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SENATE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
AND TRANSPORT

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

TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2009

HOBART

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

Tuesday, 31 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 Back, Farrell, Ludlam, Milne, O'Brien and Sterle

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 9.03 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 hearing evidence on the committee's inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and state funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services. This is a public hearing and a *Hansard* transcript of the proceedings will be made. Before the committee starts taking evidence, I remind all witnesses that in giving evidence to the committee they are protected by parliamentary privilege. It is unlawful for anyone to threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of evidence given to a committee. Such action may be treated by the Senate as a contempt. It is also a contempt to give false or misleading evidence to a committee. The committee prefers all evidence to be given in public, but under the Senate's resolutions, witnesses have the right to request to be heard in private session. It is important that witnesses give the committee notice if they intend to ask to give evidence in camera. If a witness objects to answering a question, the witness should state the ground upon which the objection is taken and the committee will determine whether it will insist on an answer, having regard to the ground which is claimed. If the committee determines to insist on an answer, a witness may request that the answer be given in camera. Such a request may also, of course, be made at any other time. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all those who have made submissions and sent representatives here today for their cooperation in this inquiry.

[9.05 am]

BUXTON, Mr Simon, Director, Traffic and Infrastructure Branch, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

CARLINGTON, Dr Bernard, Manager, Passenger Transport Services, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

KRUUP, Mr Peter Matti, Principal Policy Analyst, Infrastructure Policy, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

MOATE, Ms Babette, Principal Policy Analyst, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

PETERS, Mr David, Deputy Secretary, Infrastructure, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

POORTENAAR, Ms Sarah, Acting Assistant Director, Planning, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Tasmanian government. I remind senators that the Senate has resolved that an officer of the department of the Commonwealth or of a state shall not be asked to give opinions on matters of policy and shall be given reasonable opportunity to refer questions asked of the officer to superior officers or to a minister. This resolution prohibits only questions asking for opinions on matters of policy and does not preclude questions asking for explanations of policies or factual questions about when and how policies were adopted. Officers of the department are also reminded that any claim that it would be contrary to the public interest to answer a question must be made by a minister and should be accompanied by a statement setting out the basis for the claim. The Tasmanian government has lodged submission 140 with the committee. Do you wish to make any amendments or alterations to that submission?

Mr Peters—Only a minor amendment, Mr Chairman, if I may. On page 7 of the overview, it talks about minimum bus services. It mentions that it carries 30,000 passengers a day. That should actually be 13,000. Other than that minor amendment of fact, there are no further amendments to be made.

CHAIR—Thank very much, Mr Peters. On that, I invite you to make a brief opening statement before we go to questions.

Mr Peters—Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity to present today because this is an important subject. We are all from the same department because the Tasmanian government submission was led by the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources. The primary objective, as our department sees it, is the safe and efficient movement of people, and that involves the use of public, commercial or private motor vehicles. There is an interface with the department because we, on the one hand, manage the state road network and we also have a significant regulatory role in the safety aspects of transport.

Tasmania has a small total population, small and low density cities and a relatively low incidence of traffic congestion and parking pressures. For that reason, there has been less emphasis on commuter transport tasks than there has been in other jurisdictions. Traditionally, the focus for the state government effort has been mobility for the transport disadvantaged and the accessibility of services for people in rural and remote areas. Nevertheless, we have undertaken extensive reforms in the management and funding of public passenger transport services over the past decade. The focus, firstly, was on reforming the highly protective and prescriptive public vehicle licensing system. In more recent years, culminating in December 2007, there has been a full-scale review of core passenger services—that is, bus services—throughout the state.

Beyond matters of regulation, other major factors leading to the state government's focus with more attention on public passenger transport issues is climate change and the recognition that the prevailing heavy reliance on the private car for transport is not environmentally sustainable. There is also the issue of urban congestion and liveability. Compared with other jurisdictions, we may not be seen to have a problem, but it is becoming of concern in Hobart in particular. There has been a rise in car ownership and usage. This is likely to pose a growing challenge for network functionality. In short, the capacity for Hobart particularly to build its way out of traffic congestion is very, very limited. Other means will need to be taken.

The improved usage of public transport services is a key element in addressing all of these issues. Public transport allows existing infrastructure to be used more efficiently by increasing its passenger capacity without needing to address its vehicle capacity. Increasing accessibility is a key goal. The provision of better public transport gives people another option for getting to the places they need to go, particularly those without access to a car. The vital future role of public transport in both mass transit and in more specialised forms was acknowledged by our Premier, David Bartlett MP, in his State of the State address in March. That speech foreshadowed greater funding for expanded and modernised urban bus services, including bus priority measures on major urban corridors. That speech also announced the establishment of a trust to facilitate community transport options in smaller centres.

Another very significant initiative that is underway at the moment is the Tasmanian urban passenger transport study. Focusing initially on the Greater Hobart area, this study will recommend those measures that are most suitable for application to Hobart to improve the safe and efficient movement of people and reduce greenhouse emissions.

In summary, passenger transport in Tasmania is now entering a period of transition which is seeing it receive significantly higher priority from the state government. As it does already across other portfolios of government, greater strategic engagement by the Commonwealth in the public transport portfolio would expand the capacity of each state and territory to address the current and future challenges in this area. As you wanted a brief statement, I might stop there, Mr Chairman. There is more I could say.

CHAIR—Please feel free. There is plenty of time.

Mr Peters—Great. I will keep going.

CHAIR—We want to hear. We will pull you up if we start running short of time, Mr Peters. Tell us what you think we need to hear.

Mr Peters—As far as the submission tabled—we apologise for the late delivery of the submission; you have not had as long to consider it as you could have—it covers a brief overview of the Tasmanian public transport system, which is largely carried out by road based services supplemented by a limited number of water transport services. Tasmania's bus services can be described in terms of five different service types. Firstly, there are urban general access services. These are provided primarily by Metro Tasmania Pty Limited, which is a state owned company, and the Mersey Bus and Coach company. This covers the four major metropolitan centres of Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport. Metro works across the first three and in Devonport it is Mersey Bus and Coach. The maximum fares these operators can charge is regulated. These operators receive approximately 70 per cent of their funding through a contract payment from the Tasmanian government. Under these contracts, the Tasmanian government has developed service standards to describe its expectations as to minimum service coverage, span and frequency in urban areas.

The second type is non-urban bus services. There are 11 private operators, which together with Metro provide general access bus services outside the designated urban areas. A further 40 operators provide dedicated student only services for which a fare is charged. These services are generally described by reference to their area of operation, the three types being urban fringe, regional and long distance. They are all provided under contracts with the state government. The government provides subsidies for the carriage on these services of concession passengers who are eligible for discounted fares. Direct subsidies are paid to support the delivery of services on some marginal routes.

The third type is rural school bus services. These services are fully funded by the Tasmanian government and provide capacity for over 13,000 students per day. The fourth type is taxis. Taxis are regarded as a part of the public transport sector and supplement services provided by mass transport bus operations. There are currently 450 standard taxis licensed in Tasmania and 50 wheelchair accessible taxis. Tasmania has recently changed its licensing system for taxis with a view to creating a more service oriented culture. In preference to perpetual taxi licences, Tasmania has now moved to issuing owner operator licences that cannot be leased to another party. The first tender of these licences occurred in November 2008 and tenders will continue on an annual basis.

The fifth form of public passenger transport is community transport. The community transport sector plays an important role in Tasmania's passenger transport task. These transport services are provided to suit the specific needs of local communities or cohort groups within the community. The providers of these transport services are usually charitable or not-for-profit organisations with the benefit of full or partial government funding. Services through the home and community care, or HACC, program account for a large proportion of the community transport sector. The fee for travelling by community transport is generally heavily subsidised and the sector is characterised by a strong reliance on volunteer drivers. At present, the Tasmanian government is examining how access to community transport services can be improved for both HACC and non-HACC clients who need to attend scheduled non-emergency health related services.

The final form of transport we have is ferry services. Several passenger ferry services operate in Tasmania, by far the largest of which is the two car ferries operated by TT-Line between Devonport and Melbourne. Of course, there is also the Bruny Island ferry service and some small interurban services in the north of the state.

The Commonwealth does not directly fund the delivery of any public passenger transport services in Tasmania. While not a transport initiative per se, through the HACC program, the Commonwealth government provides a significant amount of funding for personal care services, which includes transport services. As I referred to earlier, that is in the community transport sector.

The HACC arrangements illustrate how passenger transport services are being delivered and funded by separate and distinct programs. As these programs are not of themselves coordinated, they do not ensure the most efficient use of funds from a transport perspective. The delineation between health funded transport services and state subsidised general passenger transport services is reinforced by the fact that the funding from the Commonwealth is restricted on how it can be used.

The provision of heavily subsidised transport solutions aimed at subgroups of the community risks isolating those who fall outside the criteria for the program. It also undermines the financial sustainability of passenger transport services that they replace for the wider community. Other examples of highly specific programs initiated by the Commonwealth government are the seatbelts in school buses program and concessions for seniors cardholders. These programs are welcomed and certainly have merit in themselves. But they only address elements of the underlying policy challenge.

Examples of ongoing coordinated and strategic approaches between the two levels of government exist in the area of roads and infrastructure projects, with AusLink and Infrastructure Australia programs being standouts as far as our agency is concerned. Funding models such as this would be highly beneficial in the arena of public passenger transport. In particular, the holistic approach to project assessment that has been adopted by Infrastructure Australia is an example of a more desirable arrangement. While road freight is likely to continue to be the dominant factor in Tasmania's infrastructure funding program, we recognise that the challenges of people movement cannot be addressed by an ever expanding road network. In the absence of an agreed strategic provision for national public transport issues between the different levels of government in Australia, the Commonwealth has been restricted in its ability to bring about meaningful change or progress in areas of concern.

CHAIR—On that, Mr Peters, I think we now will pull you up on your opening statement, which we have thoroughly gained from. We will go through questions so we do not run out of time. I am sure that there will be quite a few.

Senator O'BRIEN—Mr Peters, or whoever wants to answer it, there is the issue of the increase in traffic, particularly in Hobart at the moment, although not exclusively there. Mr Peters, in your opening statement, you alluded to it. What measures are being taken to mitigate that and to encourage drivers and car passengers into public transport? For example, what sort of special routing priorities, dealing with the problem of the traffic choke on the bridge et cetera, are being put into place?

Mr Peters—As I mentioned in the opening statement, Senator, we are very much starting a transition process on this, so a lot is being planned rather than happening at the moment. One small test program we have in place is the bus priority route on the southern outlet. The urban passenger transport study is looking at other options for dealing with passenger transport. We also have a proposal to deal with congestion coming in from the Tasman Highway and the Tasman Bridge. I think Simon Buxton is best placed to reply on that.

Mr Buxton—I will give you an overview rather than detail, if you do not mind. I have people who look at the detail. Basically, we are looking at metering traffic through controlling their speed. So a variable speed limit will be set on the approach to the Tasman Bridge. Essentially when congestion builds up, quite often we can have a little prang at the bridge, which is obviously a weak link for us. That leads to a lot of congestion. If we can reduce the number of incidents involving vehicles coming together, we can reduce the incidence of congestion. We can also improve the flow of traffic across the bridge and into town. Ultimately, when they arrive at town, obviously that is the end of the journey. Sometimes if there are problems in town, they back up over the bridge.

Senator O'BRIEN—Are there any other solutions in consideration? Obviously the build-up in traffic has been gradual over the years. I do not live in Hobart now, but, listening to radio reports, I hear about the regular occurrence of traffic bank-up. On occasions, coming from the airport area here into the city, the traffic can bank well back away from the bridge for a number of kilometres. What other strategies, apart from this, are being used to put people into other transport modes?

Dr Carlington—We are also, again as David indicated earlier, still in a transition or, I suppose, more of a planning phase. We are starting a process of looking at the possibility of increasing the capacity of the park and ride. So we will be working very closely with Metro Tasmania in terms of identifying both corridors and sites where we think the provision of a parking lot would contribute to the increased use of public transport. At the same time, Metro Tasmania is now in a process of rolling out a new smart card ticketing system. It has just been rolled out in Burnie. It will be rolled out subsequently in Launceston and Hobart. That is going to start providing Metro with greater capacity for flexible ticketing options and offer particular packages that we hope will contribute to attracting more people on to public transport. In conjunction with some of the priority lanes and the park and ride, we are hopeful that this will begin to get some traction in terms of addressing some of those congestion problems. But it is still early in the planning development stage.

Senator O'BRIEN—Has anyone been looking at the situation that exists in Perth, where a number of free buses funded in part by levies on parking operate different routes through the city to encourage people on to public transport into the city, knowing that they can travel easily to their destination within the city from that drop-off point from the train?

Dr Carlington—In terms of specific programs, Senator, no, there has not. But there has been significant internal discussion within the passenger transport division about the merits of various free-to-the-user systems. But, at this point, none have been progressed.

Senator O'BRIEN—So no particular work has been done on that?

Dr Carlington—No.

Senator O'BRIEN—In terms of rural bus services, what measures have been put in place to assist in the provision of services such as, for example, exploring new routes and meeting emerging need in the rural bus route sector?

Dr Carlington—I suppose the government has just completed a complete review of what we call our core passenger transport services in Tasmania. The report on that review was submitted to the government in November 2007, so it is reasonably current. We are now in a transitional stage where we are, if you like, totally restructuring the contractual relationship between the transport commission, which contracts for the provision of passenger transport services in the state, and the various service providers. Amongst those are the services being provided to those rural and regional areas.

The new contracting framework that we are now putting in place—the contracts are in the process of being signed—have a requirement for operators to submit what we call service development plans. They are providing both some financial support and financial incentives for operators to be a bit more innovative and try to look at ways that they can fill some empty seats. There is capacity within the contracts for the first time for us to provide some financial support for services that are put in in the inter and off peaks. So at times when passenger demand is very thin, there is capacity within our contracting framework that operators can put up plans and proposals to attract more users and have access to some financial support at the front end, if you like, to try to develop those trades.

We are in a position where some of these things are now in place. At the moment, we have just received the first lot of service development plans from one of our major service providers. Again, they are, I suppose, the first tentative steps in putting these things into the marketplace and actually getting some funding directed towards these operators. But we are still in those early stages. The framework has been set, but we are yet to progress down to the point of actually having them up and running to any significant degree.

Senator O'BRIEN—And how do you think those initiatives have been received by the industry?

Dr Carlington—They were developed in conjunction with the industry, so there was a series of negotiations between the department and the Tasmanian Bus Association, which is the principal industry group within the state. The operator that we have now had some signed agreements in place with has been an advocate of these sorts of things for some years and so has expressed his delight that we are finally getting over the line and we are now in a position where we can actually put some of these things in place. But the one operator has taken them up at this point.

Senator O'BRIEN—Sure. Are you starting negotiations with others?

Dr Carlington—Yes. As part of their contracts, all of the operators on the regional routes are required to put forward service development plans. What we anticipate, however, is that there will be the normal spectrum of behaviour. Some operators will embrace these enthusiastically and will be looking to be very entrepreneurial and try some very new and innovative things. At

the other end of the spectrum, we expect some operators will put in, if you like, a minimum plan that will get them over the line in terms of contract compliance. We will be working with all of them and we will be encouraging everyone to try to take them up. But it is really a question at this point of waiting and seeing what hits the table.

Senator BACK—Thank you very much for your submission. It is most interesting. I am just interested to know what the population trend is in Tasmania not only in numbers but also particularly in mix. To what extent is the population ageing? To what extent do both numbers and mix of population impact on future public transport needs?

Ms Poortenaar—Tasmania has the fastest ageing population of all the other states. It has a high proportion of aged people. Population growth is fairly static. It has increased. During the 1990s there was not much growth, but growth has been happening in Tasmania since the 1990s and similar to the other states. Although population growth has been slow, the number of households has been increasing because household size is going down. So what we are seeing is our cities are growing more in terms of housing but not so fast in terms of population.

Senator BACK—And what impact is this having? Is the need into the future for providing public transport for retirees greater than it is for a growing population of young people with motorcars? Can you give us some understanding as to where your future pressures are going to be?

Mr Kruup—With the geographical spread of the city, there is certainly some demand generated because people are living further and further away. So this does tend to increase the commuter load. With the increased number of retired people, as in the short term, there seems to be less usage until those people get older. As they get older, they tend to put less reliance on their private motor vehicle and more reliance on public transport. The patronage during the daytime has actually declined slightly, but it would be expected to increase. When I say daytime, I mean between nine and three. That will be more apparent over the next couple of decades.

Senator BACK—Is it still the case that the Tasman Bridge closes when shipping goes under it, or are ships no longer going under the bridge?

Mr Buxton—Yes. The bridge still closes. It also closes to pedestrians as well.

Senator BACK—Is there any control yet on the times at which ships do travel under the bridge? In other words, is it not at peak hour?

Mr Buxton—I am afraid that I will have to take that question on notice. It is obviously a tightly controlled situation when a boat comes under the bridge. I am not sure how that works exactly, but I can come back to you on that.

Senator BACK—Because it has always had a major impact, has it not? If ships go under at peak hour, it causes a major disruption.

Mr Buxton—That is right, yes.

Senator BACK—I have only one other question. You have not mentioned it in your report. I do not know if it is in your area. I am interested in the provision of regional air services, particularly emergency services et cetera, on the Bass Strait islands. Does airstrip maintenance come under the jurisdiction of the state government or is it local government? Is it adequate? Are the airstrips adequately maintained, or are you not in a position to be able to comment on this?

Mr Peters—The short answer is that we are not really in a position to comment on it. The department looks after two small regional airports, which it sublets the maintenance on. But other than that, they are either privately owned or local government.

Senator BACK—I am interested simply because the Commonwealth has had a role in the past. The capacity of local or perhaps even state government in this case to actually maintain those airstrips at a level required for passenger transport and emergency transport is an area in which I have an interest. If we could receive more information on that, I would be particularly pleased.

Senator MILNE—I want to pick up on the overview scenario for a start. You say in your submission, quite rightly, that Tasmania has always had a history of separate public transport rather than an integrated transport authority looking at all modes of transport and planning. Has that changed? Is there now a move to getting rid of this individual sectoral approach and actually having a transport authority that plans for transport using all modes of public transport?

Mr Peters—Not so much a separate authority to do that. But the remit of the department has changed focus quite significantly in recent years to take a multimodal, cross-modal approach to the transport task rather than, as you quite rightly say, the traditional split between road, rail, car, bus and so on.

Senator MILNE—You say that in recent years it has changed. Explain to me how it has changed. Where in the department is this public transport authority or group that is overseeing an integrated approach to public transport delivery?

Mr Peters—Two years ago we created the passenger transport division in the department to do just that. Until then, the policy area of passenger transport was in with, if you like, general transport policy. With the passenger transport services, the contracting and service development area was lined up with the roads. A decision was made to take a less roadcentric, more transport holistic approach, so we created a passenger transport division named deliberately passenger transport, not public transport, because the aim was to look across all passenger transport modes from walking, cycling, private cars, buses and any other options that are about. The current urban passenger transport review is looking at issues such as light rail and ferries and the capacity to utilise them to, as I say, take a system-wide approach to passenger transport.

Senator MILNE—So this passenger transport unit was formed two years ago. Have you now got a passenger transport strategic plan for Tasmania—a five-year plan, a 10-year plan or a three-year plan or anything like that?

Mr Peters—In turn, we do have the development of a business plan for the division, which is part of transport policy development, which has not been finalised yet. Largely, the effort in policy and strategy is the 10-year state infrastructure plan that was announced by the government

last year. That is strongly in the development stage at the moment and it should be available later this year. The transport policy will dovetail with that. An integral part of the transport policy will be the passenger transport policy, but at this stage it is all a work in progress.

Senator MILNE—My concern here is that you are seeing it in terms of an infrastructure plan. Have you been out and asked the people what they want in terms of passenger services? If you are having a strategic plan, a strategic approach to the provision of passenger services, surely if this is a shift to an integrated model you need to have some notional view of what people want from a passenger service system.

Mr Peters—Yes, we have. The core passenger services review, which was a component of the whole, was completed in 2007. It was a very highly consultative process. It dealt with not only operators but the communities throughout Tasmania that either have or have not bus services, be they school bus services, student only services, general access services or whatever. The consultation was very, very broad and very, very wide. In fact, the consultation on passenger transport, particularly in the bus area, started before the consultation on the broader infrastructure work, which has been completed in the last three months. Again, the infrastructure plan development started in consultation with business through the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, through regional local government forums and through targeted leadership forums led by the secretary of the department to get as wide a range of views as we could. The passenger transport information is already available to us in the review report.

Senator MILNE—In terms of acting on that, what consultation have you had with local government to start talking about limits to the growth of towns so that you can adequately provide passenger services for them? It seems to me—and this committee has had this time and time again—that all the evidence shows that the poorest people live furthest from the centre of the city, have the least access to public transport, drive the gas guzzlers and so on. So until you have a strategic plan which says there is no further expansion than that, it is very hard to fill in a spokes and wheel model. So what discussion are you having at a transport planning level with, say, Hobart City Council and, more particularly, local government authorities around the state about this issue of integrating planning with transport planning?

Mr Peters—We do have three regional integrated transport plans. I will hand over to Sarah Poortenaar, who can best explain that.

Ms Poortenaar—In Tasmania, we have two regional transport plans for the north and the Cradle Coast region. We are currently working on the southern region. One of the key principles in that is about integrating transport and land use planning, so it is really setting the direction about how we plan our cities into the future at a strategic level and looking at principles to get better urban design and better connectivity and accessibility. The state government has also signed up to do three regional land use strategies in partnership with local government. They are just at the beginning phase. So we will work quite closely with the land use planning branch of the Tasmanian government, which is in the Department of Justice, and with the three regional authorities and the councils to get that better integration with transport and land use planning.

Senator MILNE—You mentioned the Cradle Coast Authority. One of the concerns I have had for a long time is the very poor level of public transport provision on the north-west coast of Tasmania. It is a disincentive to integration in education and in health services in particular, as

you know. There was a time when people would go to a doctor in Devonport at five o'clock and had to stay overnight because there was no way to get back to Ulverstone less than 10 minutes or 15 minutes away. Can you tell me what level of priority is being given to the north-west coast to get a really good regular public transport system so that the Burnie and Devonport TAFEs and the hospitals and the schools and so on can get a much better flow?

Dr Carlington—Senator, one thing, as you identify, that came out through the consultative process that we undertook for the core passenger service review is that very issue. It has been a longstanding concern, and a range of studies have been done over a great number of years on transport along that north-west corridor. As a result of the changes that were introduced following the review, one of the real targets we had was to do something about the link between Devonport and Burnie. Metro Tasmania some years ago started a link that went from Burnie to Ulverstone, but the connectivity from Ulverstone to Devonport was missing. We were now in a position to sit down with a company by the name of Phoenix Coaches. We have now established an integrated service that runs between Devonport and Burnie. Phoenix Coaches does the Devonport to Ulverstone leg and Metro does the Ulverstone to Burnie leg. They have an integrated timetable.

With the rollout of the new smart card ticketing system that Metro has done in Burnie, we are hoping to follow that up with the installation of the same equipment—same ticketing machines—on the Phoenix coaches. We are then hoping to have an integrated ticketing system so that people can travel through, whether it is halfway to Ulverstone or the full distance on either company, with a single ticket and to do so relatively seamlessly. The timetables are now integrated. We have increased the frequency. We have been able through the service development plans to include some interpeak and off peak services. So we are increasing both the frequency and the spread of those services. That really only kicked off with the start of the school year—in February this year. So we are still doing some finetuning of that.

There are some issues, particularly with the transport of students. The Australian Technical College was one group that we had some issues with. There has been a separately funded service that has been operating now for about six weeks. The numbers on that have been good and we are going to keep that going. So we are still monitoring the numbers and seeing how we are going. It is early days yet. We hope to grow the traffic over that corridor. We are optimistic. Both the companies are very keen to see it grow and progress. Phoenix in particular is trying to be very innovative. They have grown quite a bit in the last few years on the Ulverstone to Devonport link. They are going through a transition, if you like, from a school bus operator to a general access operator. One change that we very much want to target is moving from a public transport system that is based around school buses to one that is based around general access, with the school buses being supplementary to it rather than the reverse. That is one area where a lot of work has been done, and we are quite optimistic that that will be a success.

Senator MILNE—This is my final question on this. In terms of this shift, as you are saying, there is not a public transport culture in Tasmania—I say that as a general observation—compared with a lot of other places where we have been. They also did not have a public transport culture and they have worked very hard to change it. The TravelSmart program has been one of the ways that Perth has had a huge transformation because of public awareness, public engagement and integration, as we have said. They have also added a train service. They have the free buses, TravelSmart and the cycleways. There is real excitement in that city on

public transport. The same thing is happening in Sydney. I just wonder what you are doing here to try and have a cultural shift and to proactively go out and talk to people through programs like TravelSmart. It does not seem to have had anything like the profile here that it has had in other places.

Ms Poortenaar—As part of the urban passenger study we are doing, we are looking at what we call travel demand management measures. Part of that will be looking at the key element of travel behaviour change, which is about how you shift people from cars towards public transport, including buses, walking and cycling or even ride sharing. Again, that study is in the process of being developed. What we hope to have is a package of information which includes demand management measures. That includes a travel behaviour change element.

Senator MILNE—In Perth they have, I think—Chair, correct me if I am wrong—only about 14 or 15 people involved in their TravelSmart program. Is that right? Do you recall? The officer there gave us a figure of about 14 or 15 full-time equivalent positions supporting an amazing proactive personal service. Is that envisaged in the kind of thing you are talking about? Surveys and planning and stuff are nothing compared with personally contacting people and talking them through their options.

Mr Peters—The TravelSmart program is one that we are aware of. It will be highly looked at because it has been considered by many to be a very good model to follow. But that will be part of the overall approach we are taking. We have not done a large amount of work on that at this point of time.

CHAIR—I am afraid we have run out of time. I know I had some questions. I am interested in how you are converting all these perpetual taxi licences to owner operator licences. You can take that on notice. Unfortunately, time is against us.

Mr Peters—I am happy to provide a response to that, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—I am very interested in that.

Senator FARRELL—In relation to your Bass Strait service between Devonport and Melbourne, can you give us some information on whether the traffic is increasing or decreasing or staying the same? Do I take it there is no longer a service to Sydney?

Mr Peters—That is right.

Senator FARRELL—So that was cut out?

Mr Peters—The Sydney ferry was cut out a few years ago. But certainly we will get you information on demand.

Senator LUDLAM—Could you provide some details on what your proposals to Infrastructure Australia were and whether public transport was part of that mix. We heard evidence in other cities, particularly in Perth, that expanding the park and ride system was really just a symptom that the bus network was failing. If you were not able to feed people to your public transport system without cars, it meant that the bus network was not working very well.

Have you considered alternatives to expanding carparks around your bus networks? Is any rail still in the ground, or was the whole lot torn up? I would be interested to know whether there is any potential for returning to metropolitan or regional rail services in Tasmania.

Mr Peters—We can get you a response to that.

CHAIR—Thank you. I thank officers from the department for their assistance to the committee.

[9.46 am]

MARSHALL, Ms Georgina Kate, Director, Cool Pool Tas

CHAIR—Welcome, Ms Marshall. Do you have anything to add about the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Marshall—I am founder and director of Cool Pool Tas, a carpooling website specialised for Tasmania to connect passengers and drivers together. It is an Internet based website.

CHAIR—Cool Pool Tas has lodged submission 141 with the committee. Do you wish to make any amendments or alterations to that submission?

Ms Marshall—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make a brief opening statement before we go to questions.

Ms Marshall—Thank you. This morning I would like to put out there that the culture is something we really need to grow in Tasmania. We have already over 350,000 registered motor vehicles and licensed drivers. We have this fantastic potential to connect together. I really want to talk about growing this culture of sharing our resources and creating opportunities and incentives for doing that, which can be greatly supported through state and federal government. We do not want to create these island systems, because this is where carpooling in other parts of the world has broken down. We need to create a unified sharing system. So I would really like to point out that I want to seek connectivity within Tasmania for carpooling. This is what I have been trying to work with the state government on so they are not going to create an isolated system for public servants to carpool in Tasmania. We need to create much more linkages.

I heard the conversation about TravelSmart. I know that they have been doing studies with the University of Tasmania. I would really like to see the university now move forward with the information they have gained from their studies with TravelSmart linking in to carpooling. We have set up a great carpooling website. It is making those linkages together, whether Cool Pool Tas stays as the existing way for people to connect in Tasmania or we move into a different way. I am really flexible on seeing what can happen there. I would really like to see more support at a government level for carpooling and growing the culture in Tasmania. This would support innovation and small business with technology so we move forward with how we can share rides together. Perhaps we could set up a call centre or something like that we can call into. At the moment we have the Internet site. In Quebec, they have had a 20-year model, which has been very successful, with call-in for connecting up with passengers. But incentives is going to be a major one for connecting drivers together and encouraging people that it is great to take your car out and it is easy to be flexible on your own. We need those incentives to support people to move towards this culture of sharing rides together.

CHAIR—Thank you, Ms Marshall. Is it happening yet anywhere here in Tasmania?

Ms Marshall—There are little pockets of carpooling within certain communities. There are communities that will ferry. They will have their little carpooling group and they will organise it informally. So there is informal carpooling happening throughout the state. But we have established with Cool Pool Tas the first formal site. The university, as I said, have been doing studies and looking into it and trialling carpooling at the university. But this site is up and running. We have 321 members at the moment who are logged on and registered and starting to use the site to find rides. But it is slow growing because it is a cultural transition. It is a big change that people need to make—sharing a space with someone else, trying to get rid of that fear of sharing a ride with someone else and trying to get clearer timetables and trying to stick to those timetables, because we love to be more flexible these days. But it has started.

CHAIR—But there are no incentives for your 321 members coming from local government or state government?

Ms Marshall—No. There are no incentives at the moment. The only incentive is a free tank of fuel for people who start to log rides on our carpooling site. But we have not received any support at all apart from last year at the Fuel Summit in September, where we were given some verbal support that the state government would come on board and create something for all the public servants. But we have seen nothing. I know it was discussed in parliament last week that they are going to put it out for a tender now, which is great that they are now moving on that. But, then again, I do not want to see the state government become an isolated system. If the public servants and the government vehicles can start carpooling together, that is fantastic. But it would be great to see a strategic plan where that can actually be linked in to the general community.

CHAIR—In your submission you list a figure of 350,000 registered vehicles and fully licensed persons in Tasmania. I am just not clear on the 350,000. Is that vehicles and drivers?

Ms Marshall—Sorry. It is only 350,000. It came from the transport website, the state site, for motor vehicles.

CHAIR—So that is vehicles and drivers, a combined tally?

Ms Marshall—Yes. That is people who have their full licence. There are over 350,000 fully licensed drivers in Tasmania and over 350,000 registered motor vehicles.

CHAIR—I see. Do you have a split for Hobart? I will just pick Hobart because we are here in Hobart.

Ms Marshall—No. I am not sure of the breakdown of those figures.

Senator LUDLAM—Can you give us a bit of an idea of the model and how you have made it work. Can you explain briefly how long you have been going for and whether you have any kind of funding base, or is it entirely a volunteer organisation?

Ms Marshall—It is set up as a business structure, but it is basically driven by volunteers and funding that I am putting into it at the moment whilst looking for alternative sources. We launched it around Environment Day in June 2008 last year. You can register for free at the

moment as a member. Once you are registered, you can search for and post rides on the site. We have put in a protective thing for safety. You can actually go and look at the rides which are available online without going through the time of registering. But if you do see a ride which you would like to take, we have set it up so if you click on the profile of the person who is offering the ride as the driver, you will have to be a registered member to be able to see that information.

Senator LUDLAM—Is it mainly serving commuter traffic or is it a bit broader than that?

Ms Marshall—We have tried to target it so that we get the frequent journey to work communities involved and the travellers coming into Tasmania so they have an alternative way of getting to some of the more remote areas—people travelling out to national parks and that sort of thing—where we do not have much frequent public transportation set up. There is something called a home to hub connector on the site. When you register, you can choose to be alerted if someone else registers from the same area. So you will get an email if you choose to be alerted if someone else has just registered on the site as a member.

Senator LUDLAM—Have you got a rough idea, then, of to what degree it is being used? How many rides per day or per week are being coordinated through that system?

Ms Marshall—It is really tough to get that feedback. I have been trying to promote through the site and a newsletter to get that feedback, but it is difficult to tell. We have a logbook, but we are just offering an incentive at the moment for free fuel if people can start to actually log their rides if they are finding them. But we are not at critical mass yet. We need at least 1,000 members to really start turning and see it work.

Senator LUDLAM—So a tiny bit of help through the state government sounds like it could go a long way, even just in terms of promotion?

Ms Marshall—Some promotion would be fantastic just to build the culture and a few incentives from the state government, yes.

Senator LUDLAM—You mention in your submission that there is a need to reassess the insurance policy. What kind of barrier is that?

Ms Marshall—That is more just a perceived fear from people. It is legal through the transport act to be able to carpool.

Senator LUDLAM—It is illegal?

Ms Marshall—It is legal to carry up to seven passengers in your car if it is not prearranged, if you have not just specifically done that trip to carry people in the car. So if you are already going into work, you can legally carry people. I suppose I put that in this briefing. We really need to bring it out that it is okay to carpool and that it is not going to affect your liability if something happens in the car. There should not be this fear. You are taking a ride with someone else. Of course, we have certain etiquette for carpooling which we are trying to promote for safety in learning about the person before you ride with them and looking at the pick-up and drop-off

points and that sort of thing. As far as perceived fear, it is the whole perceived fear of insurance and, 'Will I be liable for someone if something happens in my car?'

Senator LUDLAM—Are there other models similar to what you are trying operating around Australia in other Australian cities?

Ms Marshall—Yes. There are lots of local community models. There are quite a few national carpooling websites. There are about five main ones and then there are lots of little ones for certain businesses and communities. For the national sites, I think they are too big and they do not work because you cannot even see how many members or where they are registered. So for me to want to go and post a ride and search for something, I would just feel like I was wasting my time on the national sites. On the localised sites, I am not sure how they are working for those local communities. But we have already been contacted by three communities throughout Australia asking us to implement a model for their communities. They are in Margaret River in Western Australia and in the south of Byron Bay. In Bega, they have asked us if we can help them develop a model for their community. Someone from northern New South Wales wrote to us the other day asking if we can set something up for their community as well.

Senator LUDLAM—I wish you well. Thanks for coming in this morning.

Senator MILNE—Congratulations on what you are doing. As we noted earlier, the culture here is such that you are really up against it. One of the disincentives, I imagine here, is the free carparking by the city council. Unlike other cities, where carparking is incredibly expensive, the first hour in Hobart city is free, so it encourages people to bring their car in, do a bit of shopping and go home. How serious do you think it is as a disincentive that Tasmania has a very proactive culture that encourages car use through low parking fees as opposed to other places?

Ms Marshall—I think this is the key for us, which we can implement without too much investment to start with. I think we can implement something like this quickly. I just met with the Hobart City Council and spoke with them yesterday about their strategic plan. I think they are talking to you later today. Certainly I think offering to those who have three or more in their car or two or more in their car areas where they can have free or very low cost parking would be a great incentive, as would upping the cost. We saw it when the fuel went up last year. That is when Cool Pool started to get in the papers. That is when we called the Fuel Summit. If you up the cost, people are forced to look for alternatives. It is just a reality of everything throughout our society. Until economics becomes a factor, people are not going to be forced to change. Parking is something that we are talking to the Hobart City Council about at the moment. Certainly Cool Pool Tas would like to work with the councils in pushing forward these sorts of disincentives and incentives.

Senator MILNE—Secondly, you mentioned the universities doing some work. The state government has now said it is going to put something out to tender. I was not clear whether what they are putting out to tender is the carpooling arrangement for the public servants or whether it is a tender to organise a carpooling arrangement. Can you just be slightly more specific about what the university is doing, what the state government's tender is for and whether there is any discussion with you about having one carpool or any notional view that we might have one instead of three?

Ms Marshall—I wish I could bring more clarity to it, but I am not sure. I just heard from various sources that this was discussed in parliament last week. I have not had contact with the state government since last year, when we were in discussion and gave them some proposals to support them to implement carpooling. As far as the university goes, I contacted them a few months ago. I am not sure at what stage they are at. I know they have been doing pilot trials, but I am not sure. I do not think they are connecting up with the state government. I am not sure whether it is a talk about a state site. I imagine it is just for the government carpooling.

Senator MILNE—We heard from the government a minute ago that they have this passenger service unit which consults widely. Have they consulted you about carpooling or about TravelSmart and how you might work with a TravelSmart type operation?

Ms Marshall—No. I have not been consulted.

Senator FARRELL—Ms Marshall, I think what you are doing is very admirable. One thing that has always amazed me is that even given how high petrol prices were, particularly last year, more people do not seem to want to organise carpooling, even in an informal sort of way. Can you speculate on why it is not more successful?

Ms Marshall—I think it is such a cultural shift. It is so easy for people. You can spend a bit more money on fuel. To have to make phone calls and organise pick-up points. It is that little bit of extra organisation you have to go forward towards. We have put in a grant application on cutting emissions with the state government through the climate change office to run workshops within communities in two specific areas south of Hobart. It is going to need some education as well, especially for our site, because it is technology specific. That is another thing. It is two cultures, actually. It is that culture of sharing and then it is a technology culture, which might not be appropriate. That is something that we need to put more time and investment into researching. But we do not have the resources at the moment to do that.

Senator FARRELL—Can the problem be solved with good enough technology, or is that cultural difficulty going to mean that you will never be really successful with carpooling?

Ms Marshall—I think we can definitely grow the culture. I think it might take a bit of novel campaigning. I think it might take setting up some really nice areas in the city which are drop-off and pick-up points that may be labelled carpooling drop-off and pick-up points. With incentives, I think we can really grow a great community culture. I think especially at this time in the world, where we are more on our individual trails and we need to come back together and look at community more, it is going to be really important for community change and to become more community minded. So I think it is possible. We just need the incentives and maybe some novelty and fun put into the campaigning and marketing for it.

Senator BACK—I have no specific questions except to say that I think it is just an absolutely critically important concept not just for carpooling in terms of the workplace. Again, as the population ages, as the amount of time people spend employed during the week declines, this really becomes a process, does it not, for people to get to know each other? There is no better way of people getting to know each other than to spend time in a motorcar. I have long believed that if two of your employees are having difficulty getting on, the best thing to do is to put them in a car for a couple of hours. It either solves it or completely destroys it. Nevertheless, I am at a

loss to know where the Commonwealth government can assist the process. I can see that very much it is about community. Perhaps even not-for-profit groups, including Rotary clubs, and church groups et cetera could be involved. I can see all those levels. They are critically important. I just do not see at the moment where the Commonwealth could be involved. I also really do have that concern about insurance. I think it must be a barrier both to a person who is providing their vehicle and a barrier to a person who is likely to be a passenger, not knowing the driving habits of the person. Could you respond to that?

Ms Marshall—Sure. Firstly, the federal government can do a lot as far as campaigning and growing the culture, be it through TV campaigns. It is having not just a campaign—we have seen some of the climate change offices put campaigns in and show people carpooling—but direct incentives for people to be doing that. I am not sure what it could be at this stage, but whether it is fuel vouchers or cheaper parking, I think there is a lot the federal government could put in as far as incentives. Perhaps policy documents could be changed so that carpooling and car sharing become recognised ways of travelling. Government agencies could lead by setting targets and showing that they are attempting to share rides together and cut their emissions through travel and transit. Something could be written in federal government policy that could be put to local businesses and groups. Show us that you are doing something and rewarding your employees if they share rides together and not take up an extra space that you have to pay for at work.

What the direct ones are I do not know. That would take a lot of planning and sitting down and doing. But I think the federal government could do a lot for incentives campaigning and marketing for this. While we are building up our other revamped public transportation systems, we can be building this culture of sharing within the community. It can be done quickly without too much revenue investment as well. We can do it like that.

Senator O'BRIEN—Ms Marshall, are the 321 participants in your website state-wide? How are they split up around the state?

Ms Marshall—On the site you can see that we have a map of distribution, so you can see where the members are registered. The highest density at the moment is around the Hobart and the Greater Hobart region just because that is where I am based and that is where we have been promoting more strongly from. But we also have quite a bit of uptake in the north-west because we have someone supporting us up there through promotion and in Launceston. But with the majority Tasmania-wide, we would probably have 5 per cent from interstate and overseas who have registered.

Senator O'BRIEN—And of the biggest proportion, would it be half or more in the Hobart region?

Ms Marshall—I would say it would be half or more in the Hobart region and greater region, yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—I understand that you are not necessarily flush with resources. Have you approached the local government bodies who control some of the issues you talked about—parking, signage, street pick-up areas—who have a number of employees and links to the business community in terms of their encouragement, for example, in Hobart of that cheap,

short-term parking for the business community in Hobart? Have you spoken to the councils about your scheme and ascertained what their attitude is, at least, if not tried to get some promotion from them?

Ms Marshall—There is a lot more that can be done there for making connections. When I first started the site, I emailed all the councils looking for feedback and support. I did not follow that up with a phone call so I actually got a zero response through that type of mail-out to councils. But certainly when I was up at the Fuel Summit, someone from the La Trobe council came forward to me and said, ‘Come and promote this in our municipality, please.’ I have been in discussions with the Hobart City Council. The new general manager there is very keen to discuss carpooling and carparks and work it into the new transportation strategic plan that the Hobart City Council has.

In the early days last year, we were looking at working with the technological specialist of the Glenorchy City Council to implement carpooling. Glenorchy City Council had been looking at it as something that they wanted to do. But it ended up being pretty much pushed aside and ditched because of the fear regarding insurance and liability. So they flicked aside their research and everything on carpooling within the Glenorchy council. But as far as going back to councils and looking at carparking, I think a lot of councils are really keen to get on board and link in with this. It is just something we need a bit more support to promote. The Tasman Council wrote us a support letter. They are really happy to have us working in the Tasman municipality to do some education workshops. That is one of the communities we are targeting in the Huon Valley as well. The Sorell Council is also interested.

Senator O’Brien—So you are picking up groups of people in those commuter districts outside the main business district, if I can put it that way?

Ms Marshall—Yes. I suppose it is a bit of a pilot for us. We are looking at some of the areas where a lot of people are commuting in to work from—the Sorell, the Tasman municipal areas. From the Huon Valley, there is certainly a bottleneck coming in, as you have been discussing, over the bridge and down the southern outlet highway into Hobart. I ride my bike in from Taroona every morning and see it and breathe it.

Senator O’Brien—It is relatively flat.

Ms Marshall—And that is relatively flat, yes.

CHAIR—I will wrap up. Ms Marshall, do you have access to any figures that show the distance of the average journey in and out of Hobart per car to work and back?

Ms Marshall—I have not done personal studies, but for the journey to work, there is the *Greater Hobart southern region background report*, which was done, I think, by the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources. They have statistics, which I think you have there in front of you, on the journey to work. They looked at how many people are travelling to work without a passenger in the car. I have 88 per cent at a state level for people travelling to work without someone else in the car. All the figures are significantly high.

CHAIR—Maybe I did not word it properly. The distance travelled.

Ms Marshall—I am not sure what the average is, but there is in that report, I believe, an average distance travelled for people going to work. I am not sure what it is.

CHAIR—On that, I thank you very much for your assistance to the committee today. We will take a short break and recommence at 10.30 am.

Proceedings suspended from 10.13 am to 10.33 am

PETERSEN, Mr Karry, Manager, Transport, Tourism and Transport Forum

BARKER, Mr Rowan, Manager, Media and Communications, Tourism and Transport Forum

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Petersen and Mr Barker. Do we have Ms Worth?

Mr Petersen—Unfortunately, she called in ill this morning so will be unable to attend. I apologise for the late notice.

CHAIR—That is not a problem at all. Before I invite you to make a brief opening statement, I am joined by Senator Ludlam, Senator O'Brien, Senator Back, Senator Farrell and Senator Milne. The TTF has lodged submission 137 with the committee. Do you wish to make any amendments or alterations to your submission?

Mr Petersen—No. I do not.

CHAIR—Mr Petersen or Mr Barker, I invite you to make a brief opening statement before we go to questions.

Mr Petersen—First of all, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to make comment and attend this hearing into the investment in public passenger transport. For those of you who are not aware, the Tourism and Transport Forum, or TTF, represents 200 of the most prestigious corporations and institutions in the Australian transport, property, tourism and infrastructure sectors. TTF members include public transport operators, investors, infrastructure developers, consultants and many others with an interest in improving accessibility to passenger transport in Australia. Before I go on, are you able to hear me clearly?

CHAIR—I am struggling a little. Can everyone else hear all right?

Senator BACK—We can. If you can just keep speaking clearly into the microphone, we would appreciate it, Mr Petersen.

Mr Petersen—I will pick up the phone. That might be a bit better. Aside from my role as transport manager at TTF, I am also a long-term public transport user, having experienced a variety of transport systems when residing in different cities across Australia and in my international travels. I appreciate the intrinsic part transport systems play in an urban environment. Transport is the lifeblood of global cities, serving a vital social transit function, providing mobility for people who do not have access to private vehicles, a mass transit function, moving large numbers of people efficiently and quickly, and providing a sustainable alternative at a time when we are reappraising the way we use energy.

Efficient transport systems enable people to travel to employment, connect with families and friends and stimulate social activity and can form part of a city's identity. They provide economic benefit through accelerating trade links and easing urban congestion and provide significant environmental benefits. So how do Australian transport systems stack up? Transport

networks in Australian capital cities have now reached critical mass. Increasing urban transport congestion is choking our cities and putting the brakes on productivity. It is estimated that the social cost of urban congestion will reach \$20 billion by 2020 if left unchecked. There is no doubt that this has come due to historic underinvestment in Australian transport networks. This has been the result of a lack of a coordinated national approach to transport infrastructure, where investment has largely come at a state level, with little realisation of the importance of transport systems to the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of all Australians.

Increasing urban populations, the cost of private vehicle travel and increased environmental consciousness has now led to unprecedented patronage growth on public passenger transport systems. This, coupled with a lack of long-term ongoing investment, has put an enormous strain on public passenger networks across the country. So what can be done about it? There needs to be a genuine partnership between all levels of government and the private sector in a coordinated approach to deliver the infrastructure, services and quality of life that will underpin the growth of our urban environments into the future. This includes public transport networks. There is no silver bullet solution to the transport challenges now and in the future. A range of solutions focusing on the better utilisation of current infrastructure, new infrastructure and clear policy direction is required.

TTF believes that the federal government has taken the initiative by recognising its role in the urban transport environment. With a larger tax base and access to greater funds, it has the ability to provide the necessary investment that state governments, who traditionally funded public transport, no longer have the capacity for. Infrastructure Australia funding is the first step to providing an infrastructure pipeline and a funding resource for states and the private sector to work in partnership to deliver critical public transport infrastructure. However, beyond this, long-term ongoing funding will be required. TTF believes projects of national significance should be included in the AusLink program. This will allow the program to better meet its overall scope. It should also be expanded to include funding of public passenger transport infrastructure objectives. Further investment can be provided through the private sector. For this, the federal government has taken a step in the right direction through the endorsement of the national public-private partnership policy and guidelines by the Council of Australian Governments, or COAG, in November 2008. This represents a fundamental shift in the way PPPs are undertaken in Australia by providing the foundations for a national approach. However, more work still needs to be done to improve PPPs in this process, particularly in relation to transparency, accountability and areas of jurisdictional discretion.

Additionally, the National Transport Commission needs to be provided with the proper funding to set the foundations for long-lasting national reform of the transport industry. The current lack of resources means it has not been able to drive the necessary reforms through the national transport plan, particularly in relation to public passenger transport. The size and scope of the plan necessitates ongoing funding. It is essential that the federal government provides the necessary resources.

Finally, the federal government should better utilise the tax system, which provides the mechanism to influence community demand by providing financial incentives and disincentives for certain types of travel behaviour. The current application of the statutory formula to car fringe benefits cost the federal government approximately \$1.5 billion in 2006-07 and incentivises commuters to travel to work by car rather than public transport. Considering the

rising cost of urban congestion and the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is recommended that the FBT be reviewed.

Furthermore, the TTF is extremely concerned the federal Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will increase the level of transport related carbon pollution rather than reduce it through the provision of offsets to private road transport, which is to be reviewed after three years, and road freight, which is to be reviewed after one year. These offsets shield road users in the short term and beyond from any additional fuel price increases resulting from the scheme. No corresponding offset is proposed for costs on public transport or rail freight operations.

With Australia facing an international financial crisis and a new carbon constrained world, it is imperative our transport networks are able to meet new demands and pressures while facilitating economic activity in urban centres. The federal government is paving the way to a national approach through the work of the National Transport Commission and Infrastructure Australia process. However, more work still needs to be done to drive the reform agenda in the states, facilitate further private sector investment and further encourage public transport through amendments to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and tax system. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Petersen. Did you wish to add anything, Mr Barker?

Mr Barker—Not to the opening statement, thank you.

CHAIR—Mr Petersen, you said in your opening statement that the FBT should be reviewed. Would you like to expand on that for the committee?

Mr Petersen—Sure. The tax system provides the mechanism for the federal government to influence community demand by providing financial incentives or disincentives for traffic behaviour, which includes using a car as opposed to using public transport. In this way, in the fringe benefits tax regime, under the current structure, individuals who own a car and drive to work are better off than those who own a car yet take public transport to work once all on-road costs are considered. In addition, an individual who decides to salary package that car and drive to work is even better off. FBT for salary packaged cars is influenced by a number of kilometres driven, so an individual's take-home income is maximised the more that individual drives. Support for the FBT regime to be amended has been widespread. The New South Wales state government, the International Association of Public Transport and the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors have all made strong public statements calling for reform.

In particular, TTF recommends that the tax system be amended to end this horizontal inequity between private and public transport. Options for reform include an equal FBT concession to salary package cars for public transport users or a tax deduction for the cost of public transport on individuals' income or a tax rebate for an individual's public transport costs.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Petersen. This is about our fifth day and fifth state, I think, in terms of this inquiry. The submissions have been wide-ranging. But if we had a public transport system that was safe, efficient and sustainable and everything else that goes along with it, are there any other ways you could suggest that we could convince those using cars that they would be much better off using public transport?

Mr Petersen—Well, a lot of this has to go towards information. With the FBT system, this focuses on a particular price point that stimulates public transport use or, I should say again, it incentivises or disincentivises people to use different modes of transport. Again, as I said in my opening statement—it is also in our submission—the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is another federal system that is disincentivising people to use public transport. Further to this, the TravelSmart program undertaken at a federal level and at state level is another way to provide commuters with the necessary information to inform their travel decisions. We note that they have placed more emphasis than others on this information system. We encourage further investment in this regard.

Senator BACK—Gentlemen, I have a couple of questions. One relates to public-private partnerships. Could you expand on where you believe there is a role for participation by the private sector? How do we ensure that the private sector does not provide a service in just those areas that are going to be most cost beneficial to them versus cost beneficial to the overall community?

Mr Petersen—The private sector will need transparent and consistent tendering and contracting processes across jurisdictions. I appreciate the fact that investing in the public interest will need government assistance. It is absolutely imperative that the government provides the framework to facilitate ease for the private sector to make that necessary investment. As I note in my opening statement, the national public-private partnership policy and guidelines by COAG have been signed. But there needs to be further reform in this regard. There really needs to be a national system that does look at areas of jurisdictional discretion and allows for a certain amount of discretion in an overall framework that gives the private sector the confidence to make those investments that are required.

Senator BACK—My second question is this: traditionally, in the delivery of services that we are speaking of, investment has largely been the role of state governments. Many state governments have seen the role of the federal government as supplying the money so they can spend it where they best see it being needed. The proposal that you are making and others have made to us is that there needs to be not only a lot more investment by the Commonwealth but also collaboration and guidance by the Commonwealth. I just wonder what part your organisation could play in influencing state governments that if they are to come on board in this way, they have to give up some of that autonomy?

Mr Petersen—Of course. I think the key role is through the National Transport Commission and the Australian Transport Council. The ATC in particular is the forum for these discussions to be had. TTF will do all it can to facilitate the necessary information that is required by different state parties to inform their decisions. But it is at the ATC where these decisions need to be made and the reform agenda or the policy decisions need to take place. It is up to the federal government to provide the necessary funding to the National Transport Commission to ensure that a national transport plan takes place at the national level. Again, the agreement needs to be had through COAG and the ATC.

Senator BACK—And it is likely to have support from groups such as yours?

Mr Petersen—Of course it will have the support of groups like us.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am happy for either of you gentlemen to answer this question. You have a recommendation in your submission that the AusLink program be expanded to include funding for urban passenger transport projects, including heavy and light rail infrastructure. Given the size of the AusLink program at the moment, I presume you mean that some of the money which may have been allocated to road projects should now be allocated to those projects?

Mr Petersen—No. The point we make is that there needs to be increased investment in the AusLink program, allowing it to—

Senator O'BRIEN—How much is in it at the moment?

Mr Petersen—It must be at about \$13 billion or \$14 billion. About \$14 billion goes to road projects and about \$1.2 billion goes to rail projects, which is a spending ratio of about 12 to one for road versus rail. We advocate for greater investment in public passenger transport through increased investment in the AusLink program. It is about extending the program, not limiting the current expenditure on roads.

Senator O'BRIEN—So the Commonwealth should put more money into all of those areas that are currently the bailiwick of the states. How does the Commonwealth fund that while at the same time provide the sort of funds it provides to the states through the GST revenue?

Mr Petersen—Of course.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am interested to know how the Commonwealth would fund that. Does the Commonwealth just borrow more money?

Mr Petersen—Well, there are numerous ways. Yes, we could borrow more money. It is hard to make the indication in consideration of the current global financial crisis. Of course, the private sector should be utilised in this regard to be able to fund infrastructure or even operate infrastructure to reduce the costs.

Senator O'BRIEN—I thought your organisation in the past had been a supporter of the concept that AusLink was about freight and freight transport. So this is somewhat of a shift for your organisation's policy consideration. When did that happen?

Mr Petersen—I do not believe there has been a shift at all. We have always been an advocate of integrated transport networks. That includes both freight and passenger transport infrastructure. Considering that this inquiry is about passenger transport infrastructure, that is our focus at this point in time. The TTF believes that the scope of the AusLink objectives of improving connectivity, logistics and trade, providing long-term social and economic benefits and sustaining the environment for future generations enable it to make investment in public passenger transport.

Senator O'BRIEN—Given the limit to dollars available to the Commonwealth government and the variety of demands on the AusLink program, where should the priority be?

Mr Petersen—We have outlined a list of priorities and outlined the Australian transport compact, which we did supply with our submission. The key public transport infrastructure projects should be those of national significance first of all. They would receive funding from the Building Australia Fund and would require ongoing funding, we believe, through the AusLink program. Without trying to speculate about which projects the Building Australia Fund will cover, the ones that we have outlined in the transport compact is the plan of Sydney network, the proposed Melbourne CBD rail tunnel, a second rail crossing of the Brisbane River, electrification of the Adelaide metropolitan rail network and more rolling stock for the Perth metropolitan rail network.

Senator O'BRIEN—So are they coming from the Building Australia Fund or AusLink?

Mr Petersen—As you can appreciate, the Building Australia Fund originally started at about \$20 billion and has now been reduced to about \$12.3 billion or thereabouts. You can correct me if I am wrong on that. That money would not be a scratch on the funding required to build one or two of these particular projects. Therefore, we need ongoing investment in public transport infrastructure. We believe it is the AusLink program that can provide that framework.

Senator O'BRIEN—We have pressure to increase funding available through things like Building Australia and you want us to increase AusLink as well.

Mr Barker—Obviously, in a utopian scenario, everyone would have all the money for all the projects that would be ideal. Obviously there has to be a priority. That is a decision the government would make. We are coming from a lobbying position of somewhat idealism, if you will. We would like to see unlimited funding for all these key public transport and other infrastructure projects.

Senator O'BRIEN—Milton Keynes did not like us printing money.

Mr Barker—No. It has not stopped governments overseas, particularly in the UK, over the last month or so from doing precisely that, however.

Senator O'BRIEN—Let us not get into a debate about the economic worth of that strategy.

Senator MILNE—You say in your submission that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will not reduce emissions in terms of transport and it actually biases the system in favour of private vehicles and against public transport. Would you care to expand on that point?

Mr Petersen—We further believe that the CPRS is a perfect example of some of the points raised in the *Sustainable cities* report, which noted evidence regarding counterincentives which encourage people to behave in ways that contradict state government policy objectives and send mixed messages to the community. First of all, the federal government should be commended for undertaking the task of establishing a carbon rating system. That is a step in the right direction. Including transport in that scheme is also a step in the right direction. It should be noted that when these things are set up internationally, not all of them have included transport. But we remain extremely concerned that the CPRS will increase the level of transport related carbon pollution by sending those mixed messages and providing the concessions that distort the transport marketplace by influencing community choice.

As I stated before in my opening statement—it is also in the submission—a key feature of the proposed scheme is the provision of offsets to private road transport and road freight. These offsets will shield road users in the short term and beyond. As I state, it is only a review of these offsets. It will shield the road users in the short term and beyond from any additional fuel price increases resulting from the scheme. The critical point is that no corresponding offset is proposed for the cost of public transport or rail freight operations. This is despite the CPRS green paper identifying that sustained price increases leads to reductions in car fuel consumption. All in all, construction of the scheme fails to recognise public transport and rail freight as key carbon reduction operations. Hence, it provides a counterincentive that acts in direct contradiction to the goal of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

Senator MILNE—So you would support taking out the compensation measures for private vehicles?

Mr Petersen—Our belief is that there should be a level playing field for private road users and public transport. Whichever way you want to do that—be it by providing the same concessions for public transport as have been given to road users or neither—is a matter for government.

Senator MILNE—Thank you. It is important to clarify that. Everybody wants to be shielded from everything under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Clearly, if we are trying to reduce emissions, it would be better to shield no-one.

Mr Barker—Yes. If you want to change consumer behaviour, there may have to be some sort of penalty. We believe that if you do give concessions, there is no incentive for people to change their travel patterns.

Senator MILNE—Thank you. That is important in a policy sense. I would now like to go on to another issue. I have had a look at the people that your organisation represents and the need to encourage the integration of land use planning, infrastructure development and community and business requirements. What we are seeing here is that quite often large infrastructure proponents push their proponent but do not push the public transport component of that because it does not exist. Once they get their infrastructure up, they put out their hand for state governments to then provide public transport to their facility. We have seen the same with property developers developing new suburbs. There are no links to public transport, which then, of course, entrenches energy poverty. It is the same with the shopping centre issues. Inside your organisation, do you have a requirement for those members that you have, who are essentially the developers, that when they put up their developments they also put up the public transport plan and acknowledge the deficit, if it exists, when they put in their planning applications?

Mr Petersen—No. We do not. That said, we are here today representing our body of members. As you can appreciate, and as our submission outlines, we are all for, and a big fan of, transport oriented development and other mechanisms similar to that to provide public transport infrastructure together with major residential or commercial development.

Senator MILNE—So how do you actively do that with governments?

Mr Petersen—Can you extrapolate on that?

Senator MILNE—Everybody says after the event that public transport should be provided. We have a classic case here in Hobart of a major shopping development on the way to the airport. The objection to it in the first place was that there was no public transport to it. However, the developers pushed for it. The government provided it. There is no public transport. It is failing. Now the big developers want the state to put on a public transport route for them, which is a direct subsidy Tasmanian taxpayers are making to businesses failing because the planning system failed in the first place. But the developers knew full well that was the case and went ahead anyway. I totally agree with integrating land use planning, infrastructure development and community and business requirements. But I think the onus is also on the developers and the organisations such as yours, who are representing some of these infrastructure developers, to have as part of their development application a proposal as to how they intend to get people to this tourism development, to this resort or to this place, whatever it might be.

Mr Barker—The difficulty, obviously, is that the planning is not our bailiwick. It is part of the state government legislative framework. The states are in a position to require developers to pay levies, as they do to a certain extent in New South Wales. How those levies are used is then up to government. Whether it actually goes into a hypothecated fund or into consolidated revenue is not our decision. It is obviously something we can advocate for, and we do, that any kind of levy would have to go towards the provision of the necessary infrastructure. But whether that actually occurs, we only have a limited influence in that sphere. There should be a commercial responsibility. Fundamentally, if somebody is going to invest in something, the risk should be theirs. There are a lot of examples in the private sector where that is the case and if companies go under or a business fails, a government bailout is not appropriate.

Senator MILNE—Thank you.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks very much for your submission. We have copies of your transport priorities, which you have broken down by state and territory. Some of that material is photographed black for us. I am just wondering if you could talk us through your priorities for Tasmania and tell us how they were arrived at.

Mr Petersen—Sure. Sorry about that. Our key transport priorities for Tasmania include a rapid transit system with fast, direct and frequent transport links to the CBD, Hobart and Launceston. There should be further investment in park and ride facilities. TTF supports the nationwide introduction of park and ride facilities to encourage greater use of public transport for urban commuters. A trial project should be developed in Tasmania; Elwick was identified. There is the introduction of transit lanes. Introducing a trial transit lane project at two different locations, such as the Brooker Highway, with a view to extensive transit lanes is a priority. Furthermore, there is the Brighton intermodal hub, which is planned to bring freight from Brighton to Hobart. That is on the infrastructure side.

With regard to improved transport services, there needs to be more frequent services. That will require recurrent funding for bus services to be increased. We need a smart card ticketing system in Tasmania. The development of a new smart card ticketing system for public transport has been occurring across the nation. In Tasmania, it should continue. The project should be expanded to deliver traffic light priority and real-time information for passengers at key locations.

With regard to travel behaviour, as I touched on before, TravelSmart should be expanded to encourage the greater use of sustainable transport alternatives. We also need improved community transport in Tasmania. We would seek that the government provide improved community transport services, such as Victoria's Transport Connections program.

On the regulatory reform side, there needs to be a core passenger service review. The recommendations of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources core passenger service review should be implemented. There should be low emission vehicle incentives for private vehicles. Greater use of low-emission vehicles should be made in the state government fleet, and incentives such as reduced registration fees should be provided to encourage the take-up of low-emissions private vehicles. Finally, there needs to be urban consolidation. Planning models should reflect the need to increase densification along key transport corridors to improve the efficiency of the transport network.

They are the key priorities we found in Tasmania. They came about in consultation with our members and in consultation with government departments and key transport experts both in the academic sphere and in the operations sphere.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks for that. Can you provide us with the total cost estimate for all the priorities in Tasmania?

Mr Petersen—A lot of those were not costed based on the fact that we did not have information in that regard. We do have some figures on particular projects, such as the introduction of transit lanes. The initial trial would cost in the vicinity of \$2 million. TravelSmart should be provided with at least \$1 million annually. For the more frequent services we allocated about \$10 million.

Senator LUDLAM—To what degree are these priorities in alignment with state government policy and perhaps the policies of the local councils? For example, were any of these reflected in Tasmania's submissions for funding under the Building Australia Fund, for example?

Mr Petersen—I am not entirely sure in that regard because I have not seen the Tasmanian government submission.

Senator LUDLAM—So essentially it is a wish list from the industry. It does not necessarily reflect where policy is at to any great degree?

Mr Petersen—To a certain degree for us it was primarily based on what industry would field.

Senator LUDLAM—That is fine. I want to look at the bigger picture. Your proposals for transport funding in dollar terms are dominated by the proposed tunnels in Melbourne and Sydney. In fact, I have not seen a cost breakdown, but I suspect that would make up much more than half because they are fantastically expensive proposals. How did you arrive at those? Did you look at alternatives for Melbourne and Sydney?

Mr Petersen—For the first stage of the metro system, we are looking at about \$12 billion. That was the initial proposal out to the north-west. Since we took the report, it has been cut back to just a CBD metro system at a cost of \$4.82 billion or thereabouts. For the Sydney metro

system that we talk about, the long-term strategy for public transport in Sydney—this is by no means a five-year goal; this is looking at how transport is going to be shaped in Sydney over the next 20 to 30 years—the likely cost of a full metro system is well in excess of \$30 billion in current terms. We definitely appreciate that the cost of that program is extraordinary and would require a political will that has not yet been seen by state governments.

Senator LUDLAM—Did you look at alternatives? For example, for \$12 billion you could put in about 400 kilometres of light rail. Did anybody look at alternatives to those metro systems, or are we just following the line that the state governments are putting up?

Mr Barker—We are strong advocates of light rail where it is appropriate in the CBD and, in particular, in heavily densified areas. But there is strong evidence from particularly European cities and even cities in the United States, as hard as that may be to believe, considering their normal reliance on private automobile transport, that the metro system is the appropriate method for transporting large numbers of people. It is much more efficient and effective at transporting the numbers of people that will be living in densified areas—for example, along Parramatta and Victoria roads in the years to come, according to the state government's infill policy in terms of urban consolidation.

Senator LUDLAM—You do note, though, that from the Tasmanian point of view, most of the population growth is in fringe, very low density developments on the edges of Hobart and Launceston. Do you see any sign of that changing?

Mr Barker—The growth of the population in Hobart is not something with which I am particularly familiar. But obviously the metros that we are talking about here are in heavily populated areas of Sydney.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks. I will leave it there.

CHAIR—I thank you, Mr Petersen and Mr Barker, for your assistance to the committee today.

Mr Petersen—Thank you very much.

[11.09]

BAIRD, Mr Stuart Ross, Sustainable Transport Officer, Hobart City Council

CHAIR—Welcome. The Hobart City Council has lodged submission 139 with the committee. Do you wish to make any amendments or alterations to that submission?

Mr Baird—Not at this stage.

CHAIR—We will invite you to make an opening statement before we go to questions.

Mr Baird—I suppose the statement or the document that we have put forward really just tries to capture some of the work that we have been doing over the last two years and tries to bring to the committee's attention a range of documents which might inform its deliberations. We have not put forward firm costed proposals per se, but we do try and suggest some possible ways forward for the Commonwealth and the state and local government to act together to produce improvements in the transport system within the country.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Baird. Obviously what I have learnt so far is that when we talk public transport in Tasmania, it all has rubber wheels.

Mr Baird—That is correct.

CHAIR—So I am sure there will be a host of questions around that.

Senator MILNE—Thanks very much for coming today. We heard from the state government earlier this morning that they now have a passenger transport unit in the department of infrastructure. They say they are consulting widely, that they are working on a state-wide strategy and so on and so forth, but it does not seem to have produced very much so far in terms of actual runs on the board. One of the issues here is land use planning, which council is responsible for, and the integration of public transport developments and so on in that context. We have seen from the evidence given that essentially there is a welfare mentality in public transport in Tasmania. It is seen as the provision of services to some of the outer suburban areas that tend to be lower socioeconomic areas with a high level of welfare dependence and so on. I would like to know what the city council is doing to encourage less car use and more public transport—we will get on to cycleways later—and, for example, more rapid transit between the centre of Hobart out to the city of Glenorchy and out as far as Brighton and so on. Why have we not got a rapid transit route on the main thoroughfare between the city and Glenorchy?

Mr Baird—They are excellent questions. Local government, as you would be aware, in Tasmania has very few responsibilities for public transport. In terms of what we are attempting to do with the Hobart City Council and its desire to see public transport improve, you will see a few things listed in the strategic framework plan that I have submitted as attachment 1 and the strategic plan as attachment 2. But probably more specifically within the draft sustainable transport strategy and the immediate recommendations, the things that we see as a local government organisation that we can immediately do—and these are things that we have been

doing—are to improve the quality of the bus stops around the city. So we have been trying to work with Metro to provide high quality bus stops. One has recently gone in at St Ann's, a nursing home, with provision in the centre of the city for better than Metro standard stops. We are working on a program to improve them on key strategic routes around the city.

We note a couple of other projects where we have been actively behind the scenes pursuing what we have called the Western Shore public transport corridor. That is an attachment as well. That is attachment 4, I think, that you have. That was put up by the Planning Institute of Australia, the Institute of Architects and the Housing Research Unit from the university, given the politics around producing such documents from local government organisations and trying to move it to a higher order so that the associations and the organisations are trying to show the way. This document suggests that, with the relocation of the freight hub from the centre of the city out to Brighton and the public transport corridor that we currently have, which is occupied by a cycle track and one train a day of containers to the port area, we believe that the rail side of that will become virtually redundant. The opportunity is there to provide public transport infrastructure which runs up an existing corridor through areas which are prime for reuse for higher density housing. With investment, the state, in cooperation with local governments and hopefully the Commonwealth, can possibly redirect where the development is being targeted in Hobart and the Hobart region.

As the previous questions have indicated, a lot of the housing development in Hobart is still around the fringe and in the peripheries and in the satellite settlements. There needs to be some leadership to start creating more attractive corridors for developers to develop housing within. Certainly from the state and the Commonwealth's point of view, it would seem to us to make sense to try to direct further density housing into areas that are already provisioned with schools and other facilities—that makes sense—rather than rebuild the same things out on every other urban fringe area that is being developed.

So far as land use planning control goes, there is a project which has been signed up to by the Southern Tasmanian Councils Association and the state government. Project officers have been appointed to try to develop a strategic land use plan for the southern region. Since planning was devolved to the councils some years ago, when the office of the town and country planner was essentially shut down, we have ended up with a situation where every council wants everything for its own municipality and is acting in its interests and the interests of its constituents. That means further housing development and further sprawl. That leadership is hard to come by from local government, I would suggest. Given the way local government acts—in the interests of its constituents—it needs to see some leadership from either the state or the Commonwealth in directing it to perhaps perform the appropriate functions.

Senator MILNE—So what you are saying is that the dismantling of that state government overview, devolving it to local government, has been a disincentive to making any urban settlement compact and actually encourages the fringe? This initiative you just mentioned between the southern councils, how is that going to address that, then?

Mr Baird—We hope that it would come forth with some good planning principles which might start to create better settlement patterns. But it is in its infancy. It is a two-year project. I think it will have problems coming up with a total solution for the south.

Senator MILNE—So would it be helpful if the Commonwealth's funding of public transport projects was contingent upon some progress in Tasmania in strategic planning in terms of future sprawl?

Mr Baird—Well, it would seem that investment should be targeted at creating the kind of settlement patterns you would like to see in the long term. That is why we put this up as an example of the kind of project which, if assisted by the Commonwealth, might create those outcomes that I think everybody is probably looking for as opposed to just further public transport provision to everywhere. You need to be quite targeted in where that investment goes to create the outcomes you are looking for.

Senator MILNE—What sort of discussion and collaboration is there inside the council between someone such as yourself, working on sustainable transport and improved public transport, and other areas of council given that the Hobart City Council provides carparking for one hour free in the city and has just extended that, I understand, to 90 minutes? How does that help a public transport strategy and how come that happens if you have a sustainable strategy?

Mr Baird—I cannot speak for the aldermen and the policy position that they have taken. Council operates short-term carparking; this is true. The business operators in the town see that as an essential part of maintaining the commercial function of the city. It is true that that free hour, which has now been extended to 90 minutes, may be seen by some as the antithesis of a sustainable public transport strategy. The reasons behind that increase to the 90 minutes were based on survey work that we did of number plates coming in and out of the carparks. We saw a very large number of commuter usage in the carparks. We were very much looking to target the council operated carparks purely at visiting shoppers. Along with the 90 minutes came a range of fee increases designed to make it less attractive for people to move their cars in and out of the carparks during the day and utilise what we are providing, which is short-term carparking as commuter carparking. A lot of our strategies that we have put in the documents are based around commuters in the first instance—creating a public transport and sustainable transport system and network for commuters. We think that is a good place to start. Commuters are the easy part of the equation, so to speak. Wider cultural change comes from starting somewhere. Trying to suddenly move your shopping community into a public transport system that does not exist is quite difficult. I suppose what we would see is that even within one council body there are differing views from different areas of council.

Senator MILNE—I did ask you why we cannot have rapid bus transit out to Glenorchy from Hobart along that main road. What is the problem?

Mr Baird—Technically there are no great problems. The committee might be interested to see that the state has just implemented the first transit lane or bus priority lane on the southern outlet just to the west of here. That runs for several hundred metres. That was a very long process in order to convince the state to transition what was a breakdown lane into a bus transit lane. The issues are cultural within the organisations, not so much technical.

Senator MILNE—So you are saying that the Glenorchy City Council and the Hobart City Council cannot get their act together to do it?

Mr Baird—No. The Glenorchy City Council and the Hobart City Council are involved in discussions around this public transport corridor. But at the end of the day, the Glenorchy City Council and the Hobart City Council have no power to act. The state network is controlled by the state and the Commonwealth, to an extent, where it touches on the AusLink network. The councils have very little power to do anything. This is probably an aside.

Senator MILNE—I am trying to establish where the blockage is to getting a rapid transit lane from the centre of Hobart out to Glenorchy by bus. If it is not the council, it is the state government.

Mr Baird—Council can suggest things to the state, but the state has control and ownership of the asset.

Senator MILNE—Have those councils agreed and suggested it to the state?

Mr Baird—Via this document. The councils have not formally presented a position; that is correct.

Senator MILNE—Thank you.

Senator O'BRIEN—You are presenting a good case for amalgamating councils around Hobart, Mr Baird. I take it that that is not the council position; it may be your own?

Mr Baird—Well, that might challenge the power structure of the state.

Senator O'BRIEN—It would be an interesting dimension given the obvious interconnectedness of the councils in these cities—Hobart, Glenorchy, Clarence, Kinborough—and the fact that they are an interlinked community. In terms of the use of the rate base, we have had the example, of course, of Brisbane and its foray into transport a la funding of transport in conjunction with the state government. What barriers exist in terms of the adoption of that model, for example, for Greater Hobart other than the fragmentation of the councils?

Mr Baird—The state is currently undertaking what it has termed an urban passenger transport study. This might be unfair, but the state is in its infancy in understanding the policy implications of a wider public transport or sustainable transport network for the city. So it is just starting to grapple with the issues. This study that it is conducting at the moment will hopefully start providing it with some information to form a policy position on such things. From my perspective, the real crux of the problem lies in the dialogue between the state and local government areas and the capacity of both the state and local governments to invest energy and resources into planning the system. This is a small state. This is a little different from Brisbane. Whilst we might be a capital city, the councils are relatively small and do not necessarily have the resources to put large amounts of effort into dealing with the wider transport problem.

Senator O'BRIEN—So scale is a problem and the approach to the problem at a state level is in its infancy, which I suppose can be put down to the fact that a decade and a bit ago no-one thought there would be traffic jams in Hobart or Launceston, but they are starting to occur with small growth but also affluence and more two-car families et cetera. So there is no impediment

in the structuring of the rate base other than obviously pressures to keep rates down from councils applying part of their rate base to public transport?

Mr Baird—And, I suppose, local government might argue that we currently are applying rate based funds to the provision of walking and cycling facilities. In a place like Hobart, that is an appropriate place for us to start in assisting the state and Metro with issues around their bus stops and things there. But there is not a defined policy position from the state as to how to interact with local government on the provision of transport. Certainly if the state has control and responsibility for transport in the state, certain ratepayers might find it a little remiss that their money is being diverted to pay for what might be seen as a state government or, indeed, a Commonwealth government responsibility. So there is not a clear structural breakdown.

Senator O'BRIEN—Perth has a system where there is a free public transport area both for buses coming from out of the city area and for buses which only provide a service within the city area. That is in part funded out of a parking levy. Is that something that Greater Hobart should be looking at as a means of encouraging people not to bring their cars for commuter purposes into the city area?

Mr Baird—It would be a mechanism to start down that path. Hobart City Council provides free buses at various times of the year when there are large events on. We have trialled free buses to Salamanca on a weekend in the Christmas period. We operate carparking facilities akin to a sort of a park and ride facility with a free bus to come into the city. The issue, I suppose, with—

Senator O'BRIEN—Is that well patronised?

Mr Baird—Not excessively. The big issue is that the city is still relatively compact. By the time you sat and waited for a bus, hopped on the bus and had gone around the block, you could have virtually walked there. It is not a big city. It is growing. But certainly at the moment it is virtually faster to walk from one side of the city to the other than to jump on a bus. Indeed, on some routes it is faster to walk back out to your suburb than wait for a bus. Certainly when the buses stop at 6.30 it is definitely faster to walk.

Senator O'BRIEN—I can understand that, with a limited service, that is possibly part of the problem. When a service does not run for extended hours, people tend not to rely on it.

Mr Baird—The fear that you are going to be stuck in town when your service stops at six o'clock is a big disincentive to utilising public transport or a bus, as it is down here. Sometimes at the end of the day you need to work late or engage in some other activity. If there is no service to take you home, it is often seen as easier to jump in the car.

Senator O'BRIEN—We heard some evidence today from a carpooling organisation, Cool Pool Tas, that there does not seem to be a great deal of interaction between local government—the Hobart City Council, for example—and that organisation in terms of the potential for promoting carpooling to reduce the commuter parking carload on the city. What has been done and what more can be done in that regard?

Mr Baird—Hobart City Council is the destination, to an extent for many journeys and trips—not all, but many. Within the draft sustainable transport strategy, which has been out on public

exhibition now for quite some time and that council has considered, we are suggesting the appropriate way for this council to move forward on carpooling facilities is to provide free style arrangements. At the destination, which is the city centre, we provide free parking for those individuals who are prepared to put three or more people into their car during the day. That is an incentive at this end of the journey that can assist.

I am the only sustainable transport officer for the council. To be honest, the last short period that I have been employed by council has been about developing the strategic documents, the network plans and a range of project possibilities for council to become involved in. As such, within that document, you will see physical infrastructure projects that relate to parking and suggestions for the council to involve itself with things like Cool Pool. There are other carpooling networks within the state. But I suppose what we see is that this will come down the track. But if I had spent all my time just invested in carpooling over the last two years, we would still be in a state where we do not have any of the strategic documents that will move the council forward. We also would not have any of the other projects which we believe within our municipality have good possibilities, such as the cycling projects and improved walking facilities. We are also starting to consider how the CBD is connected. We had visits from some international experts—Lars Gemzoe and Jan Gehl—who suggested to the city better ways it might structure the end destination to make it more attractive for people to walk and arrive in public transport and then move around the city more easily. Again, those things are in their infancy down here.

Senator O'BRIEN—Thank you very much.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks for coming in this morning. Did the council put a submission to Infrastructure Australia?

Mr Baird—I do not believe we did.

Senator LUDLAM—There has been loose talk about a proposal for a light rail link into Hobart. Is that something that you have been involved in?

Mr Baird—The suggestion of a light rail link has been going on ever since the light rail link was closed down many years ago now. The reason that we have been doing some work with the planning institution and the University of Tasmania and others around the real utilisation of the bus corridor is, I suppose, because we would rather steer away from the actual mode of delivery of the public transport task and look for a realistic appraisal of how the bus service might contribute to that and how the cycling and walking facilities that we could provide might contribute to that. The cynic in me says that every time we talk about light rail for this part of the world—there is a total population base of a little over 180,000 people in this region—light rail is expensive. Given that we have no cycle network and no walking network—well, we have footpaths—and a range of poor public transport facilities in terms of bussing, there might be other ways to achieve the task rather than just having a choo-choo train.

Do not get me wrong; a light rail system would be fabulous down here. The typography limits somewhat what we can achieve with light rail to access the entire greater urban area. This is put forward as an example of how one might rethink a build strategy over time, whereby you might well use buses on a corridor for a period of time while you improve density and other facilities

along it. You might transition and move to a light rail or even a heavy rail solution over time. But my personal opinion would be that whilst a light rail system would be a beautiful thing, I think when we do the numbers—and the state has asked, as part of this urban passenger transport study, to look at the numbers associated with the Western Shore light rail provision—that it will stack up as possibly an unfeasible wish. It will delay the process of us getting some improvements in public transport provided by other means.

So I am not against light rail. There could be some targeted improvements to the bus network and the bus system, with express buses on the Western Shore, Eastern Shore and in the south. Appropriate transit lanes and other corridor improvements could be provided as well as weighting. There are some other measures I have seen expressed in some of the other submissions, such as timing indicators and frequency improvements at peak times. I think on balance you might well find, once the numbers are done, that these might well be a better investment of your money in the short term to start moving people into public transport.

CHAIR—On that, Mr Baird, we thank you for your assistance for the committee today.

[11.39 am]

MASON, Dr Chloe, Private capacity

CHAIR—Welcome. Dr Mason, you have lodged submission 142 with the committee. Do you wish to make any amendments or alterations to that submission?

Dr Mason—No. I would like to speak to it more generally, particularly in light of some of the submissions that I have been hearing orally, including today.

CHAIR—Then I will invite you to make an opening statement.

Dr Mason—Just to be brief, basically, I guess I should introduce myself in terms of my background. I initially trained in geography. I have a multidisciplinary training. I will show why some of these background bits of information are relevant to what I wish to say and explain. I have also worked as an innovator for sustainable, socially inclusive transport. In particular, in Australia, I introduced the concept of active travel, which is used internationally. I have also introduced the concept and practice of transport access guides. I have also focused on trip generators, where the destination of the trip is actually to.

Like other people before the Senate panel, I am supportive of a system-wide, accessible and connecting transport system. But one of the differences that I think is—

CHAIR—I am sorry to interrupt you. I apologise. I should have asked you first. In all the excitement I forgot. Do you mind starting on Sunday night's blockbuster?

Dr Mason—No.

CHAIR—Not at all?

Dr Mason—Is it anything special?

CHAIR—I am sorry. If you could continue, thank you.

Dr Mason—We often hear this phrase 'system-wide approach'. What I think really matters here is where the boundaries of the system are drawn. So while the focus of this inquiry is understandably on public transport investment, unless one also considers the whole mobility issue for people to get around places, basically we are often having inappropriate competitions, often between modes or often public transport versus cars. The irony, in my view, is that we have come through the last 40 or 50 years where we have seen extensive car oriented growth. One of the reasons for this is that cars offer fantastic opportunities. They offer independence and great mobility. They offer freedom of travel. The downside is that they have contributed to sprawling urban developments and they have also contributed to the decay of inner cities all over the world.

But why go on about the value of cars? They are part of the mobility solution. So it is also a false dichotomy, in my view, to say public transport versus cars. It is a matter, in my view, of reducing the amount of driving, which is excessive. In my view, it is also a matter of reducing the level of car ownership, which is extremely expensive. We talk about affordable housing. It seems absurd from a public policy perspective not to also look at household expenditure and to see the area of rising cost is transport. People who live in outer suburbs, where there is low density, basically are facing extremely high costs in the short term. In the longer term, as this committee full well knows, we are facing the likelihood within five to 15 years of quite considerable fuel costs. As I say, as a social justice and as a geographic question, we must consider the housing and transport interconnection more closely, which is why we come back to how smart cars can be. What is the smartest use of cars? That is one of the reasons why I accepted and undertook a project for the Australian Greenhouse Office on car sharing, which is quite distinct from carpooling. Are people familiar? I do not want to—

Senator O'BRIEN—We have heard some of it.

Dr Mason—Car sharing is quite distinct from carpooling. It is one of the smartest ways of filling what is called the mobility gap that is left. However good the public transport system is, however walkable or cyclable the neighbourhood is, there are occasions when having a car fills a very significant gap. My thesis basically is that social housing should be looking very seriously at the incorporation of car sharing services within the housing. Similarly, so too should high density residential be mixed with commercial use. It is the smartest use of any form of technology to get around.

Having said that, I would just like to come back a bit. I say that the topic, in my view, is appropriate to how people travel in places. That is what the question is. It is about mobility rather than modes. So what we also have here is a transition in the language. In our Anglo language, the word 'transport', from its Latin root, means to carry across. Understandably, in the popular Australian imagination, that conjures up a vehicle. What do people forget about? They forget about their feet. One of the most important things facing our country now is the importance of people using their feet to get about—to get about healthily and to get about with no pollution. Basically our cities are not at the moment so readily designed for getting about by foot or getting about by cycling. We have to retrofit our cities to inject centres of mixed use development so there are destinations that are in walkable and cyclable distance. I will continue for just a few minutes.

CHAIR—Yes. By all means.

Dr Mason—Basically, what I wish to say is that we must not discount the use of language. I was here earlier this morning listening to the state department struggle with the application of passenger transport to include walking and cycling. Now it is admirable that they have not forgotten walking and cycling because they are very efficient modes of transport. In fact, they are essential to daily life for human development because children need to walk and so do adults for the sake of their bone health, if for no other reason. There are many other reasons as well. So basically the language issue is a significant one. My thesis to this committee is partly that language is a real issue in terms of social change and cultural change.

I notice that in North America and in Europe the language often refers to urban mobility and urban sustainable mobility and sustainable travel or active travel. This language set is not a trivial issue at all because it is a signal for the need to rethink and reconceptualise the old style of thinking which is beloved of traffic engineers and economists, who are very much into categorical thinking. But in terms of communicative change and a people focus, my submission is that we need to be quite serious about the significance of shifting language.

In fact, the city of Portland in Oregon many years ago had an overt and deliberate language shift. They no longer as a city council accepted the idea that widening the road to increase capacity and overcome traffic congestion in the short term represented an upgrade. It had to be called a road widening. We have had a whole lot of language that is regarded as objective, technical engineering language which is highly coloured. It is coloured to the growth of private motor vehicle use, which is no longer helpful to our society.

There are unintended consequences of car oriented growth. They were first noticed in the 1960s and 1970s with the social isolation of women at home. It required households to purchase not merely one motor vehicle but two because otherwise the woman at home would be too socially isolated. There were huge health consequences of that. It was associated with the huge uptake of pharmaceuticals for anxiety because of the sheer misery of being too lonely.

More recently, of course, the next historical awareness was air quality. Each individual vehicle in itself was okay in terms of air quality emissions. But with the cumulative growth of more and more vehicles on the road, which is what Tasmania is seeing in all of its urban areas, you have a decline in air quality.

But what was also happening, sadly, was multiple sources of health harms. In my submission, I have referred to a list of them. The classic one—and I teach in this area—is the link between transport and health. I ask groups of students to come up with the relationships. The first one they think of always is deaths on the road from collisions because that is on the ABC radio and television every week. I go, ‘Yeah, yeah, okay. But what damages a lot more people than that?’ That is the question. What kills more people than that by a factor of five? What is the answer to that? The answer is air quality. When I was working at the New South Wales EPA on the first air quality management plan, I urged the EPA unsuccessfully, I might add, to not simply talk about air quality but contextualise that in terms of the other health harms that were being caused concurrently with air quality harms. So we have collisions and we have noise vibration from motor vehicles. It is actually a cardiovascular risk factor.

We also have the problem of social isolation, which is not only older people but also teenagers and poor people and unemployed people. I am not merely an academic. I left the academy because I am such an action, programmatic change person. I worked in south-western Sydney on transport access for job seekers. I found that the Job Network itself was basically, if you like, a cultural carrier for car ownership because the first two questions to people seeking work were (1) do you own a car, and (2) have you got a driver’s licence? This is like the old days of discrimination, to my way of thinking, because in fact for most jobs in Sydney where Job Network people were going to go, you could not drive a car there anyway because there was no carparking. Basically, it was an absurd and cruel question. So one of the things we tried to do was to remove, if you like—I think it is a useful analogy—the discrimination from the Job Network because it was really foolish. Then we introduced transport access guides for the Job

Network. Transport access guides, of course, are on the RTA website, but I can come back to that. I want to take two more minutes, if I may. Is that okay?

CHAIR—Yes. That is fine.

Dr Mason—Basically, what I am saying about health harms is that they are like mode specialisations, which by now you have seen lots of; there are the bus people, the light rail people and the cycling people. Our education has encouraged us, in my view, to overspecialise to the point of becoming dysfunctional for sustainable social change. There are very few people in this country or, indeed, the whole world who look at the health harms of transport because they are too busy looking at injury or air quality or social isolation or even physical activity and health or climate change and health. If you add it all together, not only are the health harms considerable but, for governing people like senators, the health costs are phenomenal. In fact, the minister for roads in New South Wales, Michael Daley, came to a CBD mobility forum in October last year where I was present as one of the 40-odd stakeholders with the Premier and the minister for transport. He asked, ‘Do we, the assembled people, know what represents the fastest growth increase in the New South Wales budget?’ The answer is the health sector. He said that the major reason—and this is apparent in the new Garling report—is the huge growth in chronic illness. It is causing the health budget to blow out massively for Australia. We are one of the countries in the world with the greatest proportion of seriously overweight people in the population. So I am saying that the fragmentation in health is just like the fragmentation in transport. We suffer from categorical thinking, which is dysfunctional.

I have talked about the gravity of harm and I have talked about the high health costs. What it has also done from a political sense, in my view, is remove the leverage for change. I have tried to explain this to both health and environmental people. Because they are very technical specialists, they cannot see the additive benefit of talking about injury and air quality and active travel and social isolation and climate change. If you add it all up, you have a very big problem. Therefore, the leverage for change should be very great indeed. Therefore, you should have been able to turn to the Infrastructure Australia Act and find an obligation to consider those things. It is not there.

But I am not just a negative person. I am a highly positive person. I say, ‘Okay, let’s look at the other research, then—the urban research.’ We see here very clearly that there is inner and outer. If you look at big cities and you look at the inner city and the middle ring and the outer ring on the variability of density, you find that there is more driving in the outer areas than the inner. There is also a higher body mass index, which is the relationship between weight and height, high blood pressure and overweight. You turn that around. They are the negatives. You want the good side? The positives are if you change the neighbourhood type, you get an increase in walking. You get a 35 per cent decrease in overweight and the risk of overweight. The latest study, which has only just come out, which I have put in my submission, is that if you have employers who offer—this is a US study—public transport passes by salary deduction, which I should add I have introduced for a number of employers in Australia, you get an adequate physical activity daily dose. So this is the importance of destination. It is also the importance of communication at the destination. I will come back to that.

So if we want to turn things around, we have to do things more than shift at the margin, which is where TravelSmart has been at. TravelSmart was based on a travel demand management ethos.

It is based on neoclassical economics and it is based on a 10 per cent reduction. I say that is not big enough and it does not deal with the central problem, which is, if you like, accessibility for all people in all places. So that is my thesis. Let us have accessibility for all in all places rather than merely public transport investment. Do you see the wider context?

I will say just two more things. The goal needs to be to increase not only public transport but the availability of accessibility. We also need a clearer understanding in this country about the hierarchy of services. That includes car sharing, bus services and demand responsive transit, which we did not hear much about. I think it would be ideal for north-west Tasmania, incidentally. There is also the idea about whether or not we do buses or light rail. If you go to places like Austria, towns the size of Hobart and smaller have light rail. What they do, basically, is that they regard the development of a bus service, the building up of a bus service, as the transition to light rail because of the hierarchy. So we have this peculiar notion in this country that we have to be at odds with each other rather than have a transition to an appropriate combination of services for an urban area. The ultimate place that I will refer to again—it is on the podcast on the City of Sydney website—is the New York city of Manhattan, where they have a fantastic program called Sustainable Streets. They are literally changing the physical place to reflect modern sustainable thinking, which is not what we have been doing in the past here. So that is really what I would like to say. I have a whole list of recommendations.

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Mason. You asked for two minutes. I would not like to boil an egg to your timing.

Dr Mason—I apologise.

CHAIR—We thank you for that very in-depth opening statement. I just want to clarify one thing. It is very important that you do mention it, especially coming from Sydney. We have had a hearing in Sydney. We got that loud and clear that the modes of transport are in competition with each other. They deny it.

Dr Mason—I have recruited people into sustainable transport jobs. I listened to the man from the council talking about the bus versus the light rail. I was thinking, ‘Just go to Austria and understand how they do it in Austria and you will have a whole new way of thinking about it.’

CHAIR—Dr Mason, you do not have to go that far. You can jump on the *Indian Pacific* and go to Perth and see where they work in conjunction with each other. We have been told very clearly—this is not a question; it is a statement—that the main driving factor there is that one body oversees it all. I have to defend certain parts of Australia—

Dr Mason—Absolutely.

CHAIR—before we all want to slash our wrists and think it is bad everywhere.

Dr Mason—No. Far be it for me to want to do that. One of the things that Western Australia does understand, which distinguishes it, in my understanding, from every other state that I am aware of in this country, is that in their neighbourhood code they actually have a column approach showing what was the existing or the previous approach through to the sustainable approach. So I say, ‘We want to go from here to somewhere else.’ There is a relatively new book

out called *Unsustainable Transport* by David Banister. What is so very interesting about that book is that the focus is not on the mode argument; it is what you are saying about not only the organisation and the institutional arrangements but also the impediments. We often talk about what incentives we can make to get people on public transport. I was the foundation manager for a transport program at the University of New South Wales, which is the first and the largest program in the country. We were actually trying to reduce the reliance on motor vehicles. It arose out of the draft greenhouse gas strategy. I have just lost my thread, sorry.

CHAIR—You are right. There have to be incentives. We know what the Western Australian government did in terms of making it sustainable, comfortable and safe. The buses are all air-conditioned. Very important is the integration of all modes of transport. There is smart ticketing and the lot. But we must not also forget that an overriding factor is that bucketloads of taxpayers' money went into it.

Dr Mason—Yes. You have helped me now, thank you, with the 'incentive' word. What I learnt at the University of New South Wales—and we wrote a paper about it, which is referenced in this submission—is that in Australia, compared with internationally, incentives for public transport, cycling or walking without also addressing the decades accretion of incentives to drive, the inducement to drive, is like putting icing on a rotten cake.

Because I am trying to get change, I worked with the Australian Greenhouse Office over many years as a consultant to get them to undertake projects to deal with the various drivers for increased driving. There is actually a list of unpublished reports that sit on the shelf. They include one on the obstacles to removing the fringe benefits tax. That is one. Another is: what are the impediments in local government legislation to sustainable transport? That is two. A third one was a report I did after a major bit of research in the EU where the question was: how do we increase the level of uptake of car sharing? That is a very important question. There is an unpublished report on that. The fourth one is: how do we need to educate people for sustainable transport? It is sitting on their shelf unpublished.

Meanwhile, the AGO went on with funding various TravelSmart programs, which have produced some good educational behaviour change. We have come of age in this country and we are maturing. This very inquiry, in my view, is indicative and symbolic of that. We need a specialist unit at the federal level—whether it is located at the National Transport Commission or the major cities unit, I do not know—that seriously takes all of those topics and more and looks at the institutional reforms that are needed in those areas to overcome the current major driving forces for driving in Australia.

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Mason. I am keeping an eye on the time. I am sure there will be a lot of questions.

Senator BACK—Can you briefly tell us, please, what is the essence of the New York study, the Sustainable Streets program? Can you just give us a quick overview as to how they turned the streets of New York from being unattractive to being sustainable? What did they do?

Dr Mason—Janette Sadik-Khan is the head of the New York City Department of Transportation, who was appointed by the mayor, Mayor Bloomberg, two years ago. There is a whole video about the program, which I have referred to. You can now get on to the website and

see the video, which I highly recommend that the committee does. Basically, they looked at ways of enabling people to move around more easily. In fact, Jan Gehl is the famous international adviser. I studied with him about 10 years ago. He basically did a study with them about mobility in New York City. They have actually changed the use of space. One of the things that transport people forget is that, apart from the integration of development, it is also about the micro use of space. What happened over the last 40 years is that we lost a lot of spaces for walking and cycling. What she has done in New York City is basically change the streetscape. She has reallocated road space to public space. They have acres of land that they have reclaimed from previous motor vehicle space. It is a program that is really worth having a look at.

They also have celebrations like the Carfree Cities movement, which I have participated in in Naples, for example, where they take over the streets at weekends and make them spaces for people to play. So there is cycling, skating and games. They are actually urban places. This is why I included the data in my submission about Waverley council, where I worked for a year. They realise huge amounts of public space is now under asphalt for motor vehicles. The question is: is this how we really want to use our precious urban space?

In terms of who it serves, we have huge numbers of people who are outside driving age. That is often not appreciated by people who are in paid employment. We have young people and old people and a whole lot of people. They are some of the things that she has done. She has done major work. But I do recommend that you look at the video.

Senator BACK—I would love to have a look at it. As an aside and not related, in the town of Coolgardie, somebody had the idea of taking disused drums from mining, filling them up and growing geraniums in the main street. It has had a remarkable effect on bringing people to the street, keeping them to the main street and reducing unsociable behaviour and vandalism, strangely enough.

Dr Mason—Indeed. Well, that is what they have also found. The other clever thing about New York City, which is really notable for the investment side of this inquiry's brief, is they have also looked at what can be done on an interim basis quickly. The other thing which is very important for social change, which is not often appreciated by rational economic thinking and traffic engineering people, is that people need to see the benefit quickly within two years. So that is the very clever thing about the New York City program. They have put down temporary templates. They have installed geraniums or whatever it is and little tables and chairs and got deliberate coffee things right out into the street to do it very quickly. I think that is why it is so interesting visually to see that big shift. Things are possible and it is not the end of the world.

You would not have such frightened, tentative texts as we have on the Sullivans Cove Authority. I read all of their material in the front of the museum here just yesterday. I notice that they are very frightened about talking about reducing carparking because they have not got any courage or conceptual strength behind them to understand how it can be done and done imaginatively, cleverly and popularly. So this is the thing that some of our politicians and authorities need to be exposed to. That is one of the reasons why I am so strong about the importance of sustainable transport education, because I can see that the people are very isolated, like this young man here today, I thought from the council. Within the council—

Senator BACK—I know a lot of people have questions. I want to dwell for a few moments on this car sharing concept because I agree 100 per cent with you. We also discussed it with Professor Newman in Perth the other day. We were discussing RF chip smart cards as being the mechanism.

Dr Mason—That is right. It is, yes.

Senator BACK—Are you aware of any decent cost-benefit analyses that have been done that point people towards the benefits of not having to have a motorcar in their garage or two or three motorcars in their household to get the use of a vehicle? Are you aware of any work that has been done that can be examined?

Dr Mason—There is plenty of work that is available. There is work available in the publication done for the Australian Greenhouse Office some years ago. Since then, there has been other unpublished work sitting on the shelf inside the AGO. There are the results of the European Union study, which show it very clearly. But what is really important in this whole area, which is very important to appreciate, is that what has been informing both travel demand management and all of the technical things is a combination of traffic engineering and rational economic analysis. The modern work in Europe that deals with mobility management also recognises the importance of the social construction of the problem. That is where my experience comes in in working with trip generators.

There is now good research, which is published, from what is called the Asilomar conference series from California. It shows very clearly that people's choice of motor vehicles in terms of purchase is not informed by rational economic decision-making at all. It is not at all. There is very fine research on that. Rather than worrying about that, you can then say, 'How do you communicate at workplaces?' One of the beauties about using trip generators for transport programs is that you can get the conversation going. You can start the conversation about what is possible. It is people's social connectivity that is actually more important in making decisions about how they travel than merely the cost. One of the dangers is that we are informed too much by rational economic analysis rather than the social analysis. That is why I want to draw that material to you, which has been published in the Asilomar series, which I can give to people. There is very fine research on that.

Senator O'BRIEN—I was going to ask similar questions about the New York studies. Thank you for giving us the reference to the website of the podcast. We need to find the time to sit in front of the computer, although Senator Farrell seems to be doing both today. He may already have looked at it.

Dr Mason—Well, it might be nice to have a screening of it, because it was shown in a public screening to over 1,000 people in Sydney last week in the State Theatre. So it is popularly known now and it would be on the City of Sydney website as part of Sustainable Sydney.

Senator O'BRIEN—You have given us some references for car sharing as distinct from carpooling. Do you see that as growing with new development, or is it something that can be easily integrated with existing development?

Dr Mason—Both. The reason is that car sharing can be used by commercial organisations to be their car fleet. The same vehicles can then serve at night and weekends for the mixed use nearby residential development. Next week I have a meeting with one of Australia's major developers, basically, and building management facilities with a commercial car sharing firm. Why car sharing matters so much for a committee, in my view, of this kind is because in Europe it has been understood that it is a sunrise industry, which means it is vulnerable. In Perth, I do not know if Peter Newman mentioned this, but we have already had, if you like, the death of one car sharing company. If we look at experience with car sharing elsewhere in the world, we know we have to look after car sharing to make it work. It is very important that we make it work because it is the cleverest form of support for a public transport system.

Senator O'BRIEN—I can recall people handing out leaflets in Manhattan about a car sharing company. It was not really clear from reading it that that is exactly what it was. But the light has gone on. In terms of the ultimate planning task—getting down to the legal reality—if there is not a central body charged with that, getting agreement across levels of government to have fully integrated transport and development arrangements for a city is hazardous and, in some respects, almost doomed to be suboptimum, if not a failure. I am taking from your submission that implicit in everything you are saying is that we need to get the basics right in terms of the decision-making processes.

Dr Mason—Absolutely. We need to get the institutions right. In 1997-98, I worked on Sydney's first air quality management plan, which was supposed to be an air quality management plan for 25 years. Basically, the 2009 report, which has just come out, shows that, despite all its goals, it is failing and it has failed for 10 years. So they have not got it right. Institutionally they are hamstrung. So that is why we now know; we have extra knowledge. So rather than trying to do more of the same, I am saying we need to shift gears and do it differently. We need different institutions. We also need better metropolitan-wide transport authorities, like they have in the USA for their cities. The US model has a lot to teach us, in my view, both at the federal level and at the city level because of their surface transportation legislation, which requires both a regional plan with multimodal transport plus reduced car use.

Senator O'BRIEN—Whose legislation?

Dr Mason—The USA.

Senator O'BRIEN—Federal legislation?

Dr Mason—Federal legislation. It is now into about its third or fourth reauthorisation. It is commonly known as ISTEA. That is a really important piece of legislation. They have also got the city regional transportation authorities, which usually have a percentage voted by the residents and businesses for a percentage of sales tax to fund transport planning for 30 years. So we have long-term planning. I think these are things that we can benefit from to see how other people have done it. Even if we were to get a metropolitan-wide authority to deal better with the states and federally, we would also need a commitment to the goals. A lot of our analysts are economists and traffic engineers who are stuck in the old style model of thinking. We actually need a different model for thinking about these problems. That is why the economic model will continue to downrate each item, because it does not look at it as a package of measures.

Senator O'BRIEN—So for success you need a bipartisan approach at all levels of government?

Dr Mason—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—A commitment to hypothecate funding from some source towards the task and re-education of the professionals in the sector about the new approach. Anything else?

Dr Mason—Two things. One is long-term planning.

Senator O'BRIEN—After you have all that, you then do your long-term planning, I take it, yes.

Dr Mason—But you also have to have a goal of reduced car use, because it is killing us. It is miserable. We all hate it. Everyone hates it. They all hate traffic congestion.

Senator O'BRIEN—But they do not hate their cars.

Dr Mason—Well, that is right because they have no vision and there is no leadership for vision for another way of living. That is part of the problem.

Senator O'BRIEN—And part of the problem is that if you are a leader, you only lead by taking people with you, not by standing on the pinnacle and saying, 'This is where we've all got to be. Join me.'

Dr Mason—Yes. Another thing that happened last week in Sydney which was very interesting was that Robert Whitehead from the *Sydney Morning Herald* spoke about the move of Fairfax press from the CBD to Piermont, to the outer edge of inner Sydney. He referred to the way that they introduced effectively a workplace travel program whereby they encouraged and communicated and discussed with people at the workplace. They started a conversation about how they got there. They have also introduced—he was very proud of this—a free towel service for the people who cycle and who walk. That is the destination approach, where you have social communication and social context. The danger about the IA model is that it is very heavily economically driven, not socially driven. My thesis is that when we are talking about people's urban mobility, we are talking about people. We are talking about social arrangements. That is where we really need to inject social thinking into this problem that you are facing about public transport and your whole terms of reference, in my view.

Senator O'BRIEN—I can imagine in some parts of Sydney that the need for a car is minimal. It is the same as living in many parts of New York. In fact, it would be pretty hard to own a car in New York because of the cost of parking. Owning a parking space is like owning another residence, effectively. In Sydney, there would be similar factors but also adequate public transport so that if you ever wanted a car, you would just go and hire one.

Dr Mason—Well, car sharing is cleverer than car hire.

Senator O'BRIEN—It may be.

Dr Mason—They are different. They are very different.

Senator O'BRIEN—The point is that there is no barrier at the moment for those people. I can go and rent a car for short-term need and that is available. It might be that sharing is better. But there is no barrier at the moment for those people. But to get more people involved, is it a bit like the chicken and egg? Do you not need such an adequate public transport system that people will say, 'Well, I don't really need a car very often. What are the alternatives?'

Dr Mason—Sorry. I am not quite sure what you mean.

Senator O'BRIEN—What I am saying is that if you do not have a very good public transport system to start with, won't most people be reluctant to give up access to a personal vehicle? They will believe that they will need to use it very regularly rather than intermittently. Someone who perhaps lives in Paddington might be prepared to accept that they do not really need a car most of the time.

Dr Mason—That is true. That is exactly one of the reasons why for a good society you need public transport services. They are part of a good society.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is a given. But to get from where we are to there—

Dr Mason—Somewhere else?

Senator O'BRIEN—is, to put it lightly, not a small task. It is very expensive. There is no united view as to what the solution is for each city and each mode et cetera. For example, I am not sure whether light rail would be workable for some of the grades in some of the suburbs up away from the Derwent River here in Hobart. So we might not be able to apply the experience in—

Dr Mason—But I think, Senator, questions need to be situated in an appropriate context. I think there is a lot more commonality across Australia about a common agreement. I believe that there is a support for more metropolitan areas with mixed use, denser centres that are well serviced by public transport. I think there are a lot of commonalities and there is consensus around that, perhaps much more than might initially be felt because of the spatial variety. The principles are really very, very similar.

Senator O'BRIEN—We have had similar submissions about developing, for example, along the tram lines in Melbourne and how you would increase the density there to improve the liveability of the city of Melbourne. Certainly there is plenty of support for the concept. It is getting it from a concept to a reality.

Senator MILNE—It is very interesting. I am smiling about the remarks you made about Sullivans Cove. A decade ago when I was in state politics, I proposed that between Hunter Street and Salamanca and the river side of Davey Street become a pedestrian zone. The biggest opposition came from restaurateurs in particular, who said that people would not come to their restaurant unless they could park within 50 metres of the door. Therefore, it was an anti-business strategy. We have just heard from the city council this morning that businesses in the city see the 90 minutes of free parking as a strategy for making sure they continue to have people in the city.

So one of the big drivers against public transport in Tasmania is the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is totally driven by keeping people in their cars and getting bigger carparks, more carparking and so on. The underlying cultural context for that, as we have heard, is that in Tasmania public transport is seen as a welfare system. Therefore, you are going to get people spending in businesses in private cars but you are not going to get the same level of investment from people who travel on public transport. So we have a big cultural shift here to make to see public transport as a way of driving business in a city as opposed to being anti-business, if you like. That rated the car. I am just interested to know if you have any examples of other regional centres in Australia which are comparable with, say, Greater Hobart, where people have been brave enough to take on this shift? I will come to the second question in a minute. I am interested to know if you can give me some examples of where that shift has been driven and how.

Dr Mason—Well, there is a very specific example. On Bondi Road in the Waverley council area in Sydney, there was a proposal that there be a bus lane between Bondi Junction and Bondi Beach, which carries thousands of people every day, particularly on weekends. The Bondi chamber of commerce organised an opposition. They had all of the shopkeepers on Bondi Road opposed to it. It was based on the assumption that the people that come to their shop park outside. This is very common, this assumption and this idea. Waverley council they did a study of where the people came from and how they came and all those sorts of questions. It was a replication of studies done in Melbourne and all over the world, because it is very common. It is almost instinctive. I think we are about habitat. It is about, 'You are in my space and I am very anxious if you change the use of my space in front of my shop.' So it is understandable from a human point of view. But the data, of course, shows against them. Not only was it against them. In fact, were their trade to be reliant on people who parked outside their shop, they would go broke tomorrow. The research was also done a long time ago in Copenhagen before they made the shopping streets in Copenhagen totally pedestrianised because of the fear there. They have shown that areas that depend on walking and cycling transport in fact have more trade because people drop in more frequently.

My experience with not only Waverley but elsewhere for this type of problem is it joins up the need for, in my view, a national clearinghouse of research and practical research, which is about sharing problems across the country. That is why I would like to see the specialist unit attached to either the major cities unit or the National Transport Commission that can do a number of things, such as facilitate understanding amongst business about how people get there. In Europe there is this concept of mobility management. It is also in the USA. Trip generators take responsibility for how people get to them. It is because it is out of sight, out of mind that people are so very ignorant. That is where the concept of transport access guides really came from.

When I was in the EPA, I developed this proposal that all major trip generators communicate how you get to your place as a matter of courtesy by walking, cycling and public transport and, for people with special needs, where the carparking is and how much it costs. So basically it is a matter of turning the whole concept communicatively on its head. We often talk in our society about how you get to a place or how long it takes to get to places. We are talking driving time. We are not talking other time. There is this presumption. Until we start to tackle that communicatively, we are nowhere. That is why I say the technical issue needs to be in a clearinghouse because the same problem is occurring all across the land all the time. You have lots of little councils that are having to reinvent the wheel. It is just painful to watch.

Senator BACK—What happened in the Bondi Junction to Bondi Beach case with Waverley? Did they convince traders? What was the end result?

Dr Mason—No. The sad thing was it was almost a good story, but not quite. I like telling good stories. They had the data, but because of the tensions that you have heard so much about between local councils and the different types of stakeholders, the question became: whose road is it? It is an RTA road. It is not a council road. Because of the anxieties of the local councillors of all persuasions and all stripes, none of them wanted to be associated with refusing parking. They were all scared about that. They were all scared. The councillors wanted the RTA to come in as big brother and say, 'Our road. We're going to have a bus lane.' But what did the RTA do? Tragedy of all tragedies—and they have so much power—they chose to have it a transit lane, not a bus lane. We went, 'Oh, no. They've missed the point.' So the RTA typically made a suboptimal decision that was more car friendly than we would have liked because the council could not make the decision. That went on for years. It dragged on for many, many years. So Bondi Road for many years at the weekends has been a parking lot because of the congestion.

Senator MILNE—Is that still the case? That is what I am trying to get to.

Dr Mason—No. It has now been transferred into a transit lane. So it means that buses can get up there more easily. It would have been better to be a bus lane. Sadly, the opportunity, which is what has been going on in Europe, for the real conversation to occur has not occurred. That is why I say the education—I do not mean message marketing, which TravelSmart was big on; I mean real education—needs to take place. It needs to take place for the next 30 or 50 years. So I am saying that conversation never really took place with the results, with the shopkeepers.

Senator MILNE—Would you mind making available the web references to the studies that you mention, including the Waverley study and the Copenhagen study and any others you know of, because that conundrum faces Hobart constantly? You made another reference to the north-west coast, which I referred to earlier. You said something would be a solution there. Could you just elaborate on what that was. The north-west coast has a large number of decentralised urban centres. Two of them are cities of around 25,000. Others are smaller, with 10,000 and 12,000, that sort of thing. So it is essentially La Trobe to Smithton, but most people see it in terms of Devonport to Burnie. It is a significant issue because what it is leading to is a failure to maximise the education and health services and employment opportunities on the coast. There is a lack of capacity to every day easily move up and down the coast.

Dr Mason—The model for that is about where the trip generators are. This is again where the federal government could have a lot more leverage about health and education services and the issue about the range of transport services. I can provide the references on that.

Senator MILNE—If you can provide a reference on that. There is this business of seeing it as a community rebuilding exercise rather than in economic terms. This is something that I think would have a lot of traction in Tasmania—this idea that people have been isolated by their dependence on the car. They do not know people in their neighbourhood and their street and that sort of thing. It is one of the reasons why the cycleways are such a popular notion—that people are going to get together again. It is why carpooling and car sharing and all of these things are ways of getting communities to know each other again. Is there anywhere where that approach

has been taken in terms of shifting the culture to public transport, saying that this is a way of reconnecting community and rebuilding community?

Dr Mason—Yes, it has. It has been used in small ways that I know of, often through the very big charities. I cannot remember which ones, but I can find out. There is a very good project in Gosford City Council. Gosford has relatively poor public transport. It has a lot of high unemployment and it has a lot of young people. There was a really good program there on improving the cycleways in Gosford working with young men in particular to do Recycle Bicycle. They had projects where they obtained disused bicycles from charities for free and rebuilt them. They then partnered with the local TAFE to learn bicycle maintenance. That is an accredited program. It was also targeted for young men, I believe, who were at risk in terms of their social inclusion in the local society. So there are a number of them. Again, this is where a national clearinghouse would be invaluable. There are lots of these lovely projects. There is another one with mental health communities on the mid North Coast in New South Wales. The Richmond Fellowship has a lot of programs as well. So there are these programs, but they are all scattered and it is no-one's responsibility to value them, take them seriously, share the information, make them more effective and all of that.

Senator MILNE—Yes. The problem with the examples you have given is that they reinforce the view that this is for the disadvantaged; this is a welfare mechanism. I am trying to get to affluent suburbs, where loneliness and mental health is an issue simply because people are lonely and isolated and want to make connections. I am interested in some examples of more affluent suburbs as well as those where they could be classified as assisting in dislocation.

Dr Mason—Sure. I will try and look for that.

Senator LUDLAM—I have one question. I will preface it by saying that I presume you are well aware that there are a couple of car sharing businesses doing quite well in Melbourne and Sydney.

Dr Mason—I work with them all the time. There are three of them. I want to say for the record that there are two ways in which institutionally they have been read down by the state RTA policy. They should be welcoming car sharing with open arms and asking the question, 'What can we do to enable them?' They have basically dumbled them right down to below the opportunities they have in all of the major cities in the world, such as Singapore, San Francisco and Brussels in terms of the road rules about their use and the rules about parking. Basically, the state governments do not get it. I understand that it is true in Melbourne. Victoria and New South Wales are the same. So we have these nascent, young—they are only young—businesses that are not finding it easy. It is not an easy time. That is why I am saying the rules are going against them. They should be supporting them.

Senator LUDLAM—In your opening comments you mentioned retrofitting. I know this is going on already in quite an extensive way in North America. It is retrofitting of suburbs that were auto dependent. How much of what we are planning and building right at the moment, do you think, is going to need to be retrofitted?

Dr Mason—Quite a lot. In Sydney, we are still building suburbs without footpaths. It is very hard for people with prams in particular. If you are pushing a pram with a toddler and you have shopping, what do you do? You walk in the middle of the road.

Senator LUDLAM—Every one of the state government department representatives that we have had in front of us since this inquiry started has nodded sagely when we talk about transit oriented development or more dense planning and so on. A few folk have some very good show pieces and good examples. From the point of view of your research, as far as I can tell, our cities are still sprawling more or less without restraint. I am just wondering how much of what we are building we are almost immediately going to turn around and retrofit if there is an oil shock? How easy or difficult is that?

Dr Mason—Well, I do not think it is quite true to say that we are sprawling without constraint. But what I do say is this: what we need is bottom up assessment and planning. The danger is a lot of the top down work from metro planning is they have subregional plans. I did an audit of the subregional plans around Liverpool in outer Sydney. We found that the guidelines on walking and cycling were not even remotely met in terms of that. So it is the fine-grained detail where you need to do the bottom up work. The problem nowadays is that we tend to lack a lot of candid critical thinking in a lot of government. They are very scared to say, 'Look, this isn't really very good or doesn't work.' That is why the systems of public participation in, say, the US model actually look at the bottom up as well as the top down. We lack the bottom up. We have absurd situations here, I notice, in Hobart as well as in Sydney where pram ramps do not come in pairs. What do they think people are doing when they cross the road? These are fine-grained things that you can laugh about if you are fully mobile, but if you are an old lady with a stick and pulling your shopping, it is very hard work.

CHAIR—There being no other questions, Dr Mason, the committee thanks you very much for your evidence. We shall now break and recommence at 1.30 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 12.39 pm to 1.32 pm

DEWSBERY, Mr Shane, President, Tasmanian Bus Association**LEWIS, Mr Geoffrey Allan, General Manager, Tasmanian Bus Association**

CHAIR—Welcome. Gentlemen, we are going to invite you—we do not have a submission—to make an opening statement. Then we will go to questions.

Mr Lewis—Thank you very much for allowing us to be here with you. One of the important changes that have happened in Tasmania is since about 2004 there has been a complete core passenger service review undertaken by the department in conjunction with the industry. That review was completed a bit over 12 months ago. In the last 12 months we have had a rollout of contracts ranging from the school bus right through to general access. We will be predominantly talking with you today about general access.

In that, the funding model set out enables the operators who previously had to rely on the farebox to upgrade vehicles. The government states that, particularly in light of the Disability Discrimination Act, all new and replacement vehicles must be 10 years of age or less and comply with disability discrimination principles. Funding has been provided for that for the private operators, who are outside the four major areas of Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport, to bring the students or the general public in from the regional areas into the major cities. The vehicles and the equipment now have an average age of 12 years. In the general access population, we have to continually rely on the turnover of vehicles. That is where we need to grow the numbers of people. That is in line with where we are all looking, which is that we need to get people out of cars and we need to get them into public transport and for them to be able to complete their journeys in safety, as we know the bus industry provides.

Another area that we see the federal government being able to assist with is infrastructure. That is infrastructure in the sense of not only roads and priority lanes for buses but also the necessary street furniture so the disability access buses we are providing can be utilised properly. At the moment, we have buses travelling into areas where, due to there being no curbs and such, the buses cannot be utilised by people in wheelchairs. So it is another of those things.

We see the federal government role as providing some funding towards that. We also see that there should be some strings put on funding to the states. If the money is put towards the funding of particular services and they are not undertaken, there should be some recompense back from that. This is where the new contracts we have set up cover the funding. We have a commitment in the contract to develop service development plans, which we have to do within the first six months of the contracts. Every year thereafter, they must be looked at to see what areas we are missing out on and where we need to go to improve our services. Shane may have something to add.

Mr Dewsbery—The only thing I could add is that we now have the opportunity to provide Tasmanians with the same level of service expected nationally for the delivery of passenger transport services. We are a little unfortunate in that we have a dispersed population. Until now, we have sort of forgotten about the people outside the urban areas. Now we have the framework and the triggers in there to make sure that we address community needs. I suppose that,

federally, if we know what is expected in other states, we will have the mechanism to put those expectations into Tasmania and deliver services, especially in rural and remote areas.

CHAIR—Thank you, gentlemen. I want to clarify a few points. There are three major companies that operate through the four major metropolitan centres, of which one is state owned and two are privately owned. Is that correct? There is Mersey Bus and Coach.

Mr Lewis—There is Mersey Bus and Coach in Devonport and Metro in the other three areas.

CHAIR—So there are two?

Mr Lewis—Yes.

CHAIR—Are they in competition with each other?

Mr Lewis—No. That is what I was saying. They are restricted to the urban areas and we are bringing people into the urban areas. So they do not move outside the urban zone. Really we need to complement one another so that we bring the people in and they will disperse them within the urban area.

CHAIR—So they will have their own set areas they operate in. What I am alluding to is that what we have heard through these hearings, in Sydney in particular, is that all modes of transport are in competition with each other whereas in Perth there is one major authority. Is that the same here? Is there a major authority that looks after Tasmania's public bus systems?

Mr Dewsbery—We have the department of infrastructure, which manages our contracts. With the new contracts that came out, most operators have a corridor around Tasmania and they are the single operator of general access in that area.

Mr Lewis—To take your point a bit further, one thing now is that we are bringing people into the cities and Metro are travelling in the cities. We need to integrate the ticketing system so a passenger can get on in Dover and get off at North Hobart and be able to use the one ticket all the way through.

CHAIR—It makes a lot of sense. What about timetables? Are they integrated as well?

Mr Lewis—Not at the moment.

Mr Dewsbery—No. But the focus is on integrating the timetables. Because we have different operators in different areas, there is a key focus. Once we bring them into a service centre, we need the infrastructure and timetables and everything so we can do it easily. There has not been that focus until now. There are some corridors that do have multiple operators, but that is limited.

CHAIR—That would be a major impediment to people wanting to use the public transport system, would it not, if the timetables do not match?

Mr Dewsbery—Definitely. The provision of the information has been difficult because each operator has their own system for how they promote their services. When designing timetables, there is no consideration being given to how it links up with all the other providers in the state.

CHAIR—So how will that happen, Mr Dewsbery? Will government have involvement? Will government have all the operators around the table working together?

Mr Dewsbery—In the current contract, each operator must submit a service development plan in their area. That gives the opportunity for the department to look at your suggestions on how you run your services. In the service development plans you highlight how you are going to increase patronage and how you are going to look after the community. A part of the integration will be a part of your service development plan. You will highlight that in there. Then the department can look at that and provide feedback. We must go along and provide substance on how we got to where we got to with our service development plan. Surveying, talking to communities, talking to governments, talking to the people on our buses and driver feedback must all be submitted in the service development plan.

CHAIR—From the department of infrastructure we heard earlier today that Tasmania's population as a whole is certainly not experiencing an explosion at the moment. But has there been a spike in public transport usage through Tasmania in the last number of years?

Mr Dewsbery—In private industry, we are finding that there is more call for services to go into their areas. Once they were provided with a service that took some time. Until now it has been skeleton services because it has been for the operator what is most efficient. But now there is the focus, 'Let's try different things to get people onto our buses.' So frequency is going to be highlighted. They are trying to become more frequent. The standard of the services will be improved. That means that the vehicles will be accessible to the disabled and the elderly. Tasmania has a large elderly population. Proper information going out to the communities will help. We have seen under the new contracts an increase in passengers, be it students or the elderly or adults. There has been an increase in patronage.

CHAIR—What is the cost of this exercise over how many years?

Mr Dewsbery—The contracts are five plus five. There are formulas in the contract that recognise the cost of different operators and different corridors and different things they want to provide. But there is a formula in there. If we want to extend services or increase frequency, there is a pro forma in the contracts that works all that out. So when we put our service development plan forward, it automatically will give a cost to government of the extra services required.

Mr Lewis—Shane mentioned the increase in passenger numbers. One contributor to that has been that since July last year, students have been able to travel 24/7 on general access buses. Last year it was for 30 cents, this year it is 60 cents and next year it will be 90 cents a trip. That is Saturday, Sunday and every day. Previously—

CHAIR—You said 24/7. The buses stop at six o'clock. How does that work?

Mr Lewis—They can travel from one end of the state to the other for 60 cents. So that has really lifted the number of students.

CHAIR—That is good. I will go to questions.

Senator O'BRIEN—Could you explain a bit more for me, either Mr Dewsbery or Mr Lewis, this concept of how you are assisted in developing new routes or additional services in particular areas? How do you go about it? Do you put something in your plan? How does the funding work itself out in the contract?

Mr Dewsbery—With the service development payments, the first thing the operator needs to do is go through to the department and put forward his case on why we should extend our services or go to areas that are not being serviced. The formula works out the cost. Then it is up to the government of the day to work out whether they want to encourage the operator to go to those areas or extend the services or even run longer hours. So it will come back to the department, the state government, on how much they would like to invest into that area. Each trial has a limit of 12 months to see how it works out. So it is a 12-month investment. Then it can be monitored through passenger numbers and feedback through that trial. But, at the end of the day, I suppose it will be back to the government of the day to work out if they find it value for money.

Senator O'BRIEN—So presumably the government has a budget and it is to be allocated to new or extended routes or timetables according to the justification of the case?

Mr Dewsbery—Yes. That is the way it would be.

Mr Lewis—The capital of the bus is calculated out on the peak services of the day over the five days. If you want to put weekend services on, all you are doing is running costs and driver wages. So the cost is not duplicated.

Mr Dewsbery—We must identify triggers in our service development plan. So we must talk about non-peak and peak services. We must clearly show where we have spoken to people, why we think it is valuable, what services we can see that are not being tapped into and what makes us think that people are going to use our service and for what reason. So it is fairly detailed when we put our case forward.

Senator O'BRIEN—Are there some examples that you can give us of how that is working in practice out there in Tasmania?

Mr Dewsbery—I know that some operators are putting forward that they want to extend some services into communities on a Saturday. There are areas that do not receive Saturday services. They are going to put forward that the community deserves Saturday services, and for the reasons of trying to get kids into the cities to do training for their sport, to go to the pictures, to go to the library and all that sort of thing. In Hobart, there are opportunities for employment. We have Salamanca market, shopping needs and all that sort of stuff. There are communities that are locked out of that.

Senator O'BRIEN—This is still theory at the moment, or have any of these been put in place?

Mr Dewsbery—No. It is still theory. We will be testing the new contract framework with that.

Senator O'BRIEN—Have you got any indication as to how much money has been allocated for these extension services?

Mr Dewsbery—No.

Mr Lewis—No.

Mr Dewsbery—We all know that the budget is tight. With passenger transport in Tasmania, other than the main contract framework, which has been focused on, we are not sure if any funds have been put aside now to extend those contracts to what we think the community deserves.

Senator O'BRIEN—What sort of subsidy is currently provided to the private bus sector?

Mr Dewsbery—For all the contracts that have just been signed, there have been negotiations between the operators and the government to get their subsidies and to make sure that each operator is viable in what he is currently doing. The discussions over the contract were about what he is currently doing. It is not what the future is going to bring. One of the big things they have subsidised is the capital payment of the vehicles. We never received any capital before.

Senator O'BRIEN—Can you give us a number on that? Is it a proportion of cost? Is it per vehicle? Is it a bucket of money?

Mr Dewsbery—It is per vehicle. You have a replacement program in your submission. It is a full costing sheet provided to the government. It was an open book. The Tasmanian Bus Association used an industry accountant from Melbourne to put it all together to take it back to the department. We must admit that the department worked well with the operators and used the same module right throughout all the operators' discussions. So we looked at all the costs of every operator.

Mr Lewis—To give you an idea, on a DDA compliant bus you are looking at about \$60,000 per year to lease it. If you are carting 20,000 passengers, it equates to \$3 a passenger.

Senator O'BRIEN—How much would the government be putting towards that?

Mr Lewis—If you are carting a concession passenger, they will be putting the whole amount. If you are carting a full fare passenger, naturally the full fare payer has to pay the whole amount.

Senator O'BRIEN—So it is a subsidy based on the proportion of concessional passengers you are likely to carry?

Mr Lewis—That is correct. And the total number of passengers overall.

Mr Dewsbery—The fare structure has also been changed. They broke the fare up into three components. It was a capital component, a performance component and a fixed component. So it is identified in the fare how much is going through to capital and how much is going just as a fixed payment. We also have a performance payment because our contracts are a performance based contract, so we must provide what has been asked to be delivered in the contract. That way, when we came to the fare, it means the fare for the distances around all of Tasmania were similar where it has been different fares in different areas. But that will now have a more—

Senator O'BRIEN—Now it is sort of like a kilometre standard, is it?

Mr Dewsbery—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is it possible, without identifying an operator or a route, to get a bit of paper to show how that is worked out in the contract?

Mr Dewsbery—Sorry, how?

Senator O'BRIEN—How the subsidy, the components of the fare and the labour work out for a particular fare, without naming places or the operator?

Mr Dewsbery—Yes. That could be done through the accountants that the Tasmanian Bus Association use. They could show their format and how they got to it and which was used in the contract negotiations.

Senator O'BRIEN—If we could get that as an example on notice, that would be good. Finally, how has all this been received across your membership? We heard from the department earlier this morning that some are more proactive about this initiative than others in the private bus sector. What is your feedback?

Mr Dewsbery—There is finally an opportunity for the operator to really do what he does best. Until now, as I said, we had to be efficient. The service was designed around where the money was. Now there is an opportunity for operators to go and grow their business, increase passengers and service the communities. With a partnership from government, the framework is there to really move forward with passenger transport in Tasmania. It has been a long time with all the discussions and the review. We have also rationalised our service. So the services that were out there costing a lot of money that really were not needed have now been solved. That means there has been hopefully more money put back into the industry. Having performance based contracts now means the community can be assured of a certain standard of service. With the model now encouraging operators to increase their business of service throughout the community, all we need now is a joint approach from local councils, state government and, we reckon, federal government to really put it all together and have a passenger transport focus. Tasmania has not until now.

Senator O'BRIEN—So this is the genesis of that, you believe?

Mr Dewsbery—Yes.

Mr Lewis—Yes.

Senator MILNE—I will start from the point about having a passenger transport focus. I certainly acknowledge what you are saying about us not having one until now. I wonder if you have looked at other models around the world, such as New Zealand, for example, or Turkey, where you have decentralised populations and a service based on mini buses feeding main routes and extremely good services? Is there any prospect of getting that kind of planning in Tasmania?

Mr Dewsbery—As we move forward with the new contracts—remember that the new contracts are only two months old—the Tasmanian Bus Association has even encouraged our members to do a joint study tour to work out how other regional communities work. We are only going to do that through Australia to start with. We are going to visit different areas to look at different models of how remote areas utilise different forms of transport, be it a taxi, a local school bus or a community car, to bring passengers into the main trunk and then, from the main trunk, into the urban centres.

Senator MILNE—They are going to have a look around Australia. Presumably you would be informed by studies of other places.

Mr Dewsbery—Yes. Well, the Tasmanian Bus Association is also a member of the Bus Industry Confederation, which is the national body. We are always getting feedback from there and research and information.

Senator MILNE—I am concerned about what you are saying first about it going to the operators to say how they can grow their business. I cannot remember what you said second. Third was community access or whatever. This is where the state government has to take an overview and put together the strategy. Otherwise it is always going to be the best routes. Obviously private sector operators want to be able to make money out of a business. That is where I am concerned. Do you think that the very small unit the state government has inside the department is capable of bringing out a strategy in a timely manner? Does it need more resources from the state government to make this happen? It is all very well for you to put it up. But unless there is a unit capable of translating that into a state-wide strategy in a timely manner, this could drag on for five years.

Mr Dewsbery—We certainly need cooperation from the state government. There is a team in place in the department called the implementation team of the new contracts. We are yet to see how that performs and the role that that plays. But we acknowledge that at least there has been a team put into place for that. There is a team internally concentrating on the service development plans. How that progresses from here it is hard to say because we are yet to test it.

Senator MILNE—What is the timeframe? When can we expect to get what you and the other operators have put in come out the other end? Have you been given a timeframe on any of this at either a regional or state-wide level?

Mr Dewsbery—We only know that the service development plans must be submitted within 12 months of signing the contract. Some operators will be going forward before that 12 months to put forward their suggestions and ideas. Until we test that out, we do not know.

Senator MILNE—I want to go to a specific problem. It is the commuter who goes from the University of Tasmania in Hobart to the university campus in Launceston, both academics and

students, and the number of medical service and state government employees in government cars going up and down the Midlands Highway. It is frequently one person but sometimes two. Do you think the public transport system provides a convenient, reasonable alternative to what is excessive car use at the moment?

Mr Dewsbery—There are plenty of services between Launceston and Hobart on the Midlands Highway. Whether that is timed to the needs of everybody, I cannot answer. I know there are empty seats on the buses that go between Launceston and Devonport. They are different target markets. What they are getting and what they are not, I cannot answer. But there are certainly services now that can provide for some needs.

Senator MILNE—This is what I am getting at. Who is going to look at this? You have a situation where the community is horrified because of road deaths involving students. That is a tragedy for Tasmania. But it is also a tragedy for academics and students to have to spend hours behind the wheel when they could be driven and, therefore, able to do other work and so on along the way. There are several services. Who is going to the consuming public—that is, the academics, the students, the public servants and so on—and saying, ‘When do you need to travel? When do you need to come back? How much would be reasonable? Is this service being provided?’ Where is that kind of analysis going on?

Mr Dewsbery—That is in the operator’s service development plan. They must consult with that part of the community. I will give you an example. I know an operator who is servicing an area. They did a survey of their school students to make sure that they would get them to school on time. They asked what time they need to go and what is the best time of the day. They surveyed the councils and said, ‘Okay, we’ve done a survey of the students. What is required now? What is the feedback that you are getting back from your community?’ It was, ‘I need to go shopping at midday. Do not take us in at six o’clock in the morning because I do not work.’ So those sort of things are happening. That is when the operator would go to the universities to see how that fits in with their service development plan. If it is a market that is using it, I am sure between the partnership of the operator and the department they would acknowledge there are going to be some needs there.

Senator MILNE—As I say, I do not see that it is happening. The other area I am concerned about, just as an example, is Port Sorell, Horley and Shearwater. They all commute from there. It is a commuter suburb of Devonport now. Who is looking at the adequacy of public transport from that commuter area?

Mr Lewis—Perhaps I can answer that because that is my area. There is a service provider. There is now a general access service. I think there is one at 7.30 and one at eight o’clock in the morning into Devonport. It can link up and go all the way through to Burnie with the Phoenix and Metro service. There is another service at 10 o’clock in the morning. It leaves Shearwater and Horley. It comes back again at two in the afternoon. The average usage is four people. It is a bit like Shane said earlier. Things come as it goes along. The whole of the north-west coast has been forgotten about for years.

Senator MILNE—Yes, it has.

Mr Lewis—We have an avenue now where we can go from Port Sorell through to Wynyard. You made a point earlier about commuters. Something thought of at one stage was maybe Ulverstone should have an express commuter service. So those areas will be looked at. As Shane said, the operators only just started in the area in January.

Senator MILNE—That is what I am about to say. I am not surprised that there are only four because I am not sure it has been going long enough. It started in January.

Mr Lewis—No. The morning service started about last October. The early morning ones have only just started.

Senator MILNE—What strategy have you got to publicise that service so that that whole community is aware that those services now exist and are integrated to services going right along the coast?

Mr Lewis—There are a couple of points on that. The local operators have been providing their times in the media and the local free newspaper. One thing the association has worked with the department in the review on is that once it all gets completed, we have one website with every service in the state where you can see on the one website for each of the corridors the times that they are running so you can plan your trip. We will have that under a website that is cobbled to everyone.

Senator MILNE—Finally, in terms of all of the individual operators putting in their development plans to the state authorities, is the bus association getting copies of those plans so that you can second-guess and put to the government the best ways of maximising all of those opportunities as they come in?

Mr Dewsbery—We do not necessarily see each operator's individual submission. I must say that the association does discuss regularly with the authorities the transport options and the feedback. One of the difficulties at the moment is whether you go out and say, 'This is everything that is happening', or you make sure everything is happening so you can go out and say, 'Now you can use it.' As I said, two months into it, we are tossing up whether we should go and blow our trumpet or make sure we have it all up and running first to make sure we can go out and say, 'There is frequency and top-of-the-market vehicles and if you do come along in a wheelchair in Huonville, you can catch the low floor bus'. We do not want to say, 'There is a low floor bus on it, but sorry, I'm not quite sure where we can pull up.' So that is where we are at the moment. As an industry, we just have to make sure we get our backyard in order, and we have the opportunity to do that now.

Senator BACK—I am a bit confused. Has this been or is it a competitive tendering process? Is it a process whereby existing service providers are now being brought into a new model?

Mr Lewis—The 1997 act and the 2000 regulations said that if the service was still required, the incumbent operator had to be offered the service. Then the role of the association and the government was to come up with a funding model that provided to that operator a sustainable future in that service.

Senator BACK—How long are the contracts typically for? Are they for the same length of time with each operator? Are they different lengths of time?

Mr Lewis—They are all the same length of time. They were all signed just at the end of last year for a five plus five-year term. The second five years is dependent on your performance standard.

Senator BACK—Is there some mechanism whereby some operators can buy other operators out, or is it structured so that each will remain relatively similar in the size of their business?

Mr Lewis—No. One operator could buy out the whole of the state if they wanted to. They could buy Metro, I suppose, if they wanted to. All the private operators are totally independent. It is a contract for that corridor, providing they are fit and proper and pass all the criteria.

Senator BACK—I guess my question is: is there a level of competitiveness, if at all, drawn into it? Has does one operator shine and how do others as a result of it get hauled along, in a sense?

Mr Lewis—The operator will shine by the performance of the standards he provides to his customers. Therefore, he will grow his business. There are those that do not provide the standard. For example, on Boxing Day, one operator put on three brand new vehicles to start running his new service. If operators do not do those sorts of things, they will not grow the business. The operators are prepared to put that out. The government has now provided the funding to do that. Therefore, you have the chance to expand your business.

Senator BACK—Can you give me some idea within this contractual arrangement what the dispute resolution process is?

Mr Lewis—The dispute resolution process is if there is a dispute at the beginning, it is naturally between the two parties. Then it goes to arbitration. If it cannot be resolved there, it goes to a court.

Senator BACK—Lastly, you have spoken a little about incentives. I am keen to learn how an operator can really be active in getting out there and genuinely growing this business. I heard you say that they can put a case to the government and the government can consider it. But can they do more than that?

Mr Lewis—Well, they can do more than that. Take Senator Milne's example of Port Sorell. Port Sorell will not stand on its own. Of course, the government will have to put some funding behind that to have more services coming there. At the moment, that operator is running that service for four people. Now he is losing money, but he is prepared to do that to try to grow it. On the other hand, if you have a funding model and you need X number of people to fund the bus, from which you have a guarantee, the further you go over that, that is where you will then get an increase in your funding. The more passengers you cart, the more funding you will return because there is no reduction in the rate per passenger once you go over a model.

Senator BACK—Finally, in terms of what is on the buses themselves, for example, if there is an apparent demand for bicycles to be carried, is there a process whereby bike racks can be put on the front et cetera?

Mr Dewsbery—There is the opportunity in the regulations, but it is all too difficult, to be honest.

Senator MILNE—Why?

Mr Dewsbery—Because of the way you have to have the frame of the bike not covering the number plate and not covering the lights. It must not come out too far. It is something that we are looking at. We have had discussions with operators in Canberra. We are trying to discuss it with the body builders of these buses. The only real feedback we are getting is from Canberra at the moment. We just have to look at our regulations to make it easier to do it. That is on the low floor urban fringe buses. With the larger coaches, you can put the bikes into the luggage compartments.

Senator BACK—Thank you for your answers.

Senator LUDLAM—I think in the ACT, where we were a week or so ago, they were talking about using it on the high frequency trunk routes and it had been quite successful, so I am just not quite sure what it is that would be the hold-up here.

Mr Dewsbery—It is in the design of the bike rack on the front of these vehicles. As far as I am aware, there are different regulations in different states on how this device goes on the front of the vehicles.

Senator LUDLAM—Surely that is just a stroke of the pen. They have had it working successfully in the ACT for a couple of years.

Mr Dewsbery—I know that there have been discussions between operators and body builders to work out how best we do it. There is information that is making it difficult for the operators.

Senator LUDLAM—All I would suggest is that there have been a lot of submissions. We have some cycling advocates in here next. They show how if you make your buses cycle friendly, you quite dramatically increase the catchment of your buses. Instead of a 400- or 800-metre walk, if suddenly within three kilometres people can cycle, you get more people on the buses and the bus is more full. I think it might be worth looking at.

Mr Dewsbery—The industry is keen to move forward with having the opportunity to put bike racks on their bike.

Senator LUDLAM—Spell it out for me where the hold-up is because I am not seeing it.

Mr Lewis—State regulations on vehicles.

Senator MILNE—On that, from Hobart to Fern Tree, how was that taken up when the bikes could be put on the buses?

Mr Dewsbery—I do not know. You would have to discuss that with Metro.

Senator LUDLAM—I have a couple of other questions. Pull me up when we are out of time. Does your organisation do policy research and promotion? Where does that function lie?

Mr Lewis—For most of the research we rely on our national body to help us with that because they are doing it for the whole of Australia. So they are providing most of the research for us. The promotion of the industry is now such that we have a framework to work with. That is where we can take the promotion of the industry forward.

Senator LUDLAM—I apologise—I should have said this earlier—for missing your opening statement. If you have covered any of it, let me know and I will check it in the *Hansard*. We heard earlier about the difficulty between councils and the state government in even getting a couple of hundred metres of bus priority lane. Is that something that you advocate for? Have you looked into rapid bus transit between key centres?

Mr Dewsbery—We have been big promoters of trying to get better infrastructure for buses—bus lanes, priority lights, better infrastructure in general—right across the board right from day one.

Senator LUDLAM—How is that working out?

Mr Dewsbery—We have a bus lane down the southern outlet. The operators are loving it as far as it makes it easy to get into the city. It needs to be taken further. It is a small trial. It needs to grow. There are a lot of other cost effective examples that we are always discussing with government and what we can put in. There is no-one stronger than the association as far as that is concerned.

Senator LUDLAM—I would expect that. Off the top of your head, what is your wish list? Where would you go next with priority lanes?

Mr Dewsbery—The wish list? To extend the southern outlet into the city, to have priority lanes along the Brooker Highway and to have priority services over the bridge. In Launceston, the same would be through the congested area, having some priority lighting.

Senator LUDLAM—So for the benefit of a Western Australian who is a long way from home, why has it not already happened? What is the block?

Mr Dewsbery—Sorry?

Senator LUDLAM—Why has that not already happened? Bus lanes are not exactly high technology. Why are we still thinking about it?

Mr Dewsbery—Well, it comes back to the passenger transport culture here in Tasmania. We have always concentrated on congestion without thinking about the other benefits of passenger transport in Tasmania. We can go on and on. Other than congestion, what are the benefits of passenger transport? When we try to implement a thing like a bus lane, we have car users who say that we are taking something from them; they do not see the benefit.

Senator LUDLAM—Well, you are taking dozens of people out of their cars.

Mr Dewsbery—Exactly right. We put that story across, without the safety and everything else that goes with it. But without people thinking about the positives of passenger transport, be they in decision-making areas or the community or whatever, until we get that across, it is always going to be a struggle.

Senator LUDLAM—But can you pin down for me where the blockage is? You are obviously advocating for your industry in making the case. What are the doors that close?

Mr Lewis—I think until now the doors have been in the bureaucracy. With the core passenger review now completed—and there were 121 recommendations out of that put forward—that has put a whole new perspective. As Shane mentioned earlier, there has been an implementation team set up. Now that that is rolling on, I think that is where we are going to see the blockage undone.

Mr Dewsbery—I am not sure that we have really researched passenger transport within the councils. So the councils are aware of the role that passenger transport plays within their area.

Senator LUDLAM—You have a sustainable transport officer in the City of Hobart, who is obviously pretty keen. But it just seems as though there is a big disconnect and a lot of good ideas that do not seem to be going anywhere.

Mr Dewsbery—I agree.

Senator LUDLAM—No disagreement from you. We have already covered cycling. Oil prices spiked a couple of years ago. This might be more relevant for the way your contracts are structured now. What happens to your operators if the price of petrol doubles?

Mr Lewis—In our model, we have a cost index which rises roughly for fuel and labour and quarterly for the CPI and parts. So if the fuel spikes, there is an index whereby the operators get a recovery.

Senator LUDLAM—The oil contract will just pass those costs back through to the state?

Mr Lewis—To the government.

Senator LUDLAM—To the state government.

Mr Lewis—I should also mention that there is a trigger point. Unless the increase is more than 1½ per cent, it does not get passed on to the punter.

Senator LUDLAM—So there is a bit of flowthrough?

Mr Lewis—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—At what point would it get passed on to the punter?

Mr Lewis—If it is greater than a 1½ per cent increase.

Senator LUDLAM—Over a long-term average?

Mr Lewis—In a period of time. If fuel spiked very quickly and it went up by 3 per cent, that would go straight away.

Senator LUDLAM—So that is going to be added to the bus fare, to the bus ticket, straightaway?

Mr Lewis—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—That is interesting. So there is no provision for the state government to absorb any of that?

Mr Lewis—The state government will be absorbing it in their concession fares. It will be only in the full fare paying that we will be responsible for the increase.

Senator LUDLAM—That brings me to my next question. We have heard quite a bit of criticism that the proposed CPRS will actually disadvantage your industry and the rail industry relative to people in private cars, who will be shielded from the cost signal for three years. Do you have a specific view as to that policy?

Mr Lewis—Not at this stage. But we are like you. The industry is going to cop it fairly hard, so there is going to have to be a recovery back and somebody has to pay for it.

Senator LUDLAM—Presumably, that will be people trying to do the right thing and traipse on to a bus.

Mr Lewis—On to a bus. I think that is one of the things at the moment too. I do not think the price of fuel is really going to do much towards increasing the public transport numbers. It is the carbon imprint or the carbon footprint of people realising what they are doing and that they have to reduce it.

Senator LUDLAM—It would be wonderful were that the case. A lot of the public opinion surveys that we have seen, though, rate the environment quite low. Mainly it is convenience that is in the top tier reasons. If you had your way, what would be the key recommendations that you would like to see flow from this committee? What can the Commonwealth do to get people on to public transport?

Mr Lewis—It is infrastructure. It is infrastructure in two ways. It is in providing better resources for the buses to get into the city and then, as we said earlier, to do with in the regional areas being able to pull up with a bus that is capable of taking a wheelchair and somebody being able to get on. They are perhaps the two big areas. Also remember that a wheelchair bus or a disability discrimination compliant bus is not only for wheelchairs. It is also for people with a hearing impairment, the sight impaired or people with sticks and callipers and so on.

Mr Dewsbery—I think we also need minimal service levels. We need to work out what are the service levels that we expect our communities to get, no matter where they are in Australia. If that comes federally, at least everybody is getting the same. We do not have that at the moment.

Senator LUDLAM—One of the key things that has come through for us has been determining the point at which people do not need to bother looking at a timetable because they can pitch up and know that something is just around the corner.

Mr Dewsbery—Yes.

Senator LUDLAM—How many routes in Hobart are on that kind of basis?

Mr Dewsbery—Most of it would be only the urban services. Once you get outside the urban areas, really there are limited services. It depends on the distance of the service. If you are looking at 100 kilometres, of course, it is not every hour. But even if it were every hour or every two hours, it is not like getting in in the morning and then not getting home until late at night. But even if it is as regular as that into the outlying areas, it is frequent like that.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks for your evidence.

CHAIR—Mr Dewsbery and Mr Lewis, thank you very much for your assistance today.

[2.16 pm]

CANNING, Mr Ambrose, Membership Secretary, Bicycle Tasmania

CHAIR—Welcome. Bicycle Tasmania has lodged submission 144 with the committee. Do you wish to make any amendments or alterations to that submission?

Mr Canning—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make a brief opening statement before we go to questions.

Mr Canning—Thank you. I would just like to pick a few key points out of our submission. Bicycle Tasmania, for those who are not aware, is a state-wide bike advocacy group. It covers all forms of cycling. I have to point out that it is not competitive cycling. They are a group of their own. It is an incorporated association run by volunteers. It promotes cycling in all levels of the community. One of our key objectives is to develop cycling as a valid and viable transport option not only for recreation.

When I saw the terms of reference of the inquiry, I had to think quite hard. I focused on public passenger transport. I think we have a bit of a fit there. Of course, Bicycle Tasmania does not deal with public passenger transport per se. But I think it is important for the committee to consider cycling and its integration with public transport. The infrastructure associated with public transport is critical to the spread, advancement and development of cycling. In fact, it is often that infrastructure and the interface points between public transport and cycling where the public transport infrastructure is also the cycling infrastructure. The successful integration of public transport and bicycle initiatives is a win-win scenario. The well-known benefits of cycling can be realised to an extent by a belated investment in public passenger transport infrastructure and services. They are, of course, things such as the health benefits, environmental benefits and financial benefits.

In reality and unfortunately, all trips cannot be made by bicycle. Here we come again to the integration. The integration of public transport and cycling extends the number of trips where either can be used. It increases the flexibility of both to mix and match to meet the public's trip requirements. Improved cycling facilities can increase the reach and use of improved public transport facilities.

Conversely, improved cycling facilities and infrastructure which results in increasing cycling numbers has the other benefit of taking the pressure off existing public passenger transport facilities. It takes the pressure off private vehicle infrastructure and takes some of the pressure off public transport infrastructure. In Australia, we hear the number of new bicycles sold for a year has been greater than the number of new cars sold. This is the ninth consecutive year that this has happened. Cycling is now the fourth most popular physical activity. Cycle tourism is an important aspect that is really only in its infancy in Tasmania and Australia. We would contend that there needs to be a coordinated nationwide approach to cycling initiatives and their integration with public passenger transport. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Canning.

Senator LUDLAM—Thanks very much for coming in. How are you finding it in terms of what is going on here at the moment? How are you finding the attitude of the Tasmanian authorities as they relate to cycling? Are you in a fairly welcoming environment?

Mr Canning—There has been a noticeable change in the recent year or two. We have come from a situation for cycling where they would rather we did not exist to now some recognition of cycling. We cannot totally thank our Premier, of course, who is a cycling enthusiast. There has been some awakening at a wider level.

Senator LUDLAM—So we have gone from hostility to begrudging acceptance?

Mr Canning—Yes. So we are moving at last.

Senator LUDLAM—How is that manifesting in terms of design standards for roads and infrastructure for cyclists at bus stops or whatever?

Mr Canning—I honestly cannot say that we are seeing it on the ground yet. There are some existing initiatives. Often it comes down to local government. They are already taking place. They are gradually coming to fruition. It will obviously take time for new initiatives to roll through. But at least they are being talked about now.

Senator LUDLAM—You are being a bit guarded in your language. I think this is called damned by faint praise. What proportion of the budget, if any, is being spent on bike facilities? Is there anything at all going on?

Mr Canning—I could not honestly say in dollar values.

Senator LUDLAM—Can you give us a picture of to what degree commuter cycling is a factor? Start with Hobart. How many people are cycling to work, for example?

Mr Canning—Again, I cannot be specific. I have ridden to work myself over the years. I can just give a subjective view. There has certainly been an increase. It is certainly a marked increase. I could not actually give you a figure, I am sorry.

Senator LUDLAM—It is probably not your job to collect the numbers. Are the transport authorities collecting statistics on how people are getting to work?

Mr Canning—Again, not that I know of. I have been involved with some of the local councils. Some of the local councils have done counts.

Senator LUDLAM—Is there such a thing as an integrated bike network plan as there is in some cities that link up the different bits and pieces of cycling infrastructure?

Mr Canning—Yes. Hobart has five local councils. The majority of those now have bike plans. There has been work on an integrated bike plan for the Greater Hobart area, so, yes, those things are happening.

Senator LUDLAM—They are starting to happen. What do we need to see? From your point of view, what would be on your short-term wish list for making life easier for cyclists here?

Mr Canning—I think getting that integrated bike plan in not only Hobart, of course, but spreading out to the various other population centres. We would be getting some coordinated focus on it and recognising what are the key routes and what are the key interface points, coming back to public transport. We heard earlier from the bus group. Unfortunately, we do not have trains. But in the larger cities, of course, trains are a great way to interface with public transport.

Senator MILNE—I want to follow on from Senator Ludlam and the last witnesses from the bus association. I am aware that a number of people at Fern Tree, for example, are keen to ride bikes. They ride them down the mountain, but of course they are not so keen quite often to ride them back up again. There was a trial for a while where the buses facilitated that, but that has not continued. Has Bicycling Tasmania taken that up with Metro and the state government to force this issue of making it much easier to get bikes on the front of buses?

Mr Canning—We have been involved through local councils. I am aware of the trial up to Fern Tree. We have supported that. No, we have not been actively involved with pursuing buses and bus companies. We are always keen to support it. It is a small group. We seem to have a lot on our plate. I am aware of the trial at Fern Tree. It had mixed success. It is always the trouble with these trials; it is a chicken and egg scenario. Do you provide the facilities and wait for the cyclists to come or do you wait for the cyclist demand? It is always very difficult to break the ice and get people aware of it and get people educated about it.

Senator MILNE—One of the other issues, of course, is that people would commute by bike if they had dedicated bike lanes and they felt much safer. That is clearly the case along Sandy Bay Road. I am a case in point there. There is no way I would ride a bike along there because of the danger. If it were a dedicated bike lane, though, that would be different. But there is the next thing about the facilities when you get to town. How much effort is the Hobart City Council putting into facilities so that people can shower and have their safe space to lock up their bikes and that sort of thing, or moving to a scenario like Barcelona and other cities, where you have blocks of bikes that you can hire? Are we getting the council focused on providing safe facilities to look after your bike plus facilities to get changed and so on?

Mr Canning—Yes. Things are starting to happen. In the Hobart council area, they are now looking at bike parking facilities within their carparks, which is a step forward. I believe changing and showering type facilities are still pretty much up to the various workplaces. So slowly things are happening. We certainly have not heard of any plans for bike pools or those hire type bikes that are now available in some of the European cities. I believe that Brisbane is or was going to trial that. I certainly have not heard that yet. Realistically, there is no reason why it could not happen in Hobart and Tasmania. Because of our population size, it may not happen straightaway. Speaking of my own particular circumstances, I can ride to work sometimes just through the luck of the distance where I work. I can ride into the city and park my bike in a safe spot and get changed and then catch a bus. I am probably in a unique situation to be able to do

that. It is a great facility to have. But, unfortunately, it is not so available to the general public yet.

Senator MILNE—Are you getting a sense that the state government is looking at that kind of planning in conjunction with the Hobart City Council or the Greater Hobart various city councils, or is this very ad hoc?

Mr Canning—It has been ad hoc. In the past, it has been very much up to local government. There is a bit of a change now. State parliament and the public service are being pushed to consider bikes, but it has been a slow uphill battle.

Senator MILNE—In terms of road funding in Tasmania, is there a requirement that the shoulder of any road that is upgraded be made so that it is suitable for bikes? That is one of the things that has been brought forward in other parts of the country so it is a way of gradually upgrading roads around the country to make sure that they are safe for bikes. The east coast of Tasmania used to be quite popular for mainland people, especially those coming on bike trips and so on. But the state of the roads in many cases does not facilitate it.

Mr Canning—Yes. That would certainly be a great thing to have. In my understanding, it is not mandatory, so it still often gets forgotten.

Senator MILNE—So when you say it is not mandatory, is it even in the mix? Is there any directive you know of from the state government in upgrading roads, in instructions to councils or state roads for that to occur?

Mr Canning—No. Not that I am aware.

Senator MILNE—So if the Commonwealth were to say that Commonwealth road funding was tied to making sure that the shoulders were suitable for bikes, would that be a step forward?

Mr Canning—That would certainly be a great step forward. We often get it by default because adding a shoulder to roads improves, I understand, their long-term maintenance. So we get it by default. But it is not primarily aimed at cyclists.

Senator FARRELL—I have just one question. Thank you for coming along today, Mr Canning. In at least one other state the issue of helmets has been cited as a reason why you cannot get more people to ride. I wonder whether you have a view on the requirement to compulsorily wear helmets? It seems to be a stumbling block to increasing the number of people riding.

Mr Canning—I have personally never recognised it as a stumbling block. Perhaps I have just ridden so much that I am used to it. I am at the stage now where I would feel very unsafe without a helmet. Certainly within Bicycle Tasmania we are not talking about that at all. It is certainly not on our agenda. Personally, I cannot see it being on our agenda, no.

CHAIR—If there are no further questions of Bicycle Tasmania, we thank you for your assistance to the committee today. That concludes today's hearing. Thank you very much to the

support staff from the secretariat. I also thank Hansard. The quality is absolutely superb today. We appreciate that. Thank you kindly. The committee now stands adjourned.

Committee adjourned at 2.32 pm