciate your commitment to public transport.

CHAIR—We have heard a number of submissions, and we have heard about the Bombay Express a number of times. We clearly get that picture. We have also had submissions talking about feeder lines and integration. I am very mindful that that is all part of it. Is the train problem here in Brisbane a case of, 'Whack another carriage on'? Is it as simple as that?

Mr White—The system is not set up so that you can just attach another carriage; you actually have to have another train, because the platforms are not long enough. It is not feasible.

CHAIR—It is a loaded question; I am sorry.

Mr White—No, that is all right.

CHAIR—Senator O'Brien answered it for me anyway.

Mr White—You probably would have heard this already. The council here decided a couple of years ago that they would try to encourage some integration of services by allowing people to put their bikes on the front of some buses. They did that for a couple of years and then they said there was not the patronage, so they deleted it.

CHAIR—What does your group reckon about that? Was there the patronage?

Mr White—No, but it was never given a fair chance. It was only put on about three or four services. It was not ever given a fair chance. The problem with it is that the timetables are just so tight that, with the time required to put a bike on the front of a bus, of course, the drivers do not like it because it means that they run even further behind schedule. As it is, the drivers are just about driven nuts every day because Brisbane transport says to them that they have to keep to a schedule and because of the congestion on the road it is basically impossible, given the timetables. But, of course, they have to deal with that. They have to deal with some of the strange patrons on the buses as well, as you would know. The system is pretty poor, in that anyone can still get on any bus here in Brisbane at most times of the day and fumble around in their pocket for change, holding the whole bus up, instead of it being all prepaid, as in a lot of cities. We must get to a stage where services are prepaid: one way or another, you pay for your service and get on; people do not have to wait for you to find your \$2.40 in coin.

CHAIR—That is a very good point, and that has been covered today by previous submissions too. I want to touch on what you said earlier in your opening statement about how some of the buses are 25 years old. We were provided with some information from the Brisbane City Council showing the average bus fleet age. 'Average' can mean anything. The average is pretty simple, but we do not know both extremes of the calculation—well, we know the brand new one. Are there a great number of 25-year-old buses in Brisbane?

Mr White—No, it is not a great number. However, I wanted to make the point that with a lot of the council buses, even if they are not quite that old, the standard of maintenance is such that the commuter does not get a really great ride. They are noisy; they are often hot, because the old ones are still not air conditioned; they rattle; they shake; they leak in the rain. This is happening every day.

CHAIR—So they are hot in summer and cold in winter.

Mr White—Yes. We have to worry more about the summer here, because a lot of people say we do not get a winter.

Senator LUDLAM—A couple of the researchers we heard from this morning were talking about the social inequality that inner city areas are much better serviced by public transport than outer metro ones. As someone who spends a lot of time on buses and trains, do you get the sense

that they tend to run the old buses on the outer metro lines—that they do not bring them into the inner city—or is that a bit of a generalisation?

Mr White—No, I would not go so far as to say that. I have found that, with the buses, council does tend to try, I think, to provide the new buses on the long-haul routes. I have found that a lot of the older buses are used in the inner city. The problem is that they have to use them somewhere, and I think they think, ‘If we just give them short routes, they may be less likely to break down.’

CHAIR—In a nutshell, would your group have any idea what needs to be spent to fix up the system? When I say fix up, I mean fix it to a level that your group expects from a progressive state like Queensland?

Mr White—Our view is that if the Commonwealth government were to commit in Queensland to an amount in the order of \$500 million and it was a tied grant, that would make a hell of a difference—recognising the fact that the Commonwealth government has commitments across the board. All of the Commonwealth money obviously comes from a pool and there is not an unlimited amount. To us, the more important thing is, as I said, that the grants are tied so that there is some public control over how the money is spent and what is done with it.

CHAIR—What would \$500 million buy? Are you talking about improved buses, longer platforms on railway stations or double-decker trains? What exactly are you talking about?

Mr White—We would like a lot more railway rolling stock and feeder buses to take people from suburbs to the railway stations. They are the priorities. That is not going to fix it, but it would make a huge difference. In talking about that amount, I do not think it is realistic to expect the Commonwealth to put in huge amounts of money. I just do not think that that is the way to go.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. I was reading a previous submission, and I think the infrastructure lag across Queensland is \$17 billion and over \$11.7 billion in the South-East Queensland region. So it really is a massive problem.

Mr White—It is our view—and I think I have already said this in another way—that at a state level the funds are being misspent. This is our view. At a state level here we have a minister for transport and a separate minister for main roads. They are both fighting for public money, and it is our view that there should be one department of transport with two permanent heads. I just cannot see why this is happening. To me, it comes down again to the weight of the motor vehicle lobby, which in this state is enormously powerful.

CHAIR—On that, I thank you very much for appearing today and for the assistance you have provided. I am glad we could give you the opportunity to present your group’s views to this committee. We do take them seriously. Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 4.28 pm